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Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland



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Celebrating teachers' contribution

A comhghleacaithe,

Fáilte romhaibh go léir ar ais chuig an bhliain acadúil 2008-'09. Go háraithe, ba mhaith liom fáilte ó chroí a chur roimh múinteoirí nuaceapaith agus scoláirí PGDE atá ag tosnú ar bother na múinteoireachta. Tá sibh ag dul i leith gairm úasal a chuirfidh éileamh oraibh ach is gairm a thábarfaidh sonas agus sásamh díobh freisin.

It is a great honour for me to have been elected as President for the coming year, particularly as, in 2009, the ASTI celebrates its centenary. As the ASTI enters its centenary year, it is only right that we should celebrate 100 years of involvement in Irish education:

- 100 years of campaigning to ensure improvements in pay and conditions for teachers;
- 100 years of delivering a quality education service to young people, despite under-investment by governments; and,
- 100 years of developing Irish education as a holistic endeavour, which seeks to nurture the 'whole' person through, for example, commitment to extracurricular activities and pastoral care.

The ASTI is organising a number of events and activities to celebrate the contribution that second-level teachers have made to Irish society and the lives of young people over the past 100 years. Schools and branches will be invited to join in the celebrations, details of which will be circulated to all schools shortly.

We are all familiar with reports of economic difficulties, and how government spending must be reduced. While the economic downturn is real, it is widely accepted that education is a key contributor to our economic success. In order for us to emerge from the current downturn with continued good economic health, it is essential that investment in education is prioritised. Decisions regarding investment in education must be based upon the reality that we are well behind the majority of our EU and OECD counterparts when it comes to the proportion of our economic wealth that we invest in education. OECD reports show that, despite the fact that we are one of the wealthiest of 30 OECD countries, we are close to the bottom of the league when it comes to the amount of wealth we invest in second-level education. We have a lot of catching up to do. The ASTI was engaged in the social partnership pay talks, which collapsed towards the end of the summer. The union is currently consulting with the other teacher unions in relation to pursuing an increase in pay to compensate teachers for cost of living increases. Economic circumstances will always impact on any negotiations on pay. However, we will not

accept that the public service, including teachers, should become the scapegoats for our economic ills. Teachers continue to deliver a high quality education service to young people, despite inadequate resources. The ASTI is Ireland's largest second-level teachers' union, with over 17,000 members in community and comprehensive schools and colleges as well as voluntary secondary schools. Members are part-time, non-permanent and permanent, and CID teachers, teaching a wide range of subjects and fulfilling a broad range of roles in school communities around the country. Effective representation of such a diverse membership is only made possible by the involvement of as many members as possible in their union. Members participate in a wide variety of ways: at school level; by attending branch and information meetings; through the completion of professional and trade union courses organised by the ASTI; and, by representing colleagues at local, regional and national level. These activities provide members with opportunities to meet colleagues from other schools; learn more about career and employment issues; enhance their knowledge of teaching and education; and, above all, have their views heard. During the coming year, I hope to meet as many of you as possible by visiting as many branches and schools as I can. I look forward to hearing your views. I want to assure our members that the ASTI will continue to work to ensure the professional and trade union interests of our members as we have done for the last 100 years.

Pat Hurley



Pat Hurley
ASTI President

Schools should welcome a diverse cohort of students

In April of this year the Department of Education and Science published the results of an audit of school enrolment practice. Over half of the primary and second-level schools in the country were surveyed to examine the disparities that exist between schools in particular locations in relation to the number of pupils enrolled who are newcomers, have special educational needs or are from the Traveller community.

When examined in the context of local factors impacting on enrolment, the report does not point to enrolment problems on a system-wide scale, but does identify a number of school clusters where some schools are assuming more responsibility for enrolling children of all backgrounds and needs than others. Speaking in reaction to the report, John White, ASTI General Secretary, said: "The ASTI is of the firm view that all schools should be inclusive and should welcome a diverse cohort of pupils. Irish teachers are committed to the well-being of their students and the well-being of society. It is vital for society that school enrolment policies do not privilege one group of pupils or one form of ability above others".

The report is intended to facilitate an informed consultation about possible policy measures to ensure that all schools are welcoming and inclusive.

The ASTI has made a submission to this consultation process, which acknowledges that education has an important role to play in fostering a fair and more equal society. The ASTI submission points out that policy on integration will need to be viewed in the context of an education system that is currently under-funded, and that the provision of adequate resources for newcomer students, students with special educational needs and students from the Traveller community will need to be addressed as part of the solution to the problem.

The ASTI has repeatedly called on the Government to put the necessary resources in place in schools for the mainstreaming of students with special educational needs, as outlined in a Report from the National Council for Special Education published in 2006.

Other recommendations of the ASTI submission include: enhanced funding and resources for school development planning; creating awareness of the right to appeal an enrolment refusal; peer monitoring arrangements within school catchment areas; and, guidelines and regulations excluding schools from giving advice to a parent advocating a 'more appropriate' school for their child.

Visually impaired students

According to research published by the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) in June, blind or visually impaired students are 50% less likely to progress to third-level education. Only 26% of blind and visually impaired students progress to third-level courses, compared to 55% of other school leavers. The research findings also show that these students are not afforded the relevant education basics that other students take for granted at second level, such as learning to read Braille, and access to Braille and electronic books. While AHEAD acknowledges that attending mainstream schools is very positive for the social development of students with visual difficulties, the group says that it may diminish their opportunities to progress to third level. According to AHEAD, the most important thing is for students to learn the core skills outlined by the NCCA to become literate and to learn to read independently, which means learning Braille and having access to assistive technology. While additional resource teachers have been appointed to schools, they are not experts in these areas. A visiting teacher service also exists, but is outside school provision. According to Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary, Education and Research: "This report raises questions about 'placement' versus 'inclusion'. Placing students in mainstream schools is not sufficient. The ASTI is calling for the appropriate resources to provide equality of access for all students to allow for inclusion and afford them an equal chance to learn".

Teacher workload survey

The ASTI will be conducting research into teacher workload this autumn. The study is being conducted to achieve empirical evidence of teachers' working hours and the nature of work done by teachers on a day-to-day basis. The results will form strong data to back up the ASTI's claim that the teaching role extends beyond hours spent in the classroom and the data will be used to protect teachers' working conditions from unsustainable demands.

Research of a similar nature has been conducted worldwide, and the ASTI carried out similar research in 1992. Updated research is necessary in light of the changing nature of teaching, brought about by changes in school cultures and in the social expectations on schools. The implementation of legislation and various measures to further societal projects such as integration, interculturalism and active citizenship means that teachers face a heavier workload and engage in more managerial, organisational and administrative activity than heretofore.

Research company Millward Brown IMS has been commissioned to carry out the research on the ASTI's behalf. Some 1,500 teachers will be randomly selected and asked to complete a log of their workload over the course of a specific week.

Department circulars

Department of Education and Science circulars are available on the ASTI website at www.asti.ie/pr_circ.htm. Recently issued circulars include:

- Circular 0056/2008 – Protection of Employees (Fixed Term Work) Act 2003 Implementation Agreement to address specific exceptional cases;
- Circular 0055/2008 – Protection of Employees (Fixed Term Work) Act 2003 Implementation Agreement Final; and,
- Circular 0057/2008 – Chaplaincy Posts Funded by the Oireachtas.

ASTI website developments

A new section on curriculum has been added to the ASTI website and can be accessed in the members' area and through the homepage. The curriculum section sets out the role of the NCCA in relation to curriculum and curriculum development and reviews currently underway. It has been developed in conjunction with the NCCA and will be updated in line with new developments.

The ASTI website is currently undergoing redevelopment and it is hoped that the new site will be up and running before 2009.

Learning School showcase

The Learning School is a collaborative project involving 15 schools in the southwest, supported by education centres, Leadership Development for Schools, the Special Education Support Service, the School Development Planning Initiative, and the Second Level Support Service. The aim of the project is to empower schools to develop projects to promote a culture where learning is practised and celebrated by everyone. A showcase of projects undertaken by the schools was held in April and featured projects on themes including enhancing the learning experience of first years; supporting the learning of gifted, talented and high-ability students; assessment for learning; integrating marginalised students; and, improving teaching through Irish. For more information, visit www.sdpi.ie. Participating schools included: Beara Community School, Castletownbere; Castletroy College, Limerick; Catherine McCauley Special School, Limerick; Coláiste an Chroí Naofa, Carrignavar; Coláiste Ide, Daingean Uí Chúis; Gaelcholáiste Mhuire, Corcaigh; Listowel Community College; Loreto Secondary School, Fermoy; Mayfield Community School, Cork; Mercy Secondary School, Mounthawk, Tralee; Mount Mercy College, Cork; Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne, Daingean Uí Chúis; Scoil Mhuire, Cork; St Brendan's College, Killarney; and, St Brigid's Secondary School, Killarney.

Classical music competition winner



George McDonald, General Manager of Top Security (sponsor), with Kevin O'Hara, winner of the Frank Maher Music Scholarship Competition 2008.

Kevin O'Hara, a student from St Mac Dara's Community College in Templeogue, took top prize at the Father Frank Maher Music Scholarship Competition 2008. The event is held in memory of Father Frank Maher, a former music teacher at Castleknock College, and has been running for eight years. It is one of Ireland's largest classical music scholarships, and is open to all second-level students in Dublin. Kevin intends to use his prize of a €2,000 bursary to fund his fees for London's Guild Hall, where he starts this September. The awards were announced after a performance from the finalists and from last year's winner. Kevin performed Mozart's Horn Concerto No. 3' and Bossa's 'En Foret' on the French horn.

Second-level students visit Malawi with Concern



The Concern team, which played a football match against Chididi School and were beaten 2-3. Back row (from left): Chris Forde, teacher at Athlone Community College; Ciarán O'Connor, Athlone Community College; Darragh Lee, Holy Family Community School, Rathcoole; Thomás Keogh, Athlone Community College; teacher from Chididi Community School; Louise Finan, Concern Malawi; Fionnagh Nally, Concern; Bronwyn Reid McDermott, Athlone Community College; and, Caoimhe McManus, Athlone Community College. Front row (from left): Judith Browne, teacher at Holy Family Community School, Rathcoole; Tissa Chalulu, Concern Malawi; Conor Tiernan, Holy Family Community School, Rathcoole; and, Gráinne O'Brien, Concern.

Two teachers and seven students from Holy Family Community School in Rathcoole, Co. Dublin and Athlone Community College spent 10 days in Malawi last July visiting projects run there by the aid agency, Concern Worldwide. The Athlone students won this year's Concern Schools' Debate while the Rathcoole students were tops in fundraising for the aid agency. Their reward was this fact-finding trip to the south eastern African country where the group got the chance to see the results of the fundraising work carried out in schools all over the country. They visited Concern's offices and a number of projects funded by the agency, including a school, a health clinic and an irrigation plant. Students and teachers were struck by the poverty and conditions in the country but were also very impressed with the work that Concern is doing on the ground to help the people there to help themselves.

Third-level fees

The ASTI is opposed to the re-introduction of third-level fees. The union believes that all of Ireland's young people should have access to a well-resourced, publicly-funded education at first, second and third level. Having a well-educated workforce is essential to Ireland's future economic and social well-being. This is only achievable through the provision of a quality education for all.

Active school awards

Five second-level schools were awarded prizes in the Active School Awards 2008 in May. Initiated in 2004, the awards scheme gives schools an opportunity to showcase their work in PE and detail the sports activities that take place in their school. The awards aim to encourage young people to engage in more physical activity and to raise the profile of PE and co-curricular physical activity. A 2006 report, 'State of the Nation's Children', published by the Minister for Children, reported that children in Ireland are doing well on physical activity, ranking second across the 32 World Health Organisation countries in being physically active for at least four hours per week. Findings from another study, however, highlight the fact that students in second-level schools receive, on average, 69 minutes of PE per week, which is less than the recommended two hours. The ASTI is committed to promoting physical education in schools and, in conjunction with the GAA, launched an initiative to honour the contribution of second-level teachers to sport last March. The five second-level schools who were recognised for their PE activities were: St Mary's Secondary School, Ballina; Coláiste Naofa, Dungarvan; Glanmire Community College, Cork; Coláiste An Phiarsaigh, Cork; and, CBS Secondary School, New Ross.

Education and homelessness

Focus Ireland, the housing and homelessness charity, has called for more support to be directed towards providing education and training programmes for young people to help tackle social exclusion. The charity runs a centre offering access to education, training and employment programmes to young people and adults who are homeless, and made the call as it announced that over 400 people who were homeless have accessed Focus Ireland's education and training programme since it first opened in 2002. Research published by Focus Ireland cited lack of education and early school leaving as among the reasons contributing to homelessness, while access to training and education was cited as one of the key factors in supporting people to move on from homelessness. The ASTI has repeatedly expressed concern that DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools – is currently the only Departmental policy in relation to educational disadvantage. There are thousands of disadvantaged students in non-DEIS schools and yet there are no specific measures in place to meet their needs. The ASTI has also expressed concern that, although learning support teachers are vital if the needs of students with literacy and numeracy problems are to be addressed, the ratio of learning support teachers to schools has remained at 600:1 for almost 15 years. Specialist supports for dealing with students with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties should also be a priority area, along with the appointment of home school liaison teachers in non-DEIS schools in order to help schools to engage positively with the community, and to support students' learning.

Senior cycle feedback

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is giving teachers the chance to air their views on senior cycle developments. Consultation packs outlining some new subjects and proposed changes to assessment will be distributed to schools in October and the NCCA are anxious to hear teachers' opinions. For more information visit www.ncca.ie/seniorcycle.

Formula 1 in Schools competition



Winners of the Junior F1 in Schools Challenge 2008, Team Sharks from O'Faich College, Dublin Road, Dundalk, with Jim Friars, Chief Executive of the Irish Computer Society; Frank Kennedy, Sales and Marketing Director of Universal Honda Limited; and, the Overall National Senior F1 2008 Schools Challenge Winners, Team Koni Kats from St David's School, Greystones.

Team Koni Kats from St David's School, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, were named National F1 in Schools senior champions last April. The team – Sean Cleary, Eoin O'Connell and Conor Daly – competed with 26 other finalist teams from all over Ireland in the challenge to design, test, build and market a racing model CO₂-powered F1 car. In addition to €5,000 in prize money, they will have the opportunity to represent Ireland in the 2009 World Championships next spring. Some 110 second-level schools participated in the competition in Ireland, and teams from 24 countries will compete for the Grand Prix title. Organisers believe that the competition is the perfect preparation for T⁴ technology subjects, which came on stream last September. Teams used computer-aided design (CAD) software to create 3D models of their cars, and the competition is also motivated by the need to combat the decline in the number of students taking ICT-based courses at third level. The competition is multi-disciplinary and competing teams were judged on the quality of engineering, marketing, graphic design, resource management, portfolio, sponsorship activities, and a verbal presentation of their work.

Frank Kennedy of Universal Honda, sponsors of the competition, congratulated the winners and their teachers: "The commitment shown by both the teachers and the students is mind-blowing. The high standards attained give us great confidence for the future development of science and technology in Ireland".

Responding to critical incidents

In light of a number of critical incidents experienced by schools in recent years, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) has published an updated edition of its resource pack to help schools to respond to unexpected and traumatic incidents. The pack includes: sections on the role of NEPS; prevention, preparation and planning; and, dealing with the media. Copies have been distributed to all schools and can be downloaded from the Department of Education website – www.education.ie.



World Teachers' Day

World Teachers' Day was inaugurated to commemorate the joint signing of the UNESCO/ILO Recommendation concerning the status of teachers on October 5, 1966. Education International, which ASTI is affiliated to, uses the occasion of World Teachers' Day to campaign for the rights of children worldwide to free, quality, public-funded education, and to celebrate the work of teachers. The ASTI is also involved in supporting the EI Global Campaign for Education.

As October 5 falls on a Sunday this year, the ASTI is encouraging members to take some time, perhaps during morning break on Friday October 3, to celebrate World Teachers' Day. School stewards can buy cakes to enjoy during morning break and reclaim the cost from their branches.

For further information on World Teachers' Day, go to www.ei-ie.org.

Minister celebrates Cork school's success



Minister for Education, Batt O'Keefe, recently visited Ballincollig Community School in Cork to congratulate students on their achievements. Aisling Murphy and Michael Coleman won the inaugural competition 'Debating Science Issues'. The final was held in May and the motion for the final was: 'This House Proposes that Animal Testing is Necessary for the Advancement of Disease Treatment'. Another student from Ballincollig, Declan Manning, recently achieved joint first place in the Junior Maths Competition organised by the Irish Maths Teachers Association.

Teaching Irish

The Department of Education and Science launched a report on teaching Irish at junior cycle level in July. The report, 'Looking at Irish at Junior Cycle', is the result of inspections of 75 second-level schools between 2004 and 2005. The inspectors highlighted the good practice observed in many classrooms and gave positive commentary on the work of Irish teachers. However, the report also noted considerable challenges facing the subject, in particular the need to place greater emphasis on the teaching and assessment of oral skills, and the use of contemporary materials. The ASTI has expressed concern about resource and assessment issues in relation to Irish.

Big Ballot



Students from Presentation Secondary School Galway who participated in the OCO Big Ballot last year are pictured with Ombudsman for Children, Emily Logan.

Some 75,000 children and young people in 500 schools and training colleges around Ireland participated in the Big Ballot project run by the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) last year. The OCO would like to acknowledge the role schools and teachers played in the success of the project, and to thank them for their energy, hard work and support in co-ordinating the Ballot in their schools and ensuring that the voices of their pupils and students were heard. The OCO received a large volume of feedback from the various schools that took part and the overwhelming response was very positive, with teachers and young people telling OCO how much they enjoyed taking part.

The results of the Ballot showed that the issue children and young people identified as being of most concern nationally was 'Family and Care', followed by 'Play and Recreation'. Some of the OCO's young advisers brought the results to members of the Oireachtas at a special meeting where TDs and Senators were impressed at the scale of the project, and were interested to hear the views that the participants had expressed. More information about the Big Ballot can be found at www.oco.ie.

Teaching Council National Elections

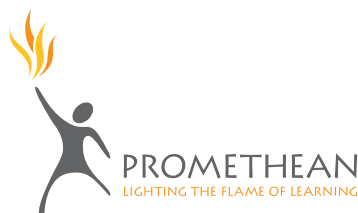
The term of office of the current Teaching Council ends on March 27, 2009. National elections to elect teachers to the new Council will be held in February 2009. The Council is made up of 37 members acting in a voluntary capacity, and includes 16 elected teachers. This is a significant opportunity for teachers to participate, through the Council structure, in the development of a range of policies affecting teaching in Ireland. All registered teachers are eligible to run for election, but must be nominated. All registered teachers are also eligible to vote in elections. For more information on the elections or the Teaching Council, visit www.teachingcouncil.ie.

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Town of Tomorrow



The winning team of the Town of Tomorrow competition, pictured with an image of their model, on Shop Street in Westport (from left): Cian Treacy; Joe Phillips; Peter Hynes, Westport Town Manager; Cllr Declan Dever, former Cathaoirleach of Westport Town Council; Danny Geraghty; and, Tim Horgan.

Students from three Mayo schools – Carrowbeg College, Rice College and Sacred Heart Secondary School – took part in an innovative competition to redesign the town of Westport during the last school year. Students approached the project like a professional urban design project, and got the chance to engage with the town's built environment and heritage, and gain experience with 3D design software.

The overall winner was a team from Rice College: Daniel Geraghty, Timothy Horgan, Joseph Phillips and Cian Treacy. The judges said the winners "showed a level of technical excellence and detail that was superb, truly embracing the theme of the competition and executing their design in a professional, clear-cut and methodical manner, like a real design team".

History of the ASTI

As part of its centenary celebrations in 2009, the ASTI has commissioned the *History of the ASTI* (working title) by Dr John Cunningham. The book will provide a social and historical account of the ASTI's role in the development of second-level education and the teaching profession in Ireland. It will demonstrate the remarkable contribution that second-level teachers have made to the lives of millions of young people and to social, political and economic progress in Ireland. The book, which will be launched in May 2009, will be of interest to teachers, trade unionists, and students of education and history, among others. If you have photographs or other items that you think may be of interest to the author of the History of the ASTI, please contact asti.library@asti.ie.

Special Needs Assistant audit

The Department of Education and Science has initiated a review of the Special Needs Assistants (SNA) scheme. The review will focus on the effectiveness of the SNA scheme as an appropriate support for the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream education. Special needs assistants are allocated to individual students and assist the student in their education and to move towards greater independence. At present, there are 10,201 SNAs in the system, 8,375 at primary level and 1,826 at second level, costing €300 million per annum. The review will focus on whether the current model is an appropriate mode of support and what alternatives are available.

The review will run until August 2009 and will encompass a number of methods. An international literature review with a particular focus on alternative models of support has commenced. Inspectors are to visit 100 schools to examine the role of SNAs from October. The review will also include focus group meetings with teachers, principals, parents, special educational needs officers, and a call for formal submissions by the education partners.

The ASTI Education Committee is currently preparing a submission to the review and welcomes input from members. Contact Eileen in ASTI Head Office on 01-6040170 for more information.

Edmund Rice Schools Trust

From the beginning of this school year, the Edmund Rice Schools Trust has assumed overall responsibility for 59 second-level schools formerly under the trusteeship of the Christian Brothers. The Trust will undertake trusteeship and operational responsibility for the schools, including the appointment of boards of management. The ASTI has been aware of the Trust since the launch of the Charter for the Trust in 2006, and will continue to liaise and communicate with it. Speaking on the establishment and role of the Trust, Pat Diggins, Chairperson of Directors of the Trust said: "The establishment of the Trust company will ensure the continuity of a tradition generated over two centuries by the Christian Brothers ... We will be working in conjunction with the Christian Brothers Trustees and with all of the relevant stakeholders within our educational environment to ensure a smooth transition".



Pictured at the launch of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust are Justice Peter Kelly and Brother Kevin Mullan, Leader of the Christian Brothers European Province.

Retirement functions around the country

Among those pictured at a recent retirement dinner held by the Cork North Branch are: Pat Hurley, ASTI President; David Briscoe, Chairperson, Cork North Branch; Dan Healy, Secretary, Cork North Branch; Máire Ní Chiarba, Treasurer, Cork North Branch; Máire Ní Laoire, Vice Chairperson, Cork North Branch; Humphrey Twomey, RSTA; Ray St John, ASTI Honorary Treasurer; Michael Barry, Standing Committee; Liam O'Mahony, ASTI National Organiser; and, Bernard Moynihan, ASTI Industrial Relations Official.



Among those pictured at a recent Dublin North West Branch retirement function: Catherine McDonagh, Maire O'Neill, Mary Passmore, Diarmuid McCarthy, Arthur Travers, Dick O'Sullivan, Hugh McGonigle, and Dick Wafer. Also pictured are: Joe Moran, ASTI Vice President; Ray St John, ASTI Honorary Treasurer; Marie Doyle, President, RSTA; Louis O'Flaherty, Past President, RSTA; and, branch officers Ger Curtin, Colm O'Gara, Marcia McGee, Mary Ohle, Paula Bigley, Bernadine O'Sullivan, and Christy Maginn, Standing Committee Region 15.



A group of ASTI members pictured recently with Patricia Wroe, ASTI Immediate Past President, at a retirement function held by the Laois Branch.



Human rights

December 10 marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Declaration was signed by all UN member states in 1948 and consists of 30 articles, which outline the view of the UN General Assembly on human rights. Article 26 of the Declaration states that everyone has the right to education. Among its other provisions are that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship. To mark the anniversary and to further these aims, a new interactive classroom resource has been developed by Amnesty International and the Curriculum Development Unit of the City of Dublin VEC. The resource is designed to be taught over the entire first term of school,

finishing with an action to take place on or around International Human Rights Day on December 10. The resource was written by a group of second-level teachers who have piloted the materials in their own classrooms. It will be distributed to all second-level schools in September. For more information, contact Ruth Gallagher, Tel: 01-863 8300, or Email: info@amnesty.ie. As a complement to the resource, the Irish Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) is running a poster action competition for CSPE class groups. Students are asked to deliver a poster message on human rights and the UDHR in Ireland to the general public. An exhibition of the posters will be on display in the Law Society of Ireland during December. Log on to www.ihrc.ie for more information or contact Winnie Donoghue, Tel: 01-858 9601, Email: wdonoghue@ihrc.ie.

ASTI members lead NACED delegation



Pictured (from left): Sean Clarke; Robbie Harrold; Ciaran Flynn, ACCS; Paul Gogarty TD; Julie Callaghan; and, Brendan Kinane.

In May, members of the National Association of Adult and Community Education Directors (NACED) Executive made a presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Education and Science. The NACED delegation was led by ASTI members Robbie Harrold, Malahide Community School, Julie Callaghan, Crescent Comprehensive College, and Brendan Kinane, Hartstown Community School. The delegation also included Ciaran Flynn, General Secretary of ACCS, and TUI member Sean Clarke, Palmerstown Community School. The agenda for the meeting was the current position of adult education in community and comprehensive schools. NACED Chairman Robbie Harrold made a presentation, which was followed by a 40-minute question and answer session. The Chairman of the Committee, Paul Gogarty TD, thanked the NACED group for "a very clear and focused presentation", and the committee passed a motion to send a letter to the Minister for Education requesting a review of the provisions of reduced teaching hours in Circular 46/00. The full transcript of the meeting is available on www.naced.ie and a DVD recording will be shown to NACED members at the annual conference in November.

Teachers' Car Insurance Scheme

The Teachers' Car Insurance Scheme for members of the ASTI has recently been reviewed and now offers even better cover. Administered by Cornmarket, over 24,000 teachers and their partners are currently insured under the Scheme.

Benefits include:

- accident and breakdown assistance;
- malicious damage cover in school grounds;
- NCB protection;
- named drivers from age 17;
- car replacement (theft or damage);
- unlimited windscreen cover;
- legal expenses cover; and,
- fully comp driving of other cars.

To find out more, call Cornmarket on 01-408 4040.

RSTA news

Many of the Retired Secondary Teachers Association branches are regrouping after the summer. The officers are dusting down their files and organising their programmes for the year 2008/2009.

Branch secretaries

Cork	Tom Cooney	Tel: 021-467 9158
Dublin	Maureen O'Connor	Tel: 01-822 7595/086-877 5754
Galway	Maura Stephens	Tel: 091-590 254
Kerry	Ann Cox	Tel: 066-712 5452
Kildare	Phil Dunning	Tel: 086-123 6404
Kilkenny	Kay Sheehy	Tel: 056-772 2271/087-245 4380
Limerick	Sr Marie Hayes	Tel: 061-303 403
Mayo	Carmel Heneghan	Tel: 093-31273
North Eastern	Michael McMahon	Tel: 042-966 1097
Wexford	Kathleen Gartland	Tel: 053-923 3691
Wicklow	Aveen Kilduff	Tel: 01-276 0616/087-664 1466

New members

If you would like to join the RSTA, please contact Sarah Scott, 3 Portmarnock Grove, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin, Tel: 01-298 6951.

RSTA branch news

Galway

Members of the Galway Branch enjoyed a talk given by Donal Taheny on 'The Houses of the Landed Gentry in Galway'. Afterwards, they had lunch in Park House.

Kildare

Members of the Kildare Branch attended a Garden Party in Áras an Úachtaráin in July. A full report will appear in the next RSTA Newsletter.

Trip to Arigna

Accommodation has been booked for a small group for September 9, 10 and 11 in the Bush Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon, from where we hope to visit the Arigna Mines and do a boat trip on the Shannon. If you would like further details, or to reserve a place, please contact Michael McMahon, Tel: 087-753 5280/042-966 1097, as soon as possible.

ICT in schools

The ASTI presents a summary of the current position with regard to ICT in Irish schools.



ICT can enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and today's technology-rich world means that students and teachers need to be equipped with the tools and training to use ICT effectively. Early last year, the ASTI welcomed the announcement by the Minister for Education and Science of an allocation of €252 million in the National Development Plan to develop an e-learning culture in schools so as to ensure that ICT usage is embedded in teaching and learning across the curriculum. However, a clear plan for this funding has yet to be announced and the ASTI is pressing for the timely roll-out of an ICT plan. The ASTI is disappointed at the recent decision by the DES not to renew the secondment arrangements for ICT advisors based in education centres around the country. ICT advisor posts were provided as part of the ICT Advisory Service to provide pedagogical advice and support, and advice on ICT-related issues, to schools and education centres. Their function was to implement the ICT in Schools Programme in a local context.

Asked about the development in the Dáil, Minister for Education and Science, Batt O'Keefe said a review by the strategy group on ICT in schools appointed by the DES concluded that the ICT Advisory Service was generally effective and efficient, but recognised that each school must plan and execute its own policy for ICT integration across the curriculum. The report recommended that resources currently utilised by the ICT Advisory Service operating from the regional Education Centres would be better employed focusing supports for ICT leadership and change within each school.

The decision to discontinue the arrangement whereby teachers were seconded to posts as ICT advisors was taken by the DES without any reference to the education partners, and was communicated by email on a Friday evening to the directors of education centres. The general secretaries of the three teachers' unions – the ASTI, INTO and TUI – have written directly to the Secretary General of the DES to express in the strongest possible terms their anger with this decision, in particular in its timing and in the manner of its announcement. The unions have outlined to the Department their grave concern at the lack of consultation in the making of this decision.

The announcement was made in the run up to the publication of two reports on information and communications technology in schools, published in July. The strategy group on ICT in schools published 'Investing Effectively in Information and Communication Technology in Schools 2008-2013', while a report evaluating the impact of ICT on teaching and learning in schools, 'ICT in Schools', was published by the DES Inspectorate. A third report, a value for money audit by the Department of Finance, is awaiting publication but cannot be published until it is put before Dáil Éireann.

The reports

'ICT in Schools'

Based on case studies of over 50 schools, inspections in over 180 schools and survey evidence from teachers, principals and students, ICT in Schools presented encouraging findings on the current situation with regard to ICT in schools. The report showed that while much progress has been achieved in the rollout of ICT at second level, considerable challenges remain.

According to the report, most schools have an ICT plan in place, and large numbers of teachers have participated in continuing professional development courses in ICT. The findings also showed that the use of ICT impacts positively on the development of students' research, investigation, writing and presentation skills, and highlighted the level of ICT integration in science and applied science subjects.

The report recommended the wider and more frequent use of ICT across the curriculum and noted the limited use made of ICT for developing creative skills, social skills, and independent working and communication skills.

According to the report, one significant challenge facing schools is the ongoing maintenance and replacement of hardware. The report identifies the provision and maintenance of hardware within schools, and the provision of increased opportunities for teachers to engage in relevant teacher training, as strategically important with regard to the development of ICT in schools. It highlights that improvements in schools' ICT infrastructure are required and that better provision needs to be put in place for ICT technical support and equipment maintenance for schools.

'Investing Effectively in Information and Communication Technology in Schools 2008-2013'

This report is the result of investigation by a strategy group on ICT, which was appointed to advise on priorities for investment in ICT in schools in the future. ASTI made a written submission to this group and many of the report's recommendations correspond to those outlined in this submission. The strategy group advocates a shift in the emphasis on ICT in schools from technology provision to a focus on embedding ICT in teaching and learning. It is hoped that this strategy will equip students with the creativity and inventiveness required to keep up to date with technological innovations and to develop the technological skills needed in a knowledge economy. The immediate aim is to prioritise investment in professional development for teachers, funding for software and hardware, the rollout of an adequate and robust broadband network, and technical support structures for schools.

Funding of education at second level

JOHN WHITE summarises some of the funding issues facing second-level education.

The high quality of Ireland's second-level education system is widely acknowledged.

Over the past number of years, OECD reports on education have consistently stated that parents in Ireland "can rely on high and consistent standards" across all types of second-level schools. In the OECD PISA studies, which examine students' performance in reading literacy, maths and science, Irish students are placed fifth out of 27 countries for reading literacy and perform significantly above average and average in science and maths, respectively. These achievements are remarkable given the persistent underfunding of our second-level schools. Despite the fact that OECD cites Ireland as one of the wealthiest nations in the world, we continue to languish near the bottom of OECD tables on funding for each second-level student relative to our wealth.

While recent annual Budget announcements have included increases in spending on education, the proportion of GDP that Ireland invests in education has actually declined. In 1995 Ireland invested 5.2% of its GDP in education compared to 4.6% in 2006. This downward trend in investment in education is not only a failure to support Irish children in a crucial aspect of their development; it is also folly in terms of Ireland's future economic well-being. For example, almost none of the recommendations of the Task Force on the Physical Sciences have been implemented.

We have now entered the era of the knowledge economy, in which a modern quality education is more important than ever. It is now more than a year since the Government made a commitment in the Programme for Government to "prioritise reductions in English, maths and Irish classes at second

level". To date there has been no action on this commitment. The commitment by the Government followed the publication of the ASTI's survey on third-year classes, which found that 65% of students are in classes of 25 to 30 on a regular basis, and 16% are in classes of 30 or more. Given that classroom teachers are engaged in education modernisation such as the integration of international students and the mainstreaming of students with special educational needs, the ASTI is extremely concerned that the Government is failing to prioritise this commitment.

The mainstreaming of pupils with special educational needs is the single biggest challenge facing schools today. While the ASTI welcomed the passing of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, the mainstreaming of students with special needs is about more than legislation. The Government has so far failed to put in place the key resources needed to ensure the effective mainstreaming. In October 2006, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the statutory body established under the EPSEN Act, identified the need for a special needs co-ordinator in second-level schools as a key step in the implementation of the Act. No action has been taken on this. What's more, some schools are finding that, due to the under-resourcing of the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS), leading to the strict application of quota arrangements, some students with learning difficulties may not be assessed. The NCSE estimates that more than 18% of students may have special educational needs. It is vital that all of these young people receive the educational support they are entitled to under legislation.



John White
ASTI General Secretary

Schools promoting dignity at work

The ASTI is working with second-level schools nationwide to foster workplaces that value respect for the person.

As part of an ongoing health and safety at work campaign, the ASTI is working with schools to foster workplaces that promote dignity at work. In recent months the ASTI has discussed with the school management bodies – the JMB, ACCS and IVEA – an initiative to promote dignity at work in schools. This initiative involves the distribution by the ASTI of the Health and Safety Authority's Dignity in the Workplace Charter to all second-level schools, so that ASTI members and school boards of management can jointly adopt the Charter and display it in their staffrooms. The Charter, which has been endorsed by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the employers' organisation IBEC, asks that workplace staff and management:

"Commit ourselves to working together to maintain a workplace environment that encourages and supports the right to dignity at work. All who work here are expected to respect the right of each individual to dignity in their working life. All will be treated equally and respected for their individuality and diversity.

Bullying in any form is not accepted by us and will not be tolerated. Our policies and procedures will underpin the principles and objectives of this Charter.

All individuals, whether directly employed or contracted by us, have a duty and a responsibility to uphold this Dignity at Work Charter.

Supervisors, managers and trade union representatives, where applicable in the workplace, have a specific responsibility to promote its provisions."

The importance of addressing dignity at work issues was underlined in a survey published by the Economic and Social Research Institute in 2007. The survey found that education, health and social work are among the sectors with the highest incidence of bullying (between 12 and 14%). The ASTI's own survey on bullying – carried out in 2007 – also found a high incidence of teachers reporting that they had been bullied during their teaching career. The survey found that reports of bullying were less common among teachers who taught in schools where a workplace bullying policy was in place. Significantly, schools with workplace bullying policies that had been drawn up in consultation with staff reported the lowest incidence of bullying.

While the great majority of schools have student disciplinary policies in place to deal with bullying of students, a much smaller number of schools have policies in place to deal with the bullying of teachers.

ASTI recommendations

To foster dignity at work, the ASTI recommends that:

- all schools put in place anti-bullying policies, these to be drafted in consultation with all staff and to be in accordance with Health and Safety Authority guidelines;
- school policies and procedures on workplace bullying to be made available to all teachers on appointment and brought to the attention of all staff on a regular basis;
- school policies and procedures for dealing with the bullying or harassment of teachers to be regularly reviewed and updated in the light of changing circumstances;
- schools' anti-workplace bullying and harassment policies to be included in or appended to each school's safety statement;
- appropriate training of a bullying 'contact person' on each staff to be provided; and,
- where schools fail to draft policies on workplace bullying, this to be brought to the attention of ASTI Head Office and appropriate action to be taken to ensure that policies are put in place.

The ASTI runs a training programme for ASTI safety representatives. Look out for further information in *Nuacht* and *ASTIR*.

Useful contacts:

ASTI Head Office:

Tel: 01-604 0160

Employee Assistance Service:

Tel: 1800 411 057



Pat King
ASTI Assistant General Secretary



Tackling bullying in schools

Teachers SEAN FALLON and MARY KENT describe an approach they have developed for tackling bullying among students.

Bullying takes place in various forms in every school. It takes place “throughout the school environment including the classroom, corridors, playgrounds, toilets and gyms” (Cool School Programme, 2000). It is very damaging to those who are targeted, even when it appears to be relatively harmless. It can undermine students, make their school lives miserable and cause serious deterioration in their academic performance. Bullying is a blight on any school and must be dealt with effectively so that the school can be a safe place for students.

Our anti-bullying campaign has a two-strand approach; one strand focuses on raising awareness about the nature and unacceptability of bullying, and the other focuses on responding to bullying incidents. Using these two strands, a culture of the ‘three Rs’ can be developed in schools, where bullying is Recognised, Rejected and Reported.

There is no ‘quick fix’ solution to bullying in schools. However, bullying can be minimised and in the process bullies can be reformed, bystanders can become more vigilant and supportive of targeted students, and the lives of targeted students can be improved. While this involves a significant amount of work for teachers, we believe that nothing teachers do is more important and worthwhile. We believe that once you try our tools as part of an anti-bullying campaign, and see the difference, you will never want your school to be without them in the future. Our tools are available to download from our website – www.antibullyingcampaign.ie.

A two-strand approach to bullying

Strand 1 – raising awareness about bullying

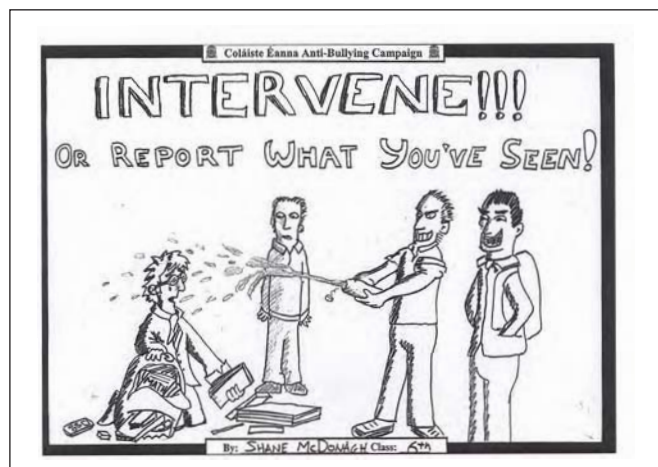
Many students, including those involved in bullying, do not recognise or understand bullying. Students need to become aware of what bullying is. Some students may need to be shown that some of their own behaviour is bullying. Students also need to be made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, though this may not be obvious at the time.

We use worksheets where students carry out exercises to help them understand the nature and unacceptability of bullying. We organise competitions (slogans, poems, very short stories, drama and drawing) on special sheets. These can be on specific anti-bullying themes, such as ‘Racism’ or ‘Witnesses to bullying!’ All students are invited to take part in at least two competitions per year. We offer cash prizes for winners, but other prizes such as phone credit could be considered. Winning entries and/or other good entries can then be typed (if necessary), laminated and put on display around the school. Drawings can be scanned and used in a PowerPoint slide show in a central part of the school so that all students can see all valid entries – students giving students a strong, repeated anti-bullying message.

Students need to be made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, though this may not be obvious at the time.

This gets a lot of attention from the students, who like to see their own entries on display as well as seeing all the other entries. We also show appropriate videos to class groups (e.g., the ‘Silent Witnesses’ DVD received by every secondary school from Trinity College). Students are then asked to discuss the film.

Using these methods, we enable students to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way. Outside of the context of particular bullying incidents the vast majority of well-informed students reject and avoid this kind of behaviour. There is, sadly, a minority of students who would still bully others if given the opportunity, and this must also be dealt with.



Each year, students at Coláiste Éanna write poems and short stories, and produce artwork, for a competition with an anti-bullying theme.



Pictured (from left): Seán Fallon and Mary Kent, Coláiste Éanna Anti-Bullying Team; Professor Mona O'Moore, Anti-Bullying Centre, Trinity College; and, Zanya Dahl, Artizan Creative Ltd, website designer.

Strand 2 – investigating bullying incidents

All instances of suspected bullying behaviour in school must be investigated with a view to establishing the facts, bringing the bullying to an end, and avoiding a backlash against any of the parties involved. Our website provides the tools you need for this.

We begin by avoiding blame and treating the bullying behaviour as a 'mistake'. We assure students that the intention is to talk to anyone involved in the bullying, to explain to them how harmful their behaviour is, and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured, there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. In return for keeping the promise the perpetrator is guaranteed confidentiality – neither the year head nor the school principal need be informed and everyone can 'live happily ever after'. However, if a student chooses to break the promise and continue the bullying behaviour, it can no longer be considered a 'mistake'. The relevant authorities are then informed and a sanction will and should consistently follow for 'breach of promise'. In our experience, this hardly ever happens.

All instances of suspected bullying behaviour in school must be investigated with a view to establishing the facts, bringing the bullying to an end, and avoiding a backlash against any of the parties involved.

Students seem to be more forthcoming with information about bullying in our system for two reasons. Firstly, they receive assurances about confidentiality and our 'no blame' approach, which allows them

to divulge information without getting themselves or others in trouble. Secondly, students sign and date any questionnaire they complete in an investigation. Because of this they know (and we sometimes remind them) that if a number of students know about bullying in their class group and they claim in a questionnaire that they 'don't know', they may have questions to answer as to whether they are covering something up.

Bullying is a blight on any school and must be dealt with effectively so that the school can be a safe place for students.

Resources

Our website offers second-level teachers and schools, free of charge, downloadable tools and a school-wide framework in which to use them for an anti-bullying campaign. We have been developing or adapting them for our use since 2004. We have been guided by well-known writers and researchers in this field, such as Dr Mona O'Moore (Ireland), Dr Dan Olweus (Norway) and Dr Ken Rigby (Australia). This development is ongoing. We offer what we have to colleagues, encouraged by the fact that by using them in our school the number of students being bullied was reduced by half in three years. We hope that other teachers who have useful anti-bullying tools/resources will share these with us and, through our website, with colleagues around Ireland. Then all our students can benefit.

Register with www.antibullyingcampaign.ie to find out more.

*Sean Fallon and Mary Kent
Teachers at Coláiste Éanna, Ballyroan, Dublin.*

Young Social Innovators

BRIGID FITZGERALD looks at the Young Social Innovators programme, and speaks to teachers and students involved at the recent exhibition in the RDS.



This year's Young Social Innovators of the Year were Coláiste Mhuire, Ennis, Co. Clare, with their project: 'Stomp Out Bullying.'

The Young Social Innovators (YSI) programme has been running on a national basis for four years, with over 20,000 students from across the country becoming involved over that time. Numbers have been growing each year, and this year over 5,500 students participated, many of them showcasing their projects at an exhibition held in the RDS in May.

Teachers as guides

The aim of the programme is to get students thinking about ways to improve society and to formulate projects that will have an impact. The students decide on issues they feel strongly about in areas such as the environment, human rights, integration, poverty, global issues, community concerns, and physical and mental wellbeing. Teachers participate as guides (the word 'guide' is used to move away from the notion of leader). They facilitate and enable the projects but it is the students who take the initiative and lead their own projects, and in doing so learn skills such as teamwork, problem solving and creativity. According to Ide ní She, a YSI teacher guide in Our Lady's College, Greenhills, Drogheda: "The students do the project work – that is the

whole point of YSI – but I have to be around to oversee the work and provide guidance. Initially, you may be cautious about giving more responsibility to the students but usually they thrive on it. I have been impressed by what the students can do for themselves when given the chance."

Active approach

YSI forms part of the developmental aspect of Transition Year education and explores society in an active manner. Most schools who participate allocate specific class periods to YSI each week. YSI offers support to teachers who want to become involved and holds in-service workshops where teachers are given guidance on getting the programme started in their school, and on carrying out and publicising projects. In terms of the work involved in YSI, Ide says: "If you have teachers who are interested in teaching YSI, it's not especially difficult to get started. I found the in-service quite useful and helpful for my planning. Really, you learn by doing. The first time you teach YSI you are on a learning curve and then in subsequent years you are more familiar with it!"

National showcase

The projects run over the course of the school year culminating with the national showcase in May. Students are also invited to participate in 'speak out' forums throughout the year where they can voice their views and ideas on issues of concern. The purpose of the YSI showcase is to celebrate and demonstrate the actions carried out by the students during the year. Speaking to the exhibitors at the RDS, it is clear that, not only are they excited about the time away from school, and the chance to mix with students from other schools, but they have a genuine enthusiasm for the projects in which they have been involved and the work they have done during the year. Teachers too are enthusiastic about the initiative. Ide says the experience offers variety and a change from the normal teaching role: "You are not really imparting information, rather you advise the students on how to research, what kind of action they might take and so on". She says YSI is unique and particularly worthwhile because "it is largely directed by students; they choose the social issue to investigate and they make the decisions on the direction the project takes. They link up with external partners so a lot of learning takes place outside the classroom. It is designed to get students thinking about problems and to show them that they can try to solve these problems". Kevin Barry, who has participated as a teacher guide in Midleton CBS, agrees: "It is completely different to normal class and very student-centred and team-based. The students learn to operate as a team and get a real sense of purpose". According to Kevin: "Teachers are very enthusiastic about the programme because it is justice in action; it gets to the core of why people become teachers – to inspire students to become better people. It is a holistic way of looking at education and gives teachers a challenge to make a real difference". Though it takes a lot of energy and commitment, Kevin believes the programme is an excellent challenge and recommends that any teacher with a sense of commitment to social justice should take part.

The purpose of the YSI showcase is to celebrate and demonstrate the actions carried out by the students during the year.

The projects

The variety and range of projects on show in the RDS in May demonstrated the hard work and creativity of the students. Serious issues, ranging from body image, suicide and gender issues, to international human rights, sexuality and animal welfare, are taken on and tackled in practical ways.

Integration

Guided by teacher Amanda Moten, a group of students from St Mary's Edenderry examined the issue of integration, and sought to gain a better understanding of how foreign national students feel as they join Irish schools. They also wanted to improve the relationship between foreign nationals and the school and community. They created a booklet with a list of useful services and organisations within the town, a map of the town and a list of useful websites. They held a cultural inclusion week to promote the project and involve the whole school

and community. The group also developed a curriculum module for use in Transition Year with a variety of activities that could be used to learn about different cultures, and to encourage students to develop teamwork, communications and organisational skills. Having received positive feedback on the booklets, the group feel they have made a difference: "We really enjoyed doing it and we definitely got more of an understanding of the situation for foreign children".

Youth centre

YSI hopes that projects will have a lasting impact and continuity in the community. Students at St Vincent's School, Dundalk, guided by teacher Maura Hennessey, carried on the work of last year's YSI group with their project, Children of the Apple Tree. Last year's project organised the donation of a space for a youth centre in the town. This year's group continued the work and took on the organisational matters of setting up the youth centre. The students felt that there was a lack of choice and facilities for young people in Dundalk, and they included a chill-out zone, a garden space, a performance space and a youth information centre. They also set up a soup kitchen in the space. The group's efforts were recognised by the AIB Better Ireland Programme, which awarded the project €10,000 in sponsorship in June.

The aim of the programme is to get students thinking about ways to improve society and to formulate projects that will have an impact.

Sudden cardiac death

Sinéad Mannion has been involved in YSI in her school, Moate Community School, for a number of years, and this year brought four projects to exhibit at the RDS. One particularly poignant project was 'The Shock of Your Life', which was inspired by the death of a student in the school from sudden cardiac death last year. The students raised awareness of the condition and raised funds for a defibrillator for the school community in Moate. The group also worked with the parents committee and organised talks by the Tullamore Ambulance Service and the Irish Heart Foundation.



Students from St Mary's Edenderry: Donna McInerney; Marissa Byrne; and, Miriam Murphy.

Homelessness

Students from Our Lady's College, Greenhills, Drogheda, carried out a project on homelessness. Their aims were to become more enlightened about the problem in the local area, to raise awareness of the issue and to fundraise for the local hostel. Ide ni She, the group's teacher guide, says the students decided to take on the issue of homelessness following class discussion. The vast majority of students felt it was one of the most important topics out there and were anxious to raise awareness of the issue. In their research the students learned that homelessness is wider than they first believed and were particularly struck by the issue of hidden homelessness.

Awareness of YSI

Students at Midleton CBS, guided by Kevin Barry, conducted a project called 'One YSI, One World', in which they tried to raise awareness of the work of YSI itself. They brought details of all the projects for the 2007/08 year together in one website and worked to promote these and the YSI programme in the media. The group settled on a topic while looking at last year's projects for inspiration. They were struck by the good work that had been done and decided to get the word out about the programme. The participants feel that they learned a lot from the project, both practical skills like website development, fundraising and public relations, and personal lessons like the importance of teamwork and commitment.

The elderly

Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont, explored the issue of ageism with particular reference to the elderly in their local community. Together with their teacher, Maura Gray, they devoted three periods a week to YSI under social education. Inspired by their own relationships with their grandparents, the students wanted to establish a link and bond between their generation and the elderly. According to the group, the title of the project – 'Fading Footprints Remain Lasting Footprints' –



John White, ASTI General Secretary, pictured with Breda Carolan, Maura Flanagan, and students from St Vincent's School, Dundalk.

"expresses the whole focus of our project; highlighting older people and the huge role they play in our lives as an important generation with so much to offer". The students talked to the local community and to the local active retirement group, and discussed issues in class. They organised a grandparent day in their school and helped to establish a helpline to provide a necessary contact for the elderly in relation to care and assistance. They also contacted local businesspeople, who agreed to volunteer their services free of charge for minor repairs via the helpline. The students say: "By carrying out this project, we feel we have made society a better place for the elderly in our locality".

ICT PARTNERSHIPS FOR SCHOOLS ACROSS EUROPE

eTwinning is a simple and straightforward way of finding a partner school in the rest of Europe to work together on a range of activities, using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).



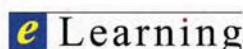
How do you get involved? 2 simple steps!

- Register your school's interest at www.etwinning.net
- Search for a partner school according to various criteria: country or region, age range, language and kinds of activities.

eTwinning Professional Development Workshops

Professional Development Workshops are aimed at teachers who want to learn more about eTwinning and develop their skills through European collaborations.

For further information on eTwinning please contact Léargas at 01 873 1411 or visit www.etwinning.net



Part-time? Non-permanent? Know Your Rights

ASTI Head Office
is organising a series of
meetings for part-time and
non-permanent teachers.

Pay

Part-time

Hours

Fixed-Term

Contracts

CIDs

VENUE	DATE	TIME OF MEETING
Tower Hotel, Tallaght, Dublin	Monday, 8th September 2008	7.30pm
Stillorgan Park Hotel, Dublin	Tuesday, 9th September 2008	7.30pm
Cavan Crystal Hotel, Cavan	Tuesday, 9th September 2008	7.30pm
Days Hotel, Waterford	Wednesday, 10th September 2008	7.30pm
The Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran, Donegal	Thursday, 11th September 2008	7.30pm
Talbot Hotel, Carlow	Monday, 15th September 2008	7.30pm
Knockranny Hotel, Westport	Tuesday, 16th September 2008	7.30pm
Radisson Airport Hotel, Dublin	Wednesday, 17th September 2008	7.30pm
South Court Hotel, Limerick	Monday, 22nd September 2008	7.30pm
Sheraton Hotel, Athlone	Wednesday, 24th September 2008	7.30pm
Silversprings Hotel, Cork	Monday, 29th September 2008	7.30pm
Days Hotel, Galway	Tuesday, 30th September 2008	7.30pm
Ballingarry House Hotel, Tralee	Monday, 6th October 2008	7.30pm

Whether you are an ASTI member or have yet to join the ASTI, you are invited to a **Know Your Rights** meeting. ASTI members should attend the meeting nearest to their home/school. ASTI travel expenses apply to ASTI members attending the meetings. For more information contact Emer Hynes. Email: ehynes@asti.ie or Tel: 01/6040171.

Starting out in teaching

Starting a new teaching job? ASTI offers some practical advice.

Starting any new job can be daunting – there are colleagues to meet, names to remember and temperamental photocopiers to figure out – but it can be especially daunting when you are embarking on your teaching career, with added burdens such as classroom management, student behaviour, and a confusing variety of contracts and salary issues to consider. *ASTIR* offers some practical advice from ASTI staff and experienced teachers.

A fixed-term contract will be awarded for concessionary hours, or where there is a specific reason for a temporary position, for example where you will be covering the hours of a teacher on leave.

Your post

The number of second-level teaching positions is directly linked to the number of pupils attending second-level schools. The current appointment ratio allocates one teacher for every 18 students in a school. The ASTI is campaigning for a reduction in this ratio in order to improve the quality of education and the number of teaching positions available.

The Department of Education and Science funds full-time permanent teachers who are appointed to in-quota positions based on the pupil-teacher appointment ratio. The Department will also pay for 'concessionary' teaching hours, which are extra teaching hours allowed depending on a school's individual needs. In certain circumstances, a school will pay directly for teaching hours from its own funds. The type of contract you are offered will depend on the reasons for the vacancy and the type of hours you will cover.

Concessionary hours will normally result in a fixed-term contract. Outside of concessionary hours posts, a fixed-term contract should only be given when the need for the teacher's service is genuinely a temporary one, for example where they are replacing a teacher on leave. Fixed-term teachers are entitled to the same working conditions as teachers appointed to permanent positions for the duration of their contract.

Your contract

It is important to make sure that you fully understand the nature of your employment. You are entitled to receive clear written information on the terms and conditions of your new job in the form of a letter of appointment, a written contract or a written statement. This should set out the nature and duration of your employment. It should clarify the type of contract under which you are employed, be it fixed-term or permanent, part-time or whole-time. It should clarify the number of hours per week that you are contracted to teach, the subjects and levels you will be teaching, the reason for the vacancy you are filling, and whether you will be paid by the school or by the Department of Education and Science. If this information has not been given to you, ask your principal to supply it in written form. Pat King, ASTI Assistant General Secretary, advises: "Remember to keep a copy of all documents, as they may be important subsequently. Take care to read your contract carefully, ask for clarification on any points you are unsure of, and seek advice from your school steward or ASTI Head Office before signing".

Generally, part-time teachers are given letters of appointment defining the period of their employment, the teaching duties to be undertaken, and salary and conditions to apply. A regular part-time teacher (RPT) is appointed where the need for part-time hours is viable for at least a year. A casual part-time teacher is appointed where there is a casual need for hours to be covered, for example when replacing a teacher on short-term sick leave.

A fixed-term contract will be awarded for concessionary hours, or where there is a specific reason for a temporary position, for example where you will be covering the hours of a teacher on leave. Where a teacher has been employed on four consecutive fixed-term contracts, s/he may be entitled to a contract of indefinite duration

(CID). A CID holder has the same entitlements as a permanent employee except for the fact that salary is based on the number of hours taught per week.

A teacher entering service for the first time may be given a permanent position. A probationary contract may be given to such teachers, but once the probationary period has been served, the teacher should receive a continuous contract.

Full information on contracts is available on www.asti.ie.

A teacher who is employed as an RPT is employed and paid for 12 months (August to July), and is paid at an hourly rate that is calculated by dividing the relevant salary scale point rate plus allowances by 735.

Your salary

Your salary will depend on your qualifications, years of service, number of hours, the period of your contract and the nature of your contract. A permanent full-time teacher is paid based on a 25-point incremental scale. The beginning point is point 3, which is currently €34,058. In addition to this basic salary, you will receive a degree allowance and HDip allowance.

A fixed-term employee's salary is based on a pro-rata fraction of the relevant point on the salary scale plus allowances, depending on how many hours per week they teach. Qualified casual part-time teachers are paid €48.39 for each hour of teaching. After 150 hours at the casual rate, the teacher is paid a personal non-casual hourly rate based on his or her qualifications and previous experience.

A teacher who is employed as an RPT is employed and paid for 12 months (August to July), and is paid at an hourly rate that is calculated by dividing the relevant salary scale point rate plus allowances by 735. Full details of salary scales and allowances are available on www.asti.ie.

Your school

As with any job, developing a good working relationship with colleagues is important. Pat King advises: "Don't be afraid to ask colleagues for advice: they were new to the job once too! If you run into difficulty, remember to ask for help sooner rather than later. Familiarise yourself with your school's procedures, disciplinary codes, school traditions, etc. The more comfortable you feel in your work environment, the more comfortable you will be in your classroom". It is important to develop a friendly and respectful relationship with students, but undue familiarity should be avoided and you are best advised to apply 'arm's length' professionalism in this relationship. You should avoid one-to-one situations with students where possible. The Teaching Council has published codes of professional conduct for teachers, which are available on www.teachingcouncil.ie and on the ASTI website.

"Preparation is crucial", says Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary. "Having materials prepared well in advance is absolutely essential to a good classroom experience. Without sufficient planning, your capacity to sustain the lesson, and the level of students' engagement, will be impaired. The NCCA has developed a range of resource materials for aspects of classroom teaching. It may also be worthwhile to examine Inspectorate reports on subject teaching in schools, which contain detailed analyses of current strengths and areas of improvement across all areas of teaching, school provision and planning." Bear the aim and content of each lesson in mind throughout. Don't try to cover too much material in one lesson and pitch the standard to suit the class. Try to involve the whole class and vary your approach.

Student behaviour is a concern for many new teachers. Pat Hurley, ASTI President and teacher at Midleton CBS, offers this advice: "It will help to start as you mean to go on and communicate your expectations clearly to the class. Be assertive and highlight good work and good conduct. Try not to become overwhelmed by 'bad days'. If you do experience bad behaviour, don't let it affect your morale or overcome your teaching. Make use of the school's disciplinary code and procedures – students need specific discipline guidelines and consequences. Keep records of serious misdemeanours and actions". The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) has issued guidelines for schools on codes of behaviour, which are available on www.newb.ie.

Here to help you

Your school staff will elect an ASTI school steward, who will represent the ASTI in your school. This person will be available to give you advice on professional and industrial relations matters should you need it.

If you would prefer to make direct contact with ASTI Head Office, staff are available to offer advice, information and representation. The ASTI has produced a number of information leaflets and a members' handbook, which may also be of use to you. These can be accessed on www.asti.ie.

Your opinion is valued by the ASTI and you can get involved in the union and air your views by attending ASTI meetings in your local school or local branch.

Vox pops: Advice for new teachers

Jennifer Gleeson teaches art in Presentation Secondary School, Warrenmount. She has been teaching full-time for five years.

Do you remember your first day teaching?

I don't really remember my first day, but I know that my first year was really busy and I was really tired for most of it! I definitely enjoyed the year but so much is new so it's important to keep on top of the work. I didn't start teaching until I was 26, so I had a career before that where I worked nine to five in an office. Teaching is very different, and it takes more out of you personally because you invest more of yourself in the work. Both of my parents are teachers, so I knew what I was getting into and I had no illusions. There is a great community spirit in schools; teachers look out for each other. The staff in my school are great, and everyone gets on really well.

Do you have any tips for new teachers?

Planning is so important, it helps to be really organised. It's good to keep in touch with people from your course to swap ideas and methodologies.

You have to recognise that you will make mistakes – everybody does – but you have to move on from them. What works with one class may not work with another so you have to develop your teaching and evolve with the job.

In terms of discipline, every school is different. It helps to be up on school policy and rules. More experienced staff are a great source of support and guidance. They can offer advice on problems you might be having. It's important to use this advice. You have to remember that whatever you experience has happened before and you can't take it to heart.

I would also advise you to sort out things like your notional service and additional voluntary pension contributions as soon as possible.

Helen Lambe has been teaching science, biology, chemistry and maths for three years in St Patrick's College, Gardiner's Hill, Cork.

Do you remember your first day teaching?

Yes. It was a rollercoaster of a day. I was extremely nervous the first morning; I was thinking of all the things that could go wrong. It was a first-year science class, and I remember walking into the classroom, telling myself to try to act confident – something I most definitely was not. The students were very well behaved and the time flew by. When the bell rang, the relief was enormous. I'd survived my first class and I was looking forward to going back into the classroom.

Do you have any tips for new teachers?

Be prepared for every class. Plan the order and how much time you want to spend on each part of the lesson. Have a set of rules for your classroom and make sure you enforce them. You do not need the students to be your friends, you need them to respect you and to have a good rapport with you.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2008-2009

THE ROLE OF THE YEAR HEAD – 2 x 2 Day Courses

Targeted At

Teachers who are interested in applying for the post of Year Head or who have recently been appointed to this post.

Objectives

- To provide a comprehensive overview of the work of the Year Head in the Pastoral Care system
- To present strategies for working with "at-risk" students and disciplinary problems
- To develop effective communication and administration skills

Areas To Be Addressed

Roles and responsibilities, developing relationships, conflict management, working with students, students at risk, record keeping and follow-up.

Having participated in Day 1, participants will have an input into the design of Day 2 to focus on issues of relevance in their schools.

01 Dublin: ASTI Head Office, Tuesday 30th September '08 and Thursday 15th January '09

02 Limerick: Limerick Education Centre, Tuesday 14th October '08 and Thursday 29th January '09

THE ROLE OF THE DEPUTY PRINCIPAL – 1x 2 Day Course

Targeted At

Teachers who are considering applying for the post of Deputy Principal.

Objectives

- To provide an overview of the role of Deputy Principal in the school leadership system.
- To provide an introduction to the duties typically attached to the post.
- To introduce teachers to core skills – timetabling, school discipline, management of effective teaching and learning, school development and planning.

Areas To Be Addressed

Leadership skills and styles, school policies, leading learning, time management, team building and conflict resolution, school timetable.

03 Dublin: ASTI Head Office, Thursday 22nd January '09 and Tuesday 24th February '09.

EFFECTIVE POLICIES FOR COUNTERING BULLYING – 1 x 2 Day Courses

Targeted At

Classroom teachers and teachers who have Pastoral Care duties.

Objectives

- To provide an understanding of bullying, its causes, and consequences
- To familiarise teachers with indications of bullying behaviour
- To familiarise teachers with contemporary forms of bullying – homophobic, racist or xenophobic, and e-bullying

Areas To Be Addressed

Types and effects of bullying, developing anti-bullying policies in the school, dealing with bullying in the classroom, raising students' awareness, response to e-bullying and supporting students.

04 Dublin: ASTI Head Office Day 1: Tuesday 11th November '08
Day 2: Thursday 27th November '08

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES TO TEACHING ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE – 2 x 2 Day Courses

Targeted At

Teachers who are teaching English as a second language and English language teachers.

Objectives

- To provide a model for whole-school approaches to teaching English as second language
- To provide training on supporting language acquisition skills across subject areas
- To provide training on using the English Language Portfolio teaching and learning resource

Areas To Be Addressed

Teaching English as second language, supporting students' language learning across the curriculum, group work with students, resources for supporting language acquisition skills.

05 Dublin: ASTI Head Office, Tuesday 21st October '08 and Tuesday 4th November '08

06 Limerick: Limerick Education Centre, Tuesday 7th October '08 and Thursday 23rd October '08

PLANNING FOR SUCCESSFUL RETIREMENT – 2 x 2 Day Courses

Targeted At

Teachers who are considering retirement and those who have recently retired from teaching.

Objectives

- To identify strategies for dealing with changes in relationships, money, time and identity
- To provide advice on good management in relation to effective management of pensions, taxation and investments
- To raise awareness in relation to maintaining physical and mental health

Areas To Be Addressed

Relationships in the home, health, budgeting, learning opportunities, making a will, making the most of time, social welfare, supports for active retirement

Dublin course ASTI Head Office. Limerick Course, Limerick Education Centre.

07 Limerick: Limerick Education Centre, Tuesday 27th January '09 and Tuesday 24th February '09

08 Dublin: ASTI Head Office, Tuesday 3rd February '09 and Tuesday 3rd March '09

Courses open to all ASTI members.

Register by phone on 01 6040170 or by email with the ASTI Inservice Section on inservice@asti.ie

Places will be allocated on a "first-come, first-served" basis.

Participants are required to attend seminars in their nearest venue.

Education in Poland

NIAMH NESTOR, who lived and taught in Poland for five years, provides some insights into the Polish education system to help second-level teachers who are teaching Polish students.



When 10 new member states acceded to the European Union on May 1, 2004, Poland was one of the countries that saw huge numbers of migrants leave their homeland in search of a better career, salary and life abroad for themselves and their families. The migrants, for the most part, are young and well educated, and many of them have children of school-going age. But just what should Irish teachers know about Poland and its educational system in order to help them understand better what these children have experienced, so that they can help Polish students to settle into the Irish school system?

Primary school

Children in Poland do not start primary school until they are seven. Before that age, however, there are many options open to parents to start schooling their children. From the age of three, children can be enrolled in a crèche or a pre-school; however, this is not obligatory. What has been obligatory since 2004 is that at the age of six, children must attend *zerówka* ('the zero class') – a preparatory year during which children learn how to function in a classroom setting. They learn how to co-operate through play, they develop their concentration skills, and they do the groundwork that will enable them to tackle the skills of reading and writing during their first year in primary school. At seven then, they are ready and fully equipped to join the mainstream school system. Pupils spend six years in primary school (until they are approximately 13).

Marking

Something noteworthy about the primary level system in Poland, and indeed about the educational system there in general, is that there is a very strong emphasis on testing and marking. Even from a young age, children are fully aware that the mark, as the end aim for a piece of work, is what really counts. (You might hear them ask about the 'note' for a piece of work. This is a mistranslation of the Polish word *nota*, which means 'mark' or 'grade'.) Of the young children I taught, I found that giving 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent' as comments for work was often met with the enquiry as to what that translated into in mark terms: did I mean a 5? Or a 6? The following is a rough guide to the Polish marking system and how it corresponds to the Irish system:

6	(= A++) (a really excellent mark)
5+	(= A+) (a little less excellent than a 6)
5	(= A)
5-	(= A-)
4+	(= B+)
4	(= B)
4-	(= B-)
3+	(= C+)
3	(= C)
3-	(= C-)
2+	(= D+)
2	(= D)
2-	(= D-)
1	(= E/F)

Polish parents may enquire about marks or grades for their children's work and the above breakdown may help to put our system into a context they can understand. Sometimes these marks are used to grade homework, as well as class tests or behaviour. If a child behaves badly, he or she may receive '1' for that day's class. For Polish teachers, marking is one of the first lines of defence in the discipline battle. The threat of '1' before an impending parent-teacher meeting is usually quite effective!

Second level: *Gimnazjum*

The current structure of the educational system in Poland is relatively new. Until 1999, pupils spent eight years in primary school and four years in secondary school. Now, pupils spend six years in primary school, three years in *gimnazjum* (lower secondary school) and three years in an upper secondary school (*szkoła średnia*), such as a *liceum*. For many Polish pupils, the six years spent in second-level education is an intense and demanding time. The subject load is heavy, and the emphasis on marking and testing is greater than ever. At the end of three years in *gimnazjum*, pupils have to sit a 'competency test' – something akin to our Junior Cert,

In case you need some Polish in the classroom:

Dzień dobry [*dzen doh-brih*] = Hello.

Cześć [*chesh-ch*] = Hi.

Jak się masz? [*yak sheh mash*] = How are you?

Dobrze, dziękuję [*dobb-zeh, dzeng-kooyay*] = Good, thank you.

Praca domowa [*pra-tsa do-moh-va*] = Homework.

Co robisz? [*tso roh-beesh*] = What are you doing?

Rozumiesz? [*roh-zoo-mee-esh*] = Do you understand?

(Nie) rozumiem [*nyeh roh-zoo-mee-yem*] = I (don't) understand.

Łatwy [*wath-veh*] = Easy.

Trudny [*throod-ny*] = Difficult.

Tak [*thak*] = Yes.

Nie [*nyeh*] = No.

Do widzenia [*do veed-zeh-nya*] = Goodbye.

except that the test comes in two parts. The first part deals with the humanities: Polish, history, and cultural and artistic knowledge. The second part is science-oriented: biology, chemistry, physics and astronomy, geography, and mathematics. From the academic year 2008/2009, a third part testing foreign languages will be added to the exam.

The system at this point gets a little complicated. To understand it better, a comparison could be made to the points system Irish pupils go through after Leaving Cert. In Poland, a points system comes into play after their *gimnazjum* competency test (as well as after their *liceum* final exam).

After *gimnazjum*, the more points you have, the better the *liceum* you will attend. A ranking of *licea* is published yearly in the national newspapers.

This ranking is based primarily on the results of *Matura* (the equivalent of our Leaving Cert) and the individual achievements of pupils in each school. The ranking is a source of prestige for schools but also a source of pressure for principals, teachers and pupils to maintain their ranked position on a year-by-year basis.

Something noteworthy about the primary level system in Poland, and indeed about the educational system there in general, is that there is a very strong emphasis on testing and marking.

For those wishing to attend the better-ranked *licea*, competition and pressure for points after the *gimnazjum* competency test is generally fierce. The test itself counts for the highest number of points, but points can also be awarded for, among other things, sporting and artistic achievements, class marks at the end of the final year at *gimnazjum*, and achievement at competitions.

The phenomenon of 'the competition' (*konkurs*) is not something we are entirely familiar with in Irish schools but is an extra dimension to the Polish system. Pupils are encouraged to deepen their knowledge, widen their experience base and, of course, gain extra points by attending inter-school competitions. These may be of an academic, sporting, or artistic nature and they start as early as primary school, continuing right through secondary school.

Liceum

After this intense time of competition and points counting in *gimnazjum*, pupils move on to an upper secondary school, such as a *liceum*. There are different types of upper secondary school, the most typical being the traditional structure that we are used to in Ireland, but pupils can also

choose to attend a vocational school, a technical school, a music school or an art school (in the case of the final two, pupils would normally have already attended a music/art primary school and *gymnazjum*). In the more traditional structure, the pupils take a range of subjects – some familiar to Irish students and some not. Polish, of course, is compulsory, as is at least one foreign language, with a great deal of pupils taking English or German. Less familiar subjects include sociology and politics (WOS), as well as health and safety (*Przysposobienie Obronne*), and preparation for family life (*Przygotowanie do życia w rodzinie*).

PE and religion

PE and religion are compulsory for all pupils. When it comes to religion, pupils can choose between a traditional religion class and an ethics class. Neither type of class is subject to examination and, if a pupil does not wish to attend, he/she can withdraw from the class, but only with the written consent of his/her parents (this applies until the pupil is 18). When pupils start at *liceum*, they are expected to choose a class 'profile', slotting themselves into the type of class grouping most suitable for their future studies or career. There are many different types of profile, for example maths, journalism, or the humanities. A pupil from a maths profile class would spend the bulk of his or her time on maths and related subject areas, but would also have to attend classes in the compulsory subjects. After three years in upper secondary school, pupils sit their *Matura* exam. Exams must be sat in Polish and a foreign language (written and oral). After that, it is compulsory to sit a written exam in one other subject. All exams (except Polish, which is one level for all) can be taken at two levels – lower or higher – and the pass mark is 30%. Like the Irish Leaving Cert, getting into third-level education involves a points system. This system is quite recent and, until a few years ago, universities demanded that prospective students sit an entrance exam as well as their *Matura* exam. This has been all but done away with now, making the system much fairer but no less competitive.

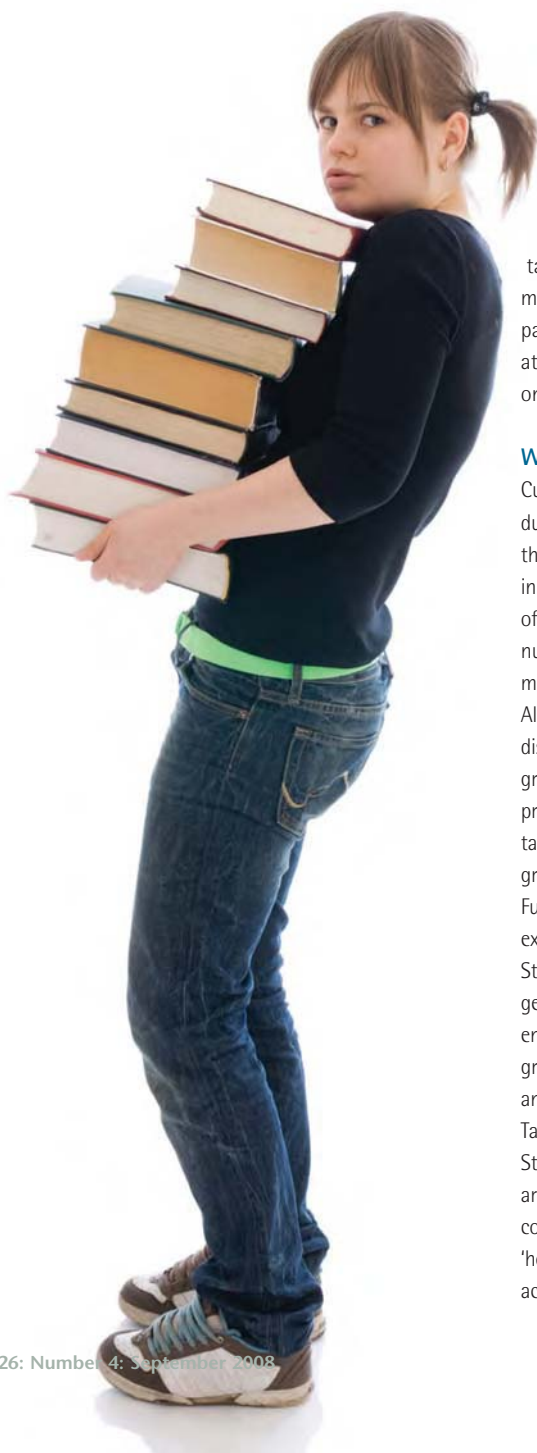


Niamh Nestor

Niamh Nestor spent five years teaching in Poland. She is currently researching a PhD in Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition at UCD. She is working on a joint TCD/UCD IRCHSS-funded project, which is investigating the Polish community living in Ireland. Her research project examines English language acquisition and Polish language maintenance among Polish children in rural and urban areas in Ireland.

Grinds and Leaving Certificate performance

EMER SMYTH outlines fascinating results from recent ESRI research on students who take grinds.



The topic of grinds has been given a lot of media attention in recent years. However, this debate has taken place in the absence of evidence on the take-up of grinds and their impact on exam performance. Recent ESRI research, shortly to be published in the *Oxford Review of Education*, sheds light on the kinds of students who take grinds and how they fare academically. This article summarises the main findings of that research, focusing on students who take grinds on a part-time basis while attending regular schools. It relates both to those attending 'grind schools' for group classes and those taking grinds on a one-to-one basis.

Who takes grinds?

Currently, almost half (45%) of students take part-time grinds at some point during their Leaving Certificate year. This has grown significantly from one-third of Leaving Certificate students in the early 1990s, reflecting the increase in disposable family income resulting from the Celtic Tiger and the freeing up of money by the abolition of third-level fees. Over the same period, increasing numbers of young people have been going on to higher education, so they may have been more likely to take grinds as a means to achieve this end. Although the numbers have grown, students taking grinds remain a distinctive group in many respects. Social background is a strong predictor of grinds take-up. The majority of those whose parents work in higher professional occupations, and whose parents have third-level qualifications, take grinds. In contrast, only a minority of their working-class peers take grinds. Girls are more likely to take grinds than boys from similar backgrounds. Furthermore, students taking the Leaving Certificate Applied programme are extremely unlikely to take grinds.

Students who go on to take grinds during their Leaving Certificate year have generally had a positive experience of the schooling process and are more engaged academically. They have already achieved higher Junior Certificate grades than non-participants, they spend more time on homework and study, and they hold higher aspirations for their future.

Taking grinds reflects not only individual but also school characteristics. Students who attend schools with a stronger orientation to higher education are more likely to take grinds, all else being equal. In other words, where college is viewed as the natural route for all students in a school, this 'hothouse effect' may lead students to take grinds as a way of coping with academic pressure.

What difference does it make?

But do grinds make a difference to how students get on in their exams? We have found that certain groups of students are more likely to take grinds than others and these are precisely the groups of students who tend to achieve higher grades. We know from previous research that female students, middle-class students, those who have received higher Junior Certificate grades, those with higher aspirations, and those who spend more time studying tend to achieve higher Leaving Certificate grades than other students. The group of students who take grinds is therefore made up of students who do well academically anyway. This makes it hard to assess whether grinds make a difference. However, our research (which draws on the regular national survey of school leavers and on a national survey of schools) is based on very detailed information on the characteristics of students, both those taking grinds and those not taking grinds. This means that we can use statistical modelling techniques to accurately compare 'like with like' in looking at the potential impact of grinds.

No advantage

Overall, students who take grinds tend to achieve higher 'raw' grades in the Leaving Certificate than those who do not. However, when we take account of the differences between grind participants and non-participants in background, aspirations and engagement in study, we find no average net difference in Leaving Certificate grades between the two groups. In other words, taking grinds is not associated with a boost in performance for the students concerned.

The research

This is a summary of 'Buying your way into college? Private tuition and the transition to higher education in Ireland', to be published shortly in the *Oxford Review of Education*. An advance electronic copy of the paper is available for subscribers or for purchase through: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/1344770269-56068463/title~content=g795255612~db=jour>.

Why take grinds?

Why then do students take grinds if they do not in fact secure them an advantage? There are a number of possible explanations. It may be hard for students and their parents to assess the real impact of private tuition. If a student takes grinds and does well in her maths exam, for example, she may attribute her success to those grinds, rather than to the teaching in her regular maths class or to her own hard work. Earlier ESRI research has shown relatively high stress levels among Leaving Certificate students, especially girls. Students may therefore seek out grinds because they feel under pressure or are worried about how they will do in the exams. This perceived need to take grinds may be heightened where students are attending schools where most of their peers are focused on going to college and therefore taking grinds.

In conclusion, grinds have become an increasing feature of the Leaving Certificate landscape. Ireland is not alone in this experience, with private tuition a long-established tradition in many South East Asian countries and a growing phenomenon in countries such as Greece and Turkey, all of which have educational systems with competitive entry to higher education. We have seen that, in the Irish case, grinds do not significantly enhance student grades but involve a significant investment of time on the part of students and money on the part of parents. The question remains open as to whether grinds may have other effects on students, such as on the way they learn, how they approach exams and their choices in later life.



*Emer Smyth
Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)*

Dr Emer Smyth is a Senior Research Officer at the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin. Her research interests centre on education and school to work transitions. She is currently leading a longitudinal study of second-level students.

Challenges for the year head

ELIZABETH FLANAGAN, who has been delivering the ASTI's programme 'The Role of the Year Head' for the last 10 years, reflects on the key challenges facing participants in the programme.

What is a year head?

A year head is a teacher with responsibility for promoting all aspects of student welfare and well-being in a particular year. The year head forms part of the school's pastoral care team. The work of the year head can vary from year to year and from school to school, but can include activities such as supporting students at risk, meeting with parents and monitoring student behaviour issues.

The academic year 2008-2009 marks the tenth year of the provision of the two-day ASTI seminar on 'The Role of the Year Head'. In that period, we have worked with up to 800 year heads at various stages in their careers and explored topics varying from pastoral care to personal well-being, and from interpersonal skills to role definition.

The two-day programme provided by ASTI is focused very clearly on the needs of the specific cohort each year. On day one, generic issues such as 'Pastoral Care and the Year Head', 'Interpersonal Skills' and 'The Year Head in the Context of the Whole School' are examined. Giving participants a chance to exchange ideas and to work on problem-solving scenarios is a key feature of the programme. The content for day two is decided in consultation with the participants, and arises from their perceived needs at a specific point in time. This information is elicited at the end of day one. In this way, participants have ownership of a programme that is tailored to suit their needs.

Reflecting on delivering this programme over the last ten years, certain issues are evident:

- the role of the year head is very much an interpersonal one, interacting not only with pupils but with parents, colleagues and senior management in various scenarios. Many year heads assume the role without any training in specific interpersonal skills, and there is an expressed need for this;
- there are certain areas of the year head's role that are common to most schools, but apart from that, there is very broad diversity in the realisation of the role. It is not standardised across the system;
- the communication of the year head's role internally within the school is seen by year heads as a very important issue, so that all members of the school community know where the boundaries are;
- the perceived conflict between the demands of being a subject teacher and being a year head gives rise to the need for time management skills training and 'time to manage';

- the need to accentuate the positive: because year heads are central to the implementation of the code of behaviour in many schools, they can sometimes feel that they are spending 90% of their time on a very small percentage of students who monopolise their time in a less than positive manner. Many year heads are very anxious to seek out ways, in the context of the whole school, to accentuate the positive that is inherent in the vast majority of students. Strategies to facilitate this are explored in detail; and,
- the opportunity to share good practice between year heads from different schools is an important feature of the programme.

For me, as facilitator, it has been a hugely positive experience and I am really looking forward to meeting the next cohort of year heads in Dublin and Limerick this coming autumn.

Observations from some of last year's participants:

Great opportunity to hear what goes on in other schools.
[October 2007]

Will certainly recommend this course to my ASTI year head colleagues.
[October 2007]

Overall found the two days very useful, as they addressed a lot of the practical issues that we encounter daily.
[January 2008]

Very informative and supportive.
[January 2008]



*Elizabeth Flanagan,
Principal of Scoil Carmel in Limerick*

Elizabeth Flanagan spent 18 years in the role of year head at St Aidan's Community College in Cork. She is currently seconded to the Leadership Development for Schools programme, and is involved in various areas of educational research. Her particular areas of interest are the role of the year head and the teaching of Irish at second level.

Interview with a year head



SUSIE HALL is a year head at Malahide Community School in Dublin.

What aspects of your role as year head do you enjoy most?

It varies from school to school, but in my school a year head looks after a particular group from first year through to sixth year. That gives you a wonderful chance to get to know the students and their families. You have a very different relationship with the students in your year group; you live through difficulties with them.

A year head is in charge of everything for that year – discipline, interaction with parents and academic issues. I find that teenagers are very tolerant in the main – they understand that my job is to enforce rules and they accept that. Students come to you with worries and problems, and it's a great privilege to have their trust. The role is very rewarding; I really enjoy it and it is marvellous to see the group graduate as confident young people at the end of your time with them.

What are some of the challenges you face in the role?

The role is hugely time consuming and the time allocated is not sufficient, which is very frustrating. I have an 18-hour timetable, so I have four hours allocated to my work as a year head each week. I look after 230 students, so the work goes far above those four hours. There are occasions where a student comes to me and I have to tell them to come back another time because I have a class. I often have to deal with outside agencies, parents and other teachers, and it is very sensitive work, so it deserves time. I am very enthusiastic about the role, but it is not fair to the students when it is not resourced properly. I have never met a parent who didn't want the best for their child, and the vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school. But there have been major changes in parental styles since I started as year head. Parents are much less sure of their role and are undermined by political correctness. The style of interaction between families has eroded and young people often don't have the same support system in place. Parents are very reluctant to allow a child to suffer or be punished, and this can be disempowering for the students. Part of growing up is learning that you have control of what happens in your life and you must take responsibility for your choices and actions. We use community service in our school: the idea is that if you take time from the school community through disruptive behaviour, you owe it back.



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Iarthuaisceart Thír Chonaill

Ba í seo ceann de na craobhacha a ba lú de Chumann Meánmhúinteoirí Éireann nuair a bunaíodh í ag deireadh na seachtóidí i 1979 le freastáil ar mhúinteoirí i dtrí phobalscoil úr i gCloich Cheann Fhaola, Gaoth Dobhair agus na Rosa. Tháinig baill eile ó Scoil Chuimsitheach na nGleanntach agus ó Choláiste Loreto i mBaile na nGallóglach. I measc na mball bhí Tomás Mac Phroinsiais a raibh aithne air in CMÉ cheana féin mar bhall de choiste gníomha agus buanchoiste Chumann Meánmhúinteoirí Éireann. Thug sin taithí chun na craoibhe agus cuireadh ar aghaidh chuig an lárchoiste é thar cheann na craoibhe.

Nuair a mhéadaigh ballraíocht na craoibhe go leor bhí lúcháir orainn go raibh cead againn an dara ionadaí againn a chur chuig an choiste. Bhí ionadaíocht ag na trí pobalscoileanna ar bhainistíocht Ionad Múinteoirí Ghort A' Choirce a bunaíodh i 1977 le freastáil ar riachtanaisí na Gaeltachta sa cheantar go h-áirithe agus thagadh múinteoirí na craoibhe le chéile chun plé agus staidéar a dhéanamh ar a gcuid ábhair agus ar na ceisteanna a bhain le freastáil ar na daltaí le réimse cumais éagsúil a bhí ag teacht chuig a scoileanna. D'fhág sin léar múinteoirí le taithí ar chúrsaí curaclam réidh agus cíocrach le dul chun tosaigh ar choistí an Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclam agus Measúnú nuair a tháinig siad i bhfeidhm. Rinne múinteoirí ón chraobh seo ionadaíocht thar cheann CMÉ in ábhair mar eolaíocht, Gaeilge, matamataic, nua-theangacha, grafaigh theicniúla, agus SPHE. Tá ball eile Éilís Ní Chaochlaoidh ina cathaoirleach ar Eagras na Múinteoirí Gairmthreorach fé láthair. Sin cuid mhór oibre agus tionchair i bhforbairt ghairmiúil múinteoirí ón chraobh.

Bíonn sé nó seacht gcrúinní de ghnáth sa bhliain. Bíonn ar a laghad duine as seisear den bhallraíocht i láthair, suas le fiche in amanna. Ag an chéad chruinniú i mí Meán Fómhair socraítear am agus láthair na gcrúinnithe don bhliain. Le roinnt mhaith blianta anois bíonn siad ag



Tomás Mac Phroinsiais, Iarthuaisceart Thír Chonaill.

5.30 san iarnóin ar an Mháirt in Ostán Radharc na Mara ar an Bhun Beag ionas gur féidir le na baill teacht chuig an chruinniú ar a mbealach abhaile óna gcuid oibre agus bheith sa bhaile in am trátha. Mar a gcéanna nuair a bhíonn vóta náisiúnta bíimid bródúil go gcaitheann suas le 80% de na baill vóta mar socraítear am agus láthair cóngarach do scoileanna na mball. Tá an t-ádh linn go bhfuil oifigí na craoibhe toilteanach an saothar breise seo a ghlacadh le freastáil ar na baill. Is mór linn fosta go dtagann an t-ionadaí réigiúnach chuig ár gcrúinnithe agus fríd sin go dtugtar ár dtuairimí go dtí láthair na gcinnithe.

Cúis bhróid dúinn go ndeachaigh Tomás Mac Phroinsiais ar aghaidh as an chraobh seo le bheith ina uachtarán ar CMÉ in 1995-'96 agus fosta an t-aitheantas a tugadh dó ag Comhdháil Bhliantúil na bliana seo le ballraíocht saoil in CMÉ.

Ag deireadh mí Bealtaine bhí an dara ócáid cheiliúrtha le trí bliana againn do mhúinteoirí a d'éirigh as an mhúinteoireacht. Seachtar ar bronnadh cuach de Ghloine Ghleann Bheatha orthu, ina measc príomhoide agus dhá phríomhoide tánaisteach. Táimid buíoch as an tseirbhís a thug siad ina scoileanna agus a mballraíocht ghníomhach sa chraobh. Go raibh blianta aoibhnis acu! Is mór linn go dtáinig Rúnaí Oinigh agus Uachtarán tofa CMÉ chuig an cheiliúradh chun an bhronnadh a dhéanamh.

Bíonn plé ag na cruinnithe ar an-chuid gnoithí gairmiúla. Le bliain mionchigiltí faoi choinníollacha oidí páirtaimsire, e.g., cúis iocáíocht pro rata maoirseachta; easpa tacaíochta oiliúna agus acmhainní do chlár staidéir nua; cóiríocht do dhaltaí faoi bhac sa rang agus easpa oiliúna ar na múinteoirí ranga sna réimsí éagsúla bac; cáilíochtaí agus taithí chúil i gcóir poist freagrachta; tacaíocht do mhúinteoirí mar mhaor scoile agus mar ionadaithe ar bhoird bainistíochta. Tá muid ag súil le bliain ghníomhach eile 2008-2009.

The school librarian

Former English and French teacher DYPNA KIERNAN's passion for reading led to her decision to join the Junior Certificate School Programme Library Project as a full-time school librarian.

How did you become a school librarian?

I was a teacher of English and over the years I noticed a decline in students' reading ages. I think there are numerous reasons for this. Books have to compete with computers and TV. There are also factors such as illness and social deprivation. Added to that there are more students with special educational needs in mainstream schools, which I welcome, and their needs can include literacy needs. Literacy has an impact across the curriculum and if literacy levels are low, students will find school a struggle.

As a classroom teacher I wanted a more focused way to target the individual student's literacy needs. I have always believed that books can transform lives. Now that we're in the 'information age', young people must have access to books if they are to be successful. So I decided to do a diploma in information and library studies. There was a module on school libraries and this, together with my discovery of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) Library Project, which aims to help improve literacy levels, seemed to be the answer to a lot of the difficulties around literacy. I took up the position of full-time school librarian at CBS James's St, Dublin, last year.

What work have you been involved in as a school librarian?

This school already had a library, but not a full-time librarian. My first task was to refurbish the library, to make it an inviting place for students. So, in consultation with the whole school community, we redesigned it. The funding from the Library Project meant that I could buy comfortable seating and up-to-date resources. I was also able to use the expertise of the librarians in the other ten JCSP libraries. The Project facilitates a great network, which meets regularly and is a wonderful support.

We've also hosted a number of activities. We started with a presentation by Animal Magic – a Limerick-based group that brought all kinds of exotic animals to the school. We did Word Millionaire, where students count the number of words they've read and if they reach one million they get an award. One of the most exciting initiatives was DEAR – Drop Everything and Read. For one week, at a particular time each day, everyone – students, teaching staff, caretaker, office staff and the principal – had to drop everything and read. Even visitors were handed a book or newspaper. We've also had a number of non-literacy based initiatives as well, such as bodhrán classes, which the students loved.

CBS James's St – best reads for 2008

The Guinness Book of Records

Moments

by Cristiano Ronaldo

Steven Gerrard – My Story

by Steven Gerrard

50x50: 50 Cent in His Own Words

by 50 Cent

Tupac: Resurrection

by Jacob Hoye



Dympna Kiernan in the library at CBS James's St.

What has it been like to leave the classroom and become a school librarian?

It's been really stimulating. For a librarian one day is never the same as the other so you have to be ready to adapt. That can be both rewarding and challenging. The relationship with students is less formal, and the work is more solitary in a sense. However, it's not at all daunting because, as well as support from the school staff, I have backup from the other librarians in the Library Project, from the Senior Project Librarian, and the whole JCSP Team.

What's the greatest challenge for you?

I'm always searching for the best books for the students. Someone once said there is no such thing as the reluctant reader; it's just that adults haven't found the right book for him. I've made this my mission!

What are the most popular books for 2008 at CBS James's St?

The students here love sport, and the top choice is *Moments*, by Ronaldo. Music is important too, and *Tupac Resurrection* and *50x50: 50 Cent In His Own Words* are always in demand. When it comes to fiction, the students are keen on tie-ins with film, so I'm expecting a run on *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (Selznick) when the film is released.

The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) Library Initiative was set up in 2001 to provide JCSP schools with modern, professionally staffed libraries. The libraries are designed specifically to meet the needs of JCSP students while working within a whole school approach to literacy. Elements of the libraries include books and learning materials with appropriate reading ages, the latest IT resources, bright and appealing décor and suitable furniture to facilitate quiet reading time and workshop/project work.



Noticeboard

Finance seminar

Cornmarket Financial Services is holding a Midas Smart Money Conference on Thursday October 23, 2008, from 6.00pm-9.30pm in Croke Park. The theme of the conference is 'Healthy, Wealthy and Wise' and, among an array of speakers, the main event will see two of Ireland's top economists provide insight into their predictions for the future of the Irish economy. There will also be stands on the night to provide you with tips on how to make your finances work harder for you. For more information, contact Breda O' Driscoll, Tel. 01-408 4116, or Email: breda.odriscoll@cornmarket.ie.

English language resource

A new web-based resource for learning and teaching English to newcomer students is available and being promoted by Roscommon Partnership. It was developed as a flexible approach to assist in the integration of newcomer students. It is suitable for use by individuals and in the classroom, or can be used as part of an approach that blends the two. The project is being piloted and used by Roscommon VEC in adult English courses, in the local community college, and in primary schools in Roscommon. Resources can be accessed at www.cfl.se/safir.

Euro competition

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Euro currency in 2009, the EU's Economic and Monetary Union has launched an online poster competition for students aged 10 to 14. Schools and teachers can register on www.eurocompetition.net and teachers can upload students' entries until December 31. The entries will be available to view on the website and a jury will select 16 national winners and an overall winner.

Online masters programme

The Centre for Co-operative Studies, University College Cork, is running a Masters Programme in Co-operative and Social Enterprise. The course is delivered online and may be of interest to teachers. For more information, Tel: 021-490 2570, or Email: ecs@ucc.ie.

ICT for Latin, Ancient Greek and classical studies

A course to help teachers integrate ICT into their teaching of Latin, Ancient Greek and classical studies will be run from July 19 to 26, 2009, in Slovenia. Run as part of the Classics and ICT Resource Course for Europe (CIRCE), the course is fully funded, with funds dispensed through Léargas. Visit www.circe.be for more information.

Classifieds

The finest laminated maps for your classroom wall are available from World Maps in Athy, Co Kildare. Contact Vera on 059-8632166 or via email at worldmaps@eircom.net. See samples on www.wall-maps.net.

OutReach Moldova

OutReach Moldova, an Irish-registered charity, is looking for volunteers to help provide care, love and attention to 350 girls living in difficult conditions in a children's orphanage in Moldova in Eastern Europe. No specific skills are required; all the charity needs are two weeks of your time during the months from May to October 2009. Visit <http://www.outreachmoldova.org> to find out more, or contact OutReach Moldova, PO Box 8039, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Tel: 01-275 1842, or Email: moldova@ireland.com.

Employment relations course

The National College of Ireland is running a part-time certificate course in 'Employment Relations, Law and Practice'. The course offers a comprehensive introduction to the legal framework underpinning effective HR policies and surrounding employment relationships. It may be of interest to school principals or deputy principals. The course can be delivered in many different ways to suit specific groups of students and the next start date is January 2009. For more information visit www.ncirl.ie.

French through Irish

A Junior Cert textbook for teaching French through Irish has been launched. *On y va* was written by teachers and uses Irish grammar as a reference point for learning French grammar. The textbook for first year is currently available and the follow-up text for second and third years will be available in 2009. For further information visit www.authentik.com, Email: info@authentik.ie or Tel: 1800 208 300.

Heart health

This year's Irish Heart Week runs from September 22 to 28. The focus is on blood pressure and keeping it at a healthy level. Promotional materials to support the campaign are available free by contacting Catherine Sexton on 01-668 5001 or by emailing heartweek@irishheart.ie. World Heart Day falls on Sunday, October 5, and the Irish Heart Foundation is asking communities and workplaces to get involved by organising a walk. Walks can be organised at any time during the week before or after World Heart Day and can be any size. If you are interested in getting involved, you can register online at www.irishheart.ie/whd.

Awards for Services to Children and Young People

The Children Act's Advisory Board's 'Awards for Services to Children and Young People' was established in 2007 to recognise the work and contribution made by service providers to children and young people nationally. The 2009 competition is now open and closing date for entries is October 31, 2008. The awards ceremony will be held in Croke Park in Dublin on February 19, 2009. Visit www.caab.ie for further information, or contact Rose Sweeney, Tel: 01 672 4100, or Email: rose.sweeney@caab.ie.

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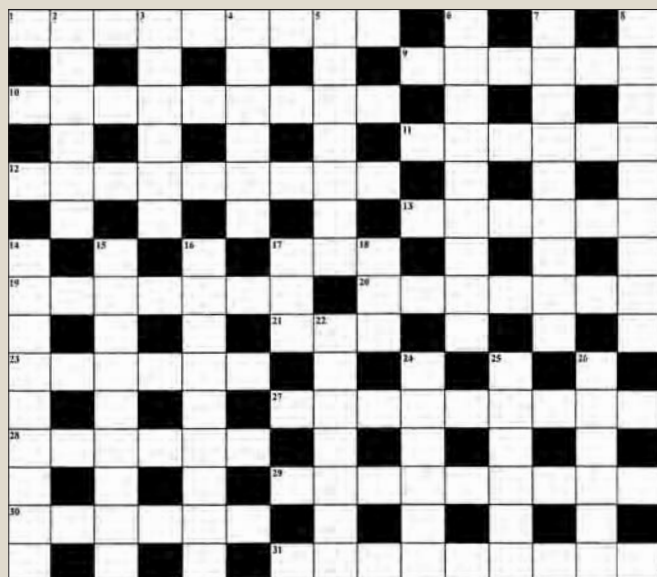
Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: **Astir Crossword No. 0804, Think Media,
The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.**
To arrive by: **Friday, October 24, 2008.**



CLUES ACROSS:

- 1 Illuminates a small area (9)
- 9 Nonchalant (6)
- 10 Type of expression in which only numbers, letters, and arithmetic operations are contained (9)
- 11 A maths respiratory disease! (6)
- 12 Teach sumo on the upper lip! (9)
- 13 Ripe as the shrub astilbe (6)
- 17 Does she provide health and personal social services for everyone? (1.1.1.)
- 19 One of the original Three Tenors (7)
- 20 One who is being made fit for a job (7)
- 21 In short, Irish School Heads Association (1.1.1.)
- 23 Quickness, accuracy and keenness of judgment (6)
- 27 Capital, Jakarta (9)
- 28 3 Down could contain six lines (6)
- 29 German sausage (9)
- 30 Sad Pat makes suitable for specific use (6)
- 31 A quick way of getting electronically from one document to another (9)

CLUES DOWN:

- 2 See 17 Down
- 3 28 Across could be an African fly (6)
- 4 No arid invasion (6)
- 5 See 7 Down
- 6 Could be a kangaroo or a wombat (9)
- 7 and 5 Down
First published in 1847 under the author's pseudonym, Ellis Bell (9,7)
- 8 You will have had at least one if not three during your years of formal education (4,5)

- 14 To a boring or sickening extent (2, 7)
- 15 Emily O'Reilly is Ireland's third (9)
- 16 The triteness of hobbies (9)
- 17 and 2 Down
The common masses in ancient Greece (3, 6)
- 18 Seventh letter of Greek alphabet or, in short, when you might be getting there! (3)
- 22 In one word, the potential ability for individuals to be more successful working together than on their own (7)
- 24 His magnum opus was *Faust* (6)
- 25 Please quell the next instalment (6)
- 26 Woodrow was a President, Harold was a Prime Minister (6)

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 0803:

Michael Lenihan, Ferbane, Co. Offaly.

Solution to ASTIR crossword No. 0803

Across

- 8. Rosemary
- 9. Uproot
- 10. Scrimp
- 11. Phishing
- 12. Mosaic
- 13. Odysseus
- 15. Home
- 17. Liaison
- 19. Anemone
- 22. Ulna
- 24. Porpoise
- 27. Missal
- 29. Malaprop
- 30. School
- 31. Rescue
- 32. Inkwells

Down

- 1. Poncho
- 2. Teriyaki
- 3. Gazpacho
- 4. Symptom
- 5. Mutiny
- 6. Brahms
- 7. Downturn
- 14. Dean
- 16. Onus
- 18. Isolated
- 20. Namesake
- 21. Mischief
- 23. Leipzig
- 25. Plaice
- 26. Israel
- 28. Apollo



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