

ASTIR

ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS, IRELAND

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Annual Convention 2024



- | Senior Cycle: protecting education
- | Incremental credit anomaly
- | Croke Park hours

The logo for the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI). It features the word "ASTI" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Above the letters "A", "S", and "T", there is a stylized, multi-colored swoosh that arches over the text, transitioning through red, orange, yellow, green, and blue.



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ASTI branch roles



Working post-retirement



Valuing teachers, valuing education



Addressing inequalities in teaching



Protecting education

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Asserting our rights online

Workplace cyberbullying emerged as a key topic at ASTI Annual Convention 2024. While a RED C/ASTI survey published in March indicates that most teachers have not been cyberbullied at work, almost 20% say that they have. The impact of cyberbullying is often enduring. One delegate at Convention described his experience as something that “hits you in the heart”.

The posting of inappropriate or harmful content about a teacher can have lasting and severe consequences. Even if content is posted by a student/students outside the school walls and after school hours, it still constitutes workplace bullying. Like all employees, teachers are entitled to dignity at work. It is vital that school policies specifically address this issue. Policies must be clear and inform the entire school community of the steps that will be taken in the event of a breach of policy. The ASTI demands that where a breach occurs school management must react quickly and decisively. Online content does not have to be unlawful to be harmful. Offensive, degrading or humiliating content undermines a teacher's right to a safe workplace.

AI considerations

Dr Christina Colclough – the guest speaker at Convention 2024 – emphasised the need to critically assess the use of AI in education. AI must be used to further the objectives of the education system, and not just those of tech companies. Christina's address is available to view on the ASTI website at: www.asti.ie.

Where AI is being considered, questions must be asked about potential negative consequences. Whether it is used to aid classroom teaching/learning or in school administration, it must be inclusive, educationally sound, and equitable. It must honour human rights in areas such as privacy, health and safety, and equality. It must uphold employment rights such as teachers' professional autonomy and the safeguarding of intellectual property created by teachers.

Teaching is a relational practice. School closures during the pandemic highlighted this. The value of teacher–student interaction must not be undermined by AI. In order to embed new technology in the classroom, teachers must have professional time for CPD and planning, and must be facilitated to spend time reviewing any proposed system/tool before there is agreement on implementation.

Teachers' voice

As this is my last *ASTIR* editorial, I wish to convey what an honour it has been for me to serve as your President and in particular to preside over Annual Convention 2024. Delegates from all over the country spent three days discussing and debating the everyday challenges facing classroom teachers: the impacts of curriculum redevelopment, lack of supports for students and teachers, the dire need for investment in education, teachers' workload, terms and conditions, and digital rights, to name but a few. The ASTI's policy platform for the coming year reflects the outcomes of these debates. Convention 2024 certainly proved to me that when you join the ASTI, you can have your voice heard.



Geraldine O'Brien

ASTI President

New Public Service Agreement

ASTI members voted by a large margin to accept the terms of the new Public Service Agreement 2024-2026. It was also ratified and accepted by the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). A circular letter setting out the revision of teacher salaries under the agreement, effective from January 1, 2024, has been issued.

The deal opens a further phase of negotiation. Chapter 4 of the agreement provides for local bargaining. Employers and trade unions may negotiate additional changes in rates of pay and/or conditions of employment up to a maximum of 3% of the basic pay cost, inclusive of allowances in the nature of pay, of the particular category of employee or bargaining unit. The ASTI and TUI are likely to be regarded as a single bargaining unit. This may include proposals involving changes in structures, work practices or other conditions of service.

Detailed arrangements for local bargaining units will be agreed by the parties by June 30, 2024. Local negotiations within sectors concerning proposals will take place between July 2024 and June 2025.

Implementation of adjustments will be on a phased basis. The first instalment, equivalent to 1% of the basic pay cost, will be implemented on September 1, 2025, and the balance will fall to be addressed in any successor pay agreement.

At time of writing, the bargaining units have not been formed. Nobody is sure what this process may entail. We will not know until the bargaining begins. There will be interesting times ahead.

A glimpse of the what may be in store

The Department of Education has recently published its latest projections of enrolment report to cover the 2023-2042 period. The projected number of post-primary pupils is expected to increase from around 417,000 this year to around 430,000 in 2026. The figure is then projected to decline to 418,000 pupils in 2030. As can be seen, the peak is expected to be reached in post-primary enrolments in 2026.

These statistics will help to inform policy and planning for the most effective provision of education for students in our post-primary schools in the coming years. They provide a platform for the ASTI to campaign to ensure that the culture whereby we have among the largest classes in the OECD is abandoned. There is so much more that could be done, whether investment in special education, middle management or a plethora of other needs to be addressed. Who knows, it just might prompt Government to, once and for all, make the necessary investment to take us off the bottom of the league table of OECD countries when it comes to investment in education as a percentage of GDP. A declining school population might also assist in ensuring that the recruitment and retention crisis that is currently bedevilling our schools will come to an end. The current paltry efforts in that regard are having minimal impact. Maybe, the plan is to wait and allow nature to take its course. Regrettably, there is very little evidence that Government has an alternative in mind.



Kieran Christie

ASTI General Secretary

Donegal retirement event



The Iar Thuaisceart Branch held a retirement event in the Caisleán Óir Hotel, Co. Donegal, in March. Pictured are (from left): Kevin Boyle (Branch Chairperson), Kate McGilloway (retiree), Geraldine O'Brien (ASTI President), Frankie Doherty (retiree), Packie Doohan (Branch Treasurer), and Helen Moran (Branch Secretary).

ASTI LGBTQI+ event



Pictured at the ASTI LGBTQI+ event at Convention 2024 were (from left): Diarmaid de Paor (ASTI Deputy General Secretary), Máire Ní Chonchubhair (Galway Branch), Seamus Dooley (Irish Secretary, National Union of Journalists and guest speaker), Philip Synnott (ASTI Equality Committee), and Donal Cremin (ASTI President Elect).

Galway retirement event



The Galway Branch recently held a retirement event in the Salthill Hotel, Co. Galway. The event was attended by Breda Lynch (ASTI Industrial Relations Official – second from left), Geraldine O'Brien (ASTI President – front row centre), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary – front row centre), Pádraig Murphy (ASTI Honorary Treasurer – back row, to the right), and Donal Cremin (ASTI President Elect – far right).

Donegal robotics team compete in Texas

A robotics team in a school in Donegal recently competed in the VEX World Robotics Championship, which took place in Dallas, Texas, at the end of April. The team, led by ASTI member Sarah Ní Roibeaird and her colleague Keith Ó Fearraigh (TUI) from Pobalscoil Dobhair, Co. Donegal, had initially won the VEX Robotics All-Ireland Championship before qualifying for the World Championship final.

The ASTI contributed to the sponsorship of the team's expenses in March. Costs associated with participating in the VEX World Championship included the cost of robot components, competition registration fees, travel expenses, and educational resources for the students.



The team from Pobalscoil Dobhair. Back row (from left): Keith Ó Fearraigh (TUI member), Corrthaigh Ó Dochartaigh, Pádraig Mac Suibhne, Yanto Carrothers, and Sarah Ní Roibeaird (ASTI member). Front row (from left): Kerry Magner, Molly Ní Sharcaigh, Muireann Haicéid, and Áine Ní Fhearraigh.

ICTU Women’s Conference




ASTI representatives at the ICTU Women’s Conference in the Hodson Bay Hotel, Co. Roscommon were (from left): Moira Leydon (ASTI Assistant General Secretary and Education and Research Official), Noelle Moran (ASTI Tuam Branch), Eimear Holly (ASTI Limerick North Branch), and Ann Piggott (ASTI Cork South Paddy Mulcahy Branch).

Global solidarity



Khaled Quzmar, General Director of Defense for Children International – Palestine, was a guest speaker at the global solidarity event at Convention 2024. The other guest speaker at the event was Oksana Kovalenko, who is a lead specialist of the Directorate of School Education of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and a representative on the Steering Committee on Education of the Council of Europe.



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Please note that not all specialisms run in every academic year and are subject to minimum student numbers.

Our M.Oid san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta may also be of interest to qualified teachers looking to develop their professional knowledge of Irish immersion education. See: <https://www.tcd.ie/education/courses/postgraduate/m-oid-san-oideachas-lan-ghaeilge-agus-gaeltachta>

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The closing date for applications for the academic year 2024/25 is **30th June, 2024 (31st May for Drama in Education and Music in Education)**. Applications for all specialisms 2024/25 must be made online at: www.tcd.ie/courses/postgraduate/faculty/subjects.php

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CRUCIAL ISSUES FOR TEACHERS HIGHLIGHTED

“[On the housing crisis] It’s grand when you’re 22, 23, you feel like you’re a fully fledged adult and you’re ready to go into your own house and have your own space, and maybe have your own family at that stage. At age 28, that has not quite happened...and being asked to come home and fill up the dishwasher, or come and make your bed – that can be a bit disheartening at my age.”

Aisling Hughes, ASTI member

Prime Time, March 19, 2024

“[On incremental credit] When I got my first paycheck, I got a letter saying that my incremental credit was going to be refused because I had worked in a secondary school that was a private school there [in the UAE]. I had colleagues who were in the same school as me. My wife, who was a Canadian teacher, was working in the same school. She got it, my colleagues got it. My wife and colleagues were working in the primary section of the school and I was working in the secondary section. Minister Foley talked about not wanting to make it overly attractive to people going away – this is discrimination. There is inequality here. It’s crystal clear.”

Richie Cosgrave, ASTI member

Lunchtime Live, Newstalk, April 3, 2024

“[On cyberbullying] They [students] might record something without people’s consent generally via audio, or they just might post something that somebody says and they are anonymous. That’s really difficult to deal with, you know, that’s a difficult problem. And teachers feel vulnerable – you’re a bit powerless, you don’t know where it has come from. It is really hurtful and it can be really damaging for people. There is no question it causes a huge amount of hurt.”

Jean Marie Ward, ASTI member and member of Principals’ and Deputy Principals’ Committee

Nine O’Clock News, RTÉ, March 26, 2024



Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary.

“[On teacher shortages] What needs to happen with the Minister and the Department of Education is a complete change in their thinking in relation to it. For instance, the efforts to entice people back from abroad who work in places like Canada, Australia and so on have been feeble and pitiable quite frankly. Inviting them back next September to part-time jobs is just not going to cut it. Other things that the Minister could do include taking measures that would improve the situation for those who were thinking of going abroad. The length of the pay scale is not particularly enticing here for people to stay. They can go abroad and get onto much shorter salary scales, while here it’s a 25-point scale. These are the kind of things we will be discussing at Convention.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary,

Morning Ireland, RTÉ Radio 1, April 2, 2024

“[On the housing crisis] In a Dublin city centre school the first thing they are looking at is the accommodation, so they will accept a job first of all if they can find accommodation, which is next to impossible in Dublin. Then they are looking at the cost of that. They are basically balancing up whether they can afford to accept the job teaching in our school.”

Sinéad Corkery, ASTI member and Standing Committee Representative Region 18

News at 5.30pm, Virgin Media, April 2, 2024

“[On recognition of service abroad] They must be given incremental credit for the years spent abroad. Otherwise, they start on point one of the scale, which is the point they started on years previously, and they cannot live on that salary in Ireland. They went abroad to get a deposit for a house, they have come back and they may have the deposit. But if they don’t have a full-time contract and have only part-time contracts, what bank manager is going to offer them a mortgage?”

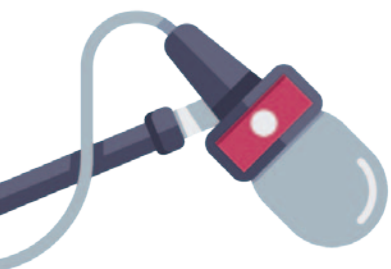
Geraldine O’Brien, ASTI President

News at 5.30pm, Virgin Media, April 2, 2024

“[On Leaving Certificate assessment] Their big problem is that at least 40% of the marks will be attributed to a project, where the students could cheat in the project, and that wouldn’t be fair for other students who wouldn’t be prepared to cheat”.

Adrienne Healy, ASTI member and Standing Committee Representative Region 15

Six One News, RTÉ, April 2, 2024



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ASTI BRANCH ROLES

BREEDA SLEVIN looks at the roles of branch secretaries and branch organisers in the ASTI, and speaks to some of those who undertake these vital positions in the union.

The branch is the basis of the organisation of the ASTI. Branch membership and participation is the way that members can contribute to the business of the ASTI and make their voices heard.

At present, the ASTI is organised into 56 branches in 18 geographical regions. Each school is affiliated to a branch. Branches meet at least once every three months during the school year. They can also meet to deal with specific issues that may arise. Members are notified of the business of upcoming branch meetings.

Roles can vary from branch to branch, but generally all branches have a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer. Thirty-one out of the 56 branches also have an organiser. There are a number of other roles, e.g., equality officer, regional organiser, and vice chairperson.

Here we look at two of the branch roles – branch secretary and branch organiser – and talk to members currently in these positions. Philip Synnott and Margo McGann are ASTI branch secretaries. Philip is in Dublin North-West and Margo is in Dungarvan. Gerada Barry is an ASTI branch organiser in Tipperary, and Seamus Mullen is branch organiser in Carrick-on-Shannon.



Branch secretaries: Philip Synnott and Margo McGann

Correspondence

The branch secretary is responsible for communication between Head Office, branch members, and external bodies. This is a really positive aspect of the role according to Margo: “You’re kept up to date because the secretary is the first to receive the messages from Head Office, be it a letter or email or whatever. So, you’re kept abreast of issues in education and issues among teachers. The role of secretary lends itself to being informed”.

Philip agrees: “You make great connections with Head Office, which is excellent because when members need help you know the people to direct them to”.



Dungarvan Branch delegates at ASTI Annual Convention 2024 in Wexford (from left): Richie Cosgrave, Siobhán Twomey, Pádraig MacCraith, Margo McGann, Liam O’Mahony, and Michael McGrath (ASTI Honorary National Organiser).

In turn, the secretary is responsible for the distribution of correspondence to branch officers and to members at meetings. Philip explains: “As branch secretary you have to have good communication around correspondence from Head Office and queries that come in from branch members. So, for example, if there was new correspondence around the public pay deal and I have organised a branch meeting, then that information has to go to directly by WhatsApp first to Adrienne, our chairperson. A good relationship with the chairperson is key”.

Margo agrees: “It’s very important to liaise with the chairperson about correspondence when organising branch meetings”.

You make great connections with Head Office, which is excellent because when members need help you know the people to direct them to.

Meetings

Branch secretaries are responsible for issuing notification of meetings including the date, time, venue, and agenda for each branch meeting. There are further duties that the secretary undertakes around record keeping and distribution of information. The secretary is also responsible for keeping minutes of branch meetings, a duty that requires a level of discretion around sensitive matters.

Philip explains: “It’s a really important duty to ensure that you email every school steward in the region about the details of the branch meetings. As secretary you also hold the minutes book and the members’ book, and you bring the correspondence to every branch meeting. You read out the names of all the new members, so they are ratified at the branch meeting”.

The amount and type of meeting varies from branch to branch. Margo says: “In Dungarvan we have about five meetings during the school year. We usually schedule our meetings for 4.15pm, just after the schools in the town finish. We book the venue at the hotel, and we always try to organise a nice warm room and teas and coffees on arrival, mindful of the fact that people are giving up their time”.

As branch secretary you have to have good communication around correspondence from Head Office and queries that come in from branch members.

Margo continues: “While you as the secretary will be passionate about informing people and organising the meetings, when the turnout isn’t great, then that can be quite challenging. In an effort to overcome that, I’ve set up a WhatsApp group for the elected officers and school stewards in the three schools in the Dungarvan Branch. I find that it’s very effective to send the reminder at 1.00pm on the day of the meeting and encourage the school stewards to forward the reminder to members”.

Philip says he understands that branch duties can be difficult to balance timewise: “I have a family as well. So, some nights you’re getting correspondence, and it might be the last thing you want to be doing in between matches and the various day-to-day stuff. But in this role, you really get a chance to make things happen”.

He adds: “The more effective the branch is, the more effective you will be in changing policy. The role is what you make it”.

While you as the secretary will be passionate about informing people and organising the meetings, when the turnout isn’t great, then that can be quite challenging.

Deadlines

The branch secretary has responsibility for particular duties regarding Convention. There are deadlines throughout the year for forwarding names of delegates, candidates for regional representative elections, and notifying Head Office of motions.

Margo has been branch secretary for 10 years and would like to see some type of training to encourage people to take on branch roles. She feels there is a fear around taking on a branch officer role but says: “Really, it’s a very positive experience. You do have to be super organised in the role of secretary, to have CEC and Convention delegate forms in and to have the motions in, but it’s not a very onerous role”.

There is training available for all branch roles and an updated publication ‘Guidelines for the Operation of ASTI Branches’ was issued in early 2024. As branch secretaries, Margo and Philip attended the recent webinar on the updated guidelines, which received very positive feedback.

You do have to be super organised in the role of secretary, to have CEC and Convention delegate forms in and to have the motions in, but it’s not a very onerous role.



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Na Modúil

Bliain 1

- An tumoideachas agus an dátheangachas
- An dea-chleachtas i suíomhanna Gaeltachta agus lán-Ghaeilge
- An teagasc agus an fhoghlaim i suíomhanna scoile lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta
- An cleachtas pleanála agus measúnaithe
- An cheannasaíocht agus an bhainistíocht
- Múinteoirí lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta mar thaighdeoirí

Bliain 2

- Inniúlacht teanga sa Ghaeilge
- An tráchtas

Riachtanais iontrála faoi leith

Ní mór cáilíocht mar mhúinteoir bunscóile nó iarbhunscoile a bheith ag iarrrthóirí agus inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ag leibhéal B1 ar a laghad ar an bhFráma Tagartha Comónta Eorpach do Theangacha.

Tuilleadh Eolais

Chun níos mó eolais a fháil ar an gcúrsa nó chun iarratas a chur isteach, téigh chuig: <https://www.tcd.ie/education/courses/postgraduate/m-oid-san-oideachas-lan-ghaeilge-agus-gaeltachta/>

Tuilleadh eolais maidir le cúrsaí iarchéime – Teastais, Dioplómaí, an PME, an D.Ed. agus an PhD san áireamh – ar fáil ar ár suíomh idirlín.

Coláiste na Tríonóide | Baile Átha Cliath

www.tcd.ie



Branch organisers: Gerada Barry and Seamus Mullen

The role of branch organiser is specifically focused on recruitment, ensuring that ASTI membership stays strong and increases where possible.

Recruitment

Gerada is branch organiser with the Tipperary Branch. She explains how she approaches the task of recruitment: “Trying to get everybody into the loop is the big thing for me. Bringing up our numbers at branch meetings has been the primary goal. I communicate first and foremost with the school stewards and encourage them to come to branch meetings or functions, and encourage the recruitment of



new teachers in their school, particularly newly qualified teachers. And we are building, it has been successful. At the meetings this year, the numbers have increased greatly, which is lovely to see”.

Seamus is branch organiser with the Carrick-on-Shannon Branch. He is also branch chairperson. He agrees that attendance at meetings is essential: “It can be challenging to try to get a quorum for a lot of meetings. Last year we had to postpone once or twice because of that. The biggest difficulty for us is trying to find suitable times to get a good representation of each school.

“Solution wise we’ve discussed hybrid meetings or just online. We’ve had two very good online meetings. Going forward, it looks like the most realistic form of communication because of the travel involved. We’re a fairly widespread branch. The Carrick-on-Shannon Branch covers Roscommon and Leitrim. We’d usually meet in Carrick when we’re in person but having it online does seem to be handier for people, particularly over the winter months”.

Seamus adds: “We mainly communicate now, as most branches do, via a WhatsApp group. Another thing we’ve found very helpful is to set up polls on WhatsApp about suitable dates for meetings. WhatsApp is really useful for the polls or for just putting out feelers about things”.

Bringing up our numbers at branch meetings has been the primary goal.

Teacher engagement

Another key challenge for Gerada is engagement with younger teachers: “For younger teachers, I really feel that they’re missing an opportunity to get involved in a lot of decision-making that’s going to affect them for much longer than it will affect me. When I talk to some of them, they often say, there’s no big issue really on the table at the moment. I explain that there are lots of issues that affect everybody, like Leaving Cert change, and I encourage them to come along and get their voice heard. It’s important to get the message across that you can just come to a meeting and listen, and have a conversation, without being asked to speak or be put on the spot”.

For younger teachers, I really feel that they’re missing an opportunity to get involved in a lot of decision-making that’s going to affect them for much longer than it will affect me.

Social

Gerada recalls: “We had a lovely meeting in October where I was expecting maybe eight people to turn up and we had double what we expected. It was brilliant to put faces to schools that hadn’t been coming to any of our branch meetings for a while, and to try and encourage them to come back and be part of the branch again. It was a lovely social occasion”.

She adds: “The retirement functions that we held last year were another nice way of trying to get schools involved on a more social level. It’s not a meeting, it’s a gathering to celebrate our former colleagues and their contribution to school and union life”.

The Carrick-on-Shannon Branch also found these events to be very positive. Seamus says: “We’ve had retirement functions as well, which have always been good nights for the branch. The union is very generous in what it gives to fund those nights. It’s people from the branch and the retiring person and maybe one or two from their school so that a person is not coming on their own and they have people who they feel comfortable with”.

Seamus recounts another meeting where attendance was encouraging: “Last year we had Desmond O’Toole down to the branch to talk about pensions. It wasn’t a seminar, just an information session. We got a very good response to that. It was great because lots of people got answers to questions that they had. It got them active in the union to go looking into it and Desmond gave them information and provided the link to take it a step further. So, that also stands out as a very successful meeting”.

Gerada outlines future plans for more informal meetings to try to increase membership: “We have plans to try and organise something for next September to encourage all school stewards to try and come to a social function rather than a branch meeting. I also always encourage school stewards to attend their training day. That’s a fantastic resource even for school stewards who may be in the role for a while. It really freshens up your knowledge around recruitment, and having the expertise from Head Office is really powerful”.

We have plans to try and organise something for next September to encourage all school stewards to try and come to a social function rather than a branch meeting.

For further information on getting involved in your local branch visit: <https://www.asti.ie/about-asti/structure/branches/>.



WORKING POST-RETIREMENT

BREDA LYNCH, ASTI Industrial Relations Official, explains how working post-retirement for teachers works.

Many teachers, having made the decision to retire, find themselves busier than ever with lots of new activities they did not have time for while working. Others may find themselves back in the classroom, often in the school they have just left, to fill in the gaps arising from the current teacher recruitment and retention crisis. This article addresses some issues that arise for these teachers. How will returning to work affect my pension? What about registration?

Registration

The registration question is straightforward. To teach, you must keep up your Teaching Council registration or, if you have let it lapse, you need to re-register. In response to the teacher supply issue, a tailored registration process for teachers who are returning to the Register has been developed. This includes detailed guidance on how to apply and the documentation required, as well as a specific email address (returntoregister@teachingcouncil.ie) to answer teachers' queries as a priority. Seventy-five lapsed registrations have already been restored to the Register in 2024, while approximately 400 teachers returned to the Register in 2023.

Supplementary pension entitlement

Some retired teachers receive a supplementary pension, having made Class A PRSI contributions. Supplementary pension is not payable if you are employed in any capacity. However, any part-time paid employment would result in the payment of the occupational supplementary pension being

applied on a pro-rata basis. Where an individual in receipt of an occupational supplementary pension takes up part-time employment, for example for one day, the supplementary pension would cease for that one day only and will be payable for the other four working days in the week, similar to how an entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit is treated. Teachers who have reached their 66th birthday receive this portion of their pension from the Department of Social Protection while working.

Pension abatement

Pension abatement is another concern for retired teachers returning to the classroom. The Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme And Other Provisions) Act 2012 provides that abatement of pension shall apply where a public service pension is payable to a public service pensioner and that pensioner is appointed to a position in the public service. Abatement, in this instance, is a reduction in the amount of the public service pension payable to that pensioner. Abatement ensures that the public service pension(s), which the pensioner receives, when combined with their remuneration in their new public service job, does not exceed the "relevant former pensionable remuneration" they would have received had they continued to serve in their former position. Abatement applies to the public service pension only and not to the new remuneration. Currently, there is a waiver due to the teacher supply crisis, allowing teachers to work for 50 days per calendar year without abatement being applied. This waiver has been extended from January 2024 for two further years. This has led to a

large number of retired teachers restricting themselves to working 49 days each calendar year. However, because teachers who return to the classroom return on the first point of the pay scale, it is very common that their combined earnings of salary for work and their pension will not bring them to a figure exceeding their former remuneration (taking account of increases), and so abatement will not apply. In 2023, in the post-primary sector, 359 retired teachers (including those on permanent and fixed-term contracts) returned to work, with only 2.5% of these teachers' pensions falling to be abated (post application of the waiver). The examples that follow from the Department of Education demonstrate how abatement is calculated and show that in many cases the impact is very small.

Currently, there is a waiver due to the teacher supply crisis, allowing teachers work for 50 days per calendar year without abatement being applied.

Example 1: Substitute employment for fewer than 50 days – abatement does not apply

Paul is a retired post-primary teacher who has returned to do some substitute work in various schools for a total of 49 days in the calendar year. As Paul does not exceed the 50 days granted by the waiver, abatement does not apply.

Example 2: Regular part-time contract – abatement applies

Note: To calculate abatement for a regular part-time (RPT) contract:
 1. Calculate the level of abatement for a full-time equivalent (FTE).
 2. Apply the current pro-rata rate to this FTE abatement outcome.

Lisa is a retired post-primary teacher. She has been offered an RPT contract at her old school where she will only be working half days. Lisa's former pensionable pay is updated to reflect any pay increases since her retirement. Lisa's pension will be abated if her (pay on return) + (pension) is greater than her former pensionable pay (Tables 1 and 2).

Gross pay on return per annum	€45,701 (FTE)	€45,701/365.26 = €125.12 (daily rate)
Gross pension per annum	€36,118	€36,118/365.26 = €98.88 (daily rate)
Gross former pensionable pay per annum	€74,882	€74,882/365.26 = €205.01 (daily rate)

Therefore, in Lisa's case (pay on return) + (pension) = €45,701 + €36,118 = €81,819	
Daily salary plus daily pension	€224 gross
Daily abatement	€18.99 gross
Daily abatement pro rata (0.5)	€9.50 gross



Example 3: Part-time casual employment in excess of 50 days – abatement applies

Laura is a retired post-primary teacher who has returned to work on a substitute basis. Under this contract she works three x 40-minute classes per week. Her former pensionable pay is updated to reflect any pay increases since her retirement. Laura's pension will be abated if her (pay on return) + (pension) is greater than her (former pensionable pay) (Table 3).

Gross pay on return per annum	€37,499
Gross pension per annum	€36,750
Gross former pensionable pay per annum	€73,500

Therefore, in this case (pay on return) + (pension) = €74,249. Since this is greater than her former pensionable pay of €73,500, her pension will be subject to abatement for the hours she works, calculated as shown in Table 4.

Number of days in school year	166
Pro rata for one day	1/166 = 0.6024%
Pro rata for 40-minute class	0.0913% (calculated on 4.4 hours per day)
Pay on return for one x 40-minute class	€34.23
Pension for one x 40-minute class	€33.54
Former pensionable pay for one x 40-minute class	€67.09

Therefore, the cost of abatement for one x 40-minute class is €34.23 + €33.54 = €67.77. As €67.77 is greater than the former pensionable pay of €67.09, the pension is abated for €0.68 for each 40-minute class worked, which results in a weekly abatement with three classes taught of €2.04.

Because teachers who return to the classroom return on the first point of the pay scale, it is very common that their combined earnings of salary for work and their pension will not bring them to a figure exceeding their former remuneration (taking account of increases), and so abatement will not apply.

Example 4: Part-time casual employment in excess of 50 days – abatement applies

Karen is a retired post-primary teacher who has returned to work on a substitute basis. Under this contract she works 10 x 40-minute classes per week. She is not entitled to the 50-day waiver as she has taken up a post that will extend beyond 50 days. Her former pensionable pay is updated to reflect any pay increases since her retirement. Karen's pension will be abated if her (pay on return) + (pension) is greater than (former pensionable pay) (Table 5).

Table 5: In example 4, Karen's rates are as follows.

Gross pay on return per annum	€37,499
Gross pension per annum	€36,750
Gross former pensionable pay per annum	€73,500

Therefore, in this case (pay on return) + (pension) = €74,249. Since this is greater than Laura's former pensionable pay of €73,500, her pension will be subject to abatement for the hours she works as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: In example 4, this table shows the rate of abatement.

Number of days in school year	166
Pro rata for 40-minute class (calculated on 4.4 hours per day)	0.0913%
Pay on return for one x 40-minute class	€34.23
Pension for one x 40-minute class	€33.54
Former pensionable pay for one x 40-minute class	€67.09

Therefore, the cost of abatement for one x 40-minute class is €34.23 + €33.54 = €67.77. As €67.77 is greater than the former pensionable pay of €67.09, the pension is abated for €0.68 for each 40-minute class worked, which results in a weekly abatement with 10 classes taught of €6.80. Table 7 sets out the gross pay on return less abatement for one week.

Table 7: Gross pay on return less abatement for one week from example 4.

Gross pay on return	€34.23 * 10 = €342.30
Abatement	€0.68 * 10 = €6.80
Gross pension less abatement	€704.29 - €6.80 = €697.49
Total gross income for week (pay on return plus pension less abatement)	€342.30 + €697.49 = €1,039.79

Therefore, when abatement is calculated the gross weekly earnings are €1,039.79 v €1,046.59.

Example 5: Substitute employment – abatement applies

Amanda is a retired post-primary teacher who has returned to do some substitute work covering a maternity leave contract for 24 weeks, for 30 classes per week (20 hours per week). She is not entitled to the 50-day waiver as she has taken up a post that will extend beyond 50 days, e.g., a maternity leave contract. Her former pensionable pay is updated to reflect any pay increases since her retirement. Her pension will be abated if her (pay on return) + (pension) is greater than her former pensionable pay (Table 8).

Table 8: In example 5, Amanda's rates are shown here.

Gross pay on return per annum	€45,701
Gross pension per annum	€36,118
Gross former pensionable pay per annum	€74,882

Therefore, in Amanda's case, (pay on return) + (pension) = €45,701 + €36,118 = €81,819.

Since this is greater than Amanda's former pensionable pay by €6,937, her pension is subject to abatement annually by this amount. In total Amanda returned for 120 days. All 120 days are subject to abatement as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: In example 5, this table shows the rate of abatement.

Number of days in school year	166
Pro rata for 40-minute class (calculated on 4.4 hours per day)	0.0913%
Pay on return for one x 40-minute class:	€41.73
Pension for one x 40-minute class:	€32.98
Former pensionable pay for one x 40-minute class:	€68.37

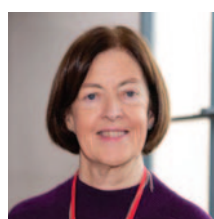
Therefore one x 40-minute class is €41.73 + €32.98 = €74.71. As €74.71 is greater than the former pensionable pay of €68.37, the pension is abated for €6.34 for each 40-minute class worked, which results in a weekly abatement with 30 classes taught of €190.20. The total abatement for 24 weeks is €4,564.80. Table 10 sets out the gross pay on return less abatement for 1 week.

Table 10: Gross pay on return less abatement for one week from example 5.

Gross pay on return	€41.73 * 30 = €1,251.90
Abatement	€6.34 * 30 = €190.20
Gross pension less abatement	€692.18 - €190.20 = €501.98
Total gross income for week (pay on return plus pension less abatement)	€1,251.90 + €501.98 = €1,753.88

Therefore, when abatement is calculated the gross weekly earnings are €1,753.88 versus €1,944.08.

Queries on the subject should be sent to the Department of Education at: abatementqueries@education.gov.ie.



Breda Lynch,
ASTI Industrial Relations Official

CYBERBULLYING A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE FOR TEACHERS – ASTI TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

Second-level teachers in Ireland are enthusiastic users of technology in education, but are challenged by a lack of basic resources in schools, cyberbullying, and out-of-hours communications.



A recently published RED C/ASTI survey, *Digital Technology and its Impact on Teachers' Working Lives*, has found a high level of usage of digital technologies by second-level teachers in Ireland: 83% of teachers surveyed use digital technologies in their teaching "all the time" or "frequently".

However, approximately one-quarter of all teachers surveyed identified access to computer devices and technical support/maintenance as poor. One in four teachers has daily problems with computer room availability, while around one in seven experiences daily issues with technical assistance and internet connectivity/speed.

Teachers expressed concern about a digital divide among students, with teachers in DEIS schools highlighting students' lack of access to digital devices at home as having a negative impact on their ability to engage in important school work, including Junior Cycle Classroom-Based Assessment work.

Teachers and AI

Teachers' response to artificial intelligence (AI) in education is both curious and cautious. Some 22% said they use AI in their classroom, and almost

one-third use it in their planning and preparation work. Some 91% of teachers surveyed want to know more about AI and education. However, more than 80% have concerns, including around data harvesting, the potential of AI to undermine professional teacher autonomy, and increased teacher workload.

Many of these concerns were raised by teachers in their comments on the survey, for example:

"Paper and book still have a very valuable place in the classroom...Although AI is already looking beneficial in terms of time teachers spend on preparation, other changes brought in during Covid such as digital planners, and use of Google Classroom to post content for absent students, have added to our workload."

"I worry about students becoming over-dependent on technology."

"We have a whole new music technology section in Junior Cycle Music but no money for resources such as recording equipment, PA systems."

Right to disconnect

The right to disconnect refers to an employee’s right to be able to disengage from work and refrain from engaging in work-related electronic communications, such as emails, telephone calls or other messages, outside normal working hours. The right to disconnect became a key issue for teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift to remote teaching. ASTI-commissioned research in 2022 found that the most important measure to improve teachers’ well-being was identified as the right to

“Expectations to engage with students outside normal working hours via Teams and upload material covered during class, as well as constant emails from other staff, has added at least an hour of work per day.”

disconnect from communications outside the school day. In the current survey, 93% of teachers whose schools do not have a right to disconnect policy would like the school to introduce one.

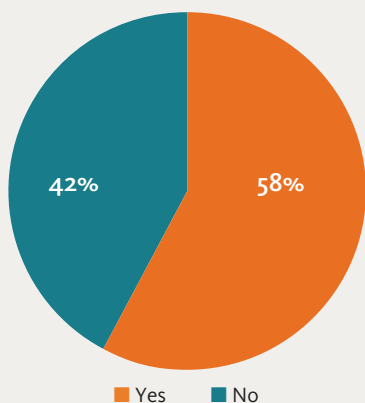
Over half of teachers receive communications from school management outside of normal work hours at least once a week; 19% are contacted by school management on a daily basis. Four in five teachers receive emails from students outside working hours (15% do so on a daily basis), and 45% receive emails from parents outside working hours and of these, one in ten does so on a daily basis. Teachers described the impact of this practice on work–life balance as negative. For example, 41% said it made them feel “constantly on”:

“Expectations to engage with students outside normal working hours via Teams and upload material covered during class as well as constant emails from other staff has added at least an hour of work per day.”

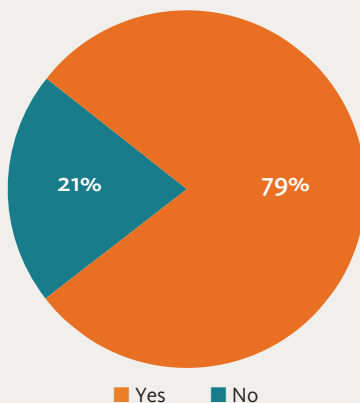
“I love my job but it is difficult to achieve a work–life balance.”

Right to disconnect – out-of-hours communications

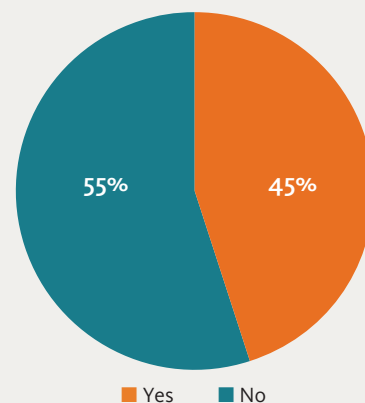
Three in five teachers receive messages from school management outside working hours



Four in five teachers receive emails from students outside working hours



Almost half of teachers receive emails from parents outside working hours



Cyberbullying concerns

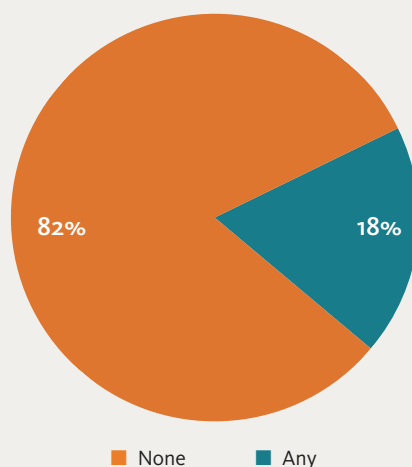
Almost one in five second-level teachers claims to have been subjected to at least one form of work-related cyberbullying. Of these, three in 10 say it has happened more than once, and for more than one in 10 it is ongoing.

The forms of cyberbullying were varied, and included: receiving angry, rude and vulgar messages or such messages being posted online; a video of the teacher uploaded without their consent; trolling – harmful, untrue or cruel comments being posted online; fake websites/profiles; account being hacked; and, private information being posted about a teacher. According to the survey, the perpetrators of work-related cyberbullying are primarily students (63%) and parents (20%).

A number of teachers stated that the experience of cyberbullying had made them less adventurous in using digital technologies in their classroom, especially mobile phones and iPads/tablets.

Teachers who responded to the survey talked about colleagues who were “extremely upset by very nasty comments”. They described feeling “scared, nervous, and embarrassed”, and said that it “affected my confidence as a teacher”. While some said that school management has responded quickly to incidents, others felt that management was “very slow to react”.

Work-related cyberbullying – almost one in five teachers claims they have been subjected to at least one form of work-related cyberbullying



The full survey results are available at: <https://www.asti.ie/document-library/red-c-asti-survey-2024-digital-technology-and-its-impact-on/>

VALUING TEACHERS, VALUING EDUCATION

This year's speeches addressed a wide range of issues, from teachers' terms and conditions and Senior Cycle redevelopment, to the impact of AI on schools.

This year, Convention also paid tribute to the late Miriam Duggan, ASTI President 2022-2023. ASTI President Geraldine O'Brien, and former Presidents Deirdre Mac Donald and Máire G. Ní Chiarba, spoke of Miriam's passion for teaching, and her commitment to bettering the working conditions of teachers through her dedicated work with the ASTI.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

ASTI President Geraldine O'Brien spoke on how valuing education means investing in education, and in teachers.

It's hard to believe it is almost a year since the late Miriam Duggan stood at this podium and delivered a heartfelt address about the value of teaching, teachers and education. Miriam worked tirelessly to better the working conditions of teachers and improve educational opportunities for students. In this context, I have chosen "valuing teachers, valuing education" as my theme.

Valuing education

In the context of 'valuing education' it would be remiss of me to let this occasion pass without mentioning Donogh O'Malley, Minister for Education from 1966 to 1968. He announced that from 1969 all education up to the completion of Intermediate Certificate would be available to all families without cost. O'Malley knew that without significant investment his vision for free post-primary education would be but a dream.



ASTI President Geraldine O'Brien.

We acknowledge that Minister Foley, on October 11, 2023, announced €67 million funding for free schoolbooks and classroom resources for Junior Cycle students. As with any new initiative, schools need resources and supports to administer this new scheme, and we ask the Minister to ensure that the concerns of principals are addressed. Teachers value education, and sound investment in education is always appreciated by them.

Incremental credit and teacher shortage

We in the ASTI were very disappointed when we learned that the Department had not sought funding to induce teachers back from countries such as Dubai. Currently, on returning to Ireland, they must recommence their careers at the bottom of the teachers' pay scale. Irish teachers returning from jurisdictions such as Dubai must be awarded full incremental credit for their service abroad. These teachers must also have access to full-time permanent positions. Valuing teachers is valuing education.

Teacher workload and extra-curricular activities

The role and workload of the teacher has expanded. This has been exacerbated by initiative overload and by policies that tie teachers into bureaucratic processes that do nothing to improve students' education. Research from the ESRI points to the importance of education in encouraging young people to volunteer in and with their communities and engage in extracurricular activities. Such activities depend on dedicated and experienced teachers. However, teachers are increasingly stating that their workload is such that they are no longer in a position to engage in extra-curricular activities.

Minister, when the bucket is full, the bucket is full, and nothing further can be added until something is removed.

Ireland's high-performing education system

The OECD PISA study provides overwhelming evidence that second-level teachers in Ireland rose to the enormous challenges presented by the pandemic. The study shows that 15-year-olds in Ireland rank first out of 37 OECD countries in reading literacy, seventh for maths, and eighth for science. This comes against the backdrop of Ireland's abysmal record for funding of education. Another OECD report, Education at a Glance 2023, ranks Ireland in last place out of 36 OECD countries for investment in education as a percentage of GDP, a ranking we have held for many years. School communities go to extraordinary lengths to ensure access to inclusive, high-quality education. The Government must support this by adequately funding schools.

AI

The use of AI and digital technologies in education may hold significant promise. In our survey on digital technologies, teachers were broadly positive about AI and education. However, approximately one-quarter of all teachers surveyed identified access to computer devices and technical support/maintenance as poor. The survey also found that 91% of teachers want the Department to provide guidance on the use of AI in schools. We welcome the Minister's statement that the Department intends to do this.

Senior Cycle

We are all aware of the reputation of the Leaving Cert worldwide. This deserved reputation is based on a high-quality education system characterised

by a broad curriculum, external assessment, and a strong focus in schools on the holistic well-being of students. In 2022, Minister Foley set out an ambitious programme for the redevelopment of Senior Cycle, guided by the vision of a Senior Cycle that delivers "equity and excellence for all". While there is much to welcome, teachers continue to have serious concerns about aspects of the proposals and their potential impact on teaching and learning.

Five Rs

In the era of acronyms such as CBAs and AACs, I'll conclude with 5 Rs:

Recognise that teachers value education and have their students' best interest at heart.

Resource schools properly so that teachers can do their jobs to the very best of their ability and students can thrive.

Reduce teachers' workload.

Redouble efforts to recruit and retain the best in teaching.

Respect the concerns raised by classroom teachers on curriculum change.

Everyone in this room wants improvement and progress. Let's get it right.

The full speech is available at: <https://www.asti.ie/document-library/president-geraldine-obrien-convention-speech/>



ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie's report to Convention this year addressed the talks regarding proposed amalgamation with the TUI, Senior Cycle redevelopment, and the teacher recruitment and retention crisis.

ASTI members voted in recent weeks to accept the terms of the new Public Service Agreement 2024-2026. Chapter 4 of the agreement provides for local bargaining. This may include proposals involving changes in structures, work practices or other conditions of service. The fund is available on a use it or lose it basis. We are not sure what issues it might be possible to use it for, but I will say this: in terms of productivity, teachers have no more to give.

ASTI and TUI unity discussions

I reported last year that the ASTI and TUI have opened discussions on the prospect of achieving teacher unity by way of amalgamating our two unions. We have now agreed with the TUI to issue a joint survey of members with a view to gauging members' opinion regarding the prospect of amalgamation. Members will be asked for their views in a context whereby the potential exists to create a new union that must both acknowledge and respect the traditions of each union, while also creating a new union that is able to face the challenges of today's industrial relations landscape. It will acknowledge that any outcome that emerges from the discussions will require comprehensive and substantial membership consultation within both unions, and will ultimately be decided upon in ballots of members.

If we get a sense that members feel the work should continue, then we will do that. If we get the sense that there is no appetite for this, then we will discontinue the process.

Leaving Certificate redevelopment

There is no doubt that one issue that has stayed at the very top of our priorities this school year is the Minister for Education's plans for Senior Cycle redevelopment. We have consistently made the point that it is essential that the mistakes made in the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle, which sidelined the voice of teachers, must not be repeated.

The standout measure in Minister Foley's initial plan was to change the final assessment procedure to significantly reduce reliance on final examinations and introduce teacher-based assessment. The ASTI pointed out from the get go that Senior Cycle change must protect the integrity of the examinations and must be built upon fairness for students and trust in the system. We clearly identified that it was and is a red line issue for us. We mounted a vigorous campaign, which included public and private events in conjunction with the TUI. This led to an announcement by Minister Foley in September that she was accelerating the development of new and revised specifications in nine subjects, together with work to develop externally assessed components in each subject that are not a traditional written examination.

By taking the concept of teacher-based assessment off the table, the prospect of fairness for all and trust in the examinations system was opened up.

Subject redevelopment

The September announcement by Minister Foley revised a key pillar of her proposals for Senior Cycle redevelopment. She also announced an accelerated process of redevelopment of Senior Cycle curriculum. The ASTI has nominated two representatives per NCCA Development Group. I want to thank them all for their valuable work on our behalf.

A non-exhaustive list of things that must be comprehensively addressed include workload, timetabling, professional time, CPD, communications, resources, and assessment practices. Decisions on breadth of content and depth of treatment will have to be made and, crucially, viable subjects need to emerge.

The minimum 60/40 breakdown must go in some subjects. Our members' expertise and the wider scientific community expertise regarding subjects in the sciences in particular must be listened to in that regard. Class sizes and class contact time must be addressed. Put simply, investment is required.

Teacher recruitment and retention crisis

The teacher recruitment and retention crisis is ensuring that schools are under enormous strain and are barely able to cope. The Minister is failing to deal with the problem as it should be dealt with. She has done little to induce teachers back from countries such as the United Arab Emirates, whereby upon return, they currently must recommence their careers at an inferior point on the teachers' pay scale, irrespective of experience.

Her determination to maintain the casualisation of teachers' employment status in their early years is unacceptable. The excessive length of pre-teacher training for graduates is no longer viable too. The two-year PME must go. Shortening of the extraordinarily long teachers' pay scale and doubling the number of middle management posts in schools would help in no small way too.

We need the Minister to change her course and take meaningful measures that will restore and enhance the attractiveness of teaching as a profession in Ireland.

The full speech is available at: <https://www.asti.ie/document-library/asti-general-secretary-kieran-christie-convention-speech-2024/>



Norma Foley TD, Minister for Education.

NORMA FOLEY TD, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Minister Foley outlined her Department's plans for Senior Cycle redevelopment, AI in education, and supporting student well-being.

I would like to join with others in paying tribute to your former President, Miriam Duggan. There is a Japanese proverb: 'Better than a thousand days of diligent study is one day with a great teacher'. Miriam was a great teacher. She was selfless in her dedication to her students, but also in her service to this union. We in the education sector are the lesser for her passing, but greater beyond measure for having had the benefit of her talent, her passion, and her compassion.

I would like to reflect on some of the successes of the education system, as well as some of the challenges and opportunities facing schools. The PISA 2022 results are indicative of some of the strengths of our system. Ireland's performance in PISA provides strong evidence of the excellent, committed, and talented teachers in every classroom in Ireland. You have been a beacon to society in terms of the welcome you have extended to the 18,000 Ukrainian students who have enrolled in Irish schools. You have also helped students of families who are seeking international protection here. For this and for your commitment to excellence in education, I thank you.

Funding and Senior Cycle change

I was determined to secure funding in the budget for free school books for Junior Cycle years in post-primary school. I appreciate that the



A tribute to former ASTI President, the late Miriam Duggan, took place during Convention.

scheme will increase the administrative burden on schools. An administrative support grant has been put in place to assist schools with the work involved in implementing this scheme.

We have accelerated the redevelopment of the curricula for Senior Cycle subjects. The Leaving Certificate has its strengths, and I do not propose to diminish those. I am giving you a commitment that the Department of Education has learned lessons from Junior Cycle implementation. Tranche one subject curricula will be approved more than one year before they will be taught in schools. The State Examinations Commission is committed to delivering more sample papers than previously and also to do it earlier. We are providing additional supports to schools that offer the new subjects too.

Technology

We know that artificial intelligence is already changing the way that people live and work. I understand and appreciate that the ASTI is strongly engaging with this agenda, and look forward to hearing your thoughts on this subject. We need to ensure that we consider the use of AI carefully on all subjects and all aspects of teaching, learning, and assessment, and that teachers and school leaders have the necessary resources and skills to support them. There is also a darker side to the connected world. I have spoken to parents about the horrific impact that cyberbullying has had on their children. But I know also that cyberbullying is not just aimed at students.

I am deeply concerned about reports of teachers receiving abusive emails or text messages, or being the subject of abusive postings on websites. There is no place for such behaviour against teachers who are simply doing their job. I have recently met with Niamh

Hodnett, the Online Safety Commissioner. She is working on a new online safety code, which will cover the scourge of cyberbullying. The era of big tech companies policing themselves is over.

Well-being

I'm very conscious of the work that you do not just to support the students in your schools academically, but also to prepare them for the world in which they live. As such, you share my concern that we work together to best support the mental health and well-being of all our young people. I am very pleased to announce that I am making funding available to enhance the existing well-being and mental health support in post-primary schools. I have asked my officials to issue a tender in early April, seeking proposals from service providers to enhance the supports already available in schools. This support will build on the good work already happening in schools to enhance well-being and mental health.

Teacher terms and conditions

In Budget 2024, I secured funding for an additional 1,000 posts of responsibility for the 2024-2025 school year. The Department has engaged in a consultation process with the teacher unions and school management bodies to ensure that the recruitment process for these posts can commence as soon as possible.

I welcome the fact that the new Public Service Pay Agreement has been backed by all teacher unions. A local bargaining mechanism is also provided for. My Department will engage with teacher unions to identify priority issues that might be tackled under this mechanism. I know that by working together, we can bring about change that will benefit the profession and the young people in our schools.



Dr Christina Colclough, guest speaker and expert on artificial intelligence (AI).

DR CHRISTINA COLCLOUGH – GUEST SPEAKER

Dr Colclough spoke passionately on the need for regulation of artificial intelligence, for teachers to understand how it works, and to be involved in its adoption.

What I want to focus on is some of the solutions that I think you should address as a union [in relation to AI and EdTech]. By tabling this issue, by talking about it with such awareness, you're already well on your way to making a change, not only for you as a profession, but also for the generations that you teach.

You need to learn how to use a digital system. You need to learn to understand why it does what it does. Learning to press the buttons in the right order: that's the easy part. That's what Google, Facebook, Meta, and the rest of them want you to learn. They don't want you to learn how these systems work, because it is in how these systems work that the threats to your privacy, to your workload, your work–life balance, lie.

If power is sucked out of you as workers, then where is workplace democracy? Is it in the hands of school management? No. It has been sucked into the hands of EdTech providers, most of them private companies. What is their business model? What's the largest asset that they have? It's the data that's being collected as you, the teachers, use these tools, and as the students apply them.

In work I did for Education International, 43% of teachers said that they were being assessed by digital technologies. Do you know how? Have you ever asked: who are you being compared against? Everything artificial is not really artificial, and it's certainly not intelligent. Artificial intelligence needs to be regulated.



As part of the ASTI's tribute to the late Miriam Duggan, Miriam's brother, Jim Duggan, was presented with the President's Medal on her behalf by ASTI President Geraldine O'Brien.

Digitalisation has immense potential. But that potential will not go without causing harm unless we take an active role.

The EU AI Act has just come into force. It will provide certain safeguards to our fundamental rights. But do you know where it is weakest? Data, but also on the labour market. There are no obligations for the deployers of technology – that's your school management or the education authorities – to involve you in the assessment of these technologies. You are to be informed but not involved. So this is recommendation number one: you should be involved in the continuous regulation or governance of these technologies. The AI Act is also very weak on post-deployment governance. We must demand that they are continuously governed, so they're not learning the wrong thing.

Nothing about you without you. You should be at that table and you should be part of the governance of these technologies.

How many of you have heard the expression, 'data is the new gold'? If we subscribe to that saying, we subscribe to the fact that our privacy is a commodity that can be bought and sold. It is not. You should have a right of access to these data.

Digitalisation has immense potential. But that potential will not go without [causing] harm unless we take an active role. Put the demands on the table of ownership, of co-governance, of inclusion, and we will be able to make sure that we can reap the benefits and limit the harms.

The full speech is available at: <https://www.asti.ie/member-benefits/events/convention-2024/>

ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES IN TEACHING

Delegates at Convention 2024 debated a series of motions on teachers' conditions of work, from tackling online harassment to recognising teaching service abroad, and the termination of the Croke Park hours.

Motions at Convention looked to restore teachers' terms and conditions, and also to take specific actions to end the current recruitment and retention crisis in the profession. Motion 6 called for teachers returning from teaching abroad to be placed on a pay scale commensurate with their experience, while Motion 8 looked for a substantial reduction in the 25-point pay scale for teachers, and Motion 30 argued for a reduction in the PME to one year.

Motion 39 called on the ASTI to lobby for stronger laws to combat online harassment and abuse, and Motion 49 asked the union to carry out a member survey to establish the psychosocial risks to teachers in the workplace. Motion 38 argued for restoration of teachers' sick leave entitlements, while Motion 34 sought a review of bereavement leave.

Motions 27, 51, 36, and 44 called for the abolition of the Croke Park and Haddington Road hours, with Motion 44 calling on the union to ballot members with a view to taking industrial action if these hours are not terminated by the beginning of the 2025/26 school year.

Motion 48 called for an opt-out option from substitution and supervision for teachers with 15 years' service. Motions 26 and 18 called for additional time allowances for post holders and those teaching Leaving Certificate second components. Motion 16 argued for the restoration of points for seniority in the interview process for posts, while Motion 11 called for independent interview panels for these roles.

Motion 21 asked the union to investigate the impact of career average pensions on female members, and Motion 23 called for the restoration of the pre-2013 pension scheme.

Pay and entitlements

"Second-level teachers returning from positions in private schools outside the EU are placed on the lowest point of the teachers' salary scale here,



Anne Loughnane, Carbery Branch.

despite their service and experience of teaching abroad. We need these teachers back here in our schools in Ireland now, and we need to treat them fairly. We have worked hard over the years in this union to eliminate injustice and division in the treatment of different groups of teachers, particularly the NQT group in recent years, and we can take great pride in our achievements in that regard. This is the next inequality that we need to put the full force of our union behind."

Anne Loughnane, Carbery Branch

"Teachers have one of the longest incremental scales in the public service, 25 or 27, depending on when you commenced teaching. With career averaging, our extremely long pay scale has a detrimental effect on our final pension, as teachers only have at the most 15 years' service at the top of the scale. Reducing the length of the pay scale would, in effect, increase teacher's salaries and lead to higher pay for a longer period, and an increased pension pot as well. With the urgent need to attract more people into the profession, now is the time to reduce the length of the pay scale."

Donal Cremin, Kerry Branch and President Elect

"In years one and two of the PME, students will pay approximately €6,500 each year, €13,000 to colleges to gain a teaching qualification. Other significant costs, such as rent, fuel, heat, and transport, add enormously to financial burdens. This means that young people from certain socio-economic backgrounds will not be able to afford the costs of two years' training. We are the voices of college students, potential members who are not in a position to speak for themselves. We must seek this and we must insist on the change."

Ann Piggott, Cork South Paddy Mulcahy Branch

Cyberbullying and leave

“In December 2022, the Minister for Education launched the Cineáltas Action Plan on Bullying, which sets out a comprehensive roadmap to ensure there is zero tolerance of bullying in Irish schools. While this is a welcome development, it simply does not go far enough to address the prevalence of online bullying behaviour and harassment of teachers and other members of the school community. The emotional and psychological impact of online abuse cannot be understated. It affects not only students and teachers, but anyone who is targeted by this harmful, hurtful, and often hateful behaviour.”

Sinéad Corkery, Dublin South Central Branch and Standing Committee Region 18

“We have a new generation of teachers who speak the language of mental health and the language of wellness at work a lot more fluently than maybe my generation or generations before mine did. We have to build a structure that we can be proud of leaving behind us for those teachers, where their psychosocial hazards are identified early, and there’s a structure where they can address them and have them dealt with.”

Donal McCarthy, Wexford Tony Boland Branch

“Before 2008, teachers had reasonable sick leave entitlements. The economic crisis forced many institutions to tighten their belts, and unfortunately, sick leave entitlements were among the casualties. But now, as we emerge from these challenging times, we must re-evaluate our priorities. Restoring sick leave entitlements is not a handout. It’s a fulfilment of promises made to our educators. By restoring these sick leave entitlements, we provide positive mental health, we ensure educational continuity, and we uphold the principles of fairness.”

Douglas Miller, Dublin South 1 Branch

“Our current bereavement leave entitlements fall short of providing the necessary flexibility and compassion our members require. The motion is practical and pragmatic. It does not demand or seek anything above and beyond what other public sector workers have. It will not necessitate or incur any additional costs to the Department. It only asks for a review of the current application of these same entitlements. It’s about embodying these values of compassion and flexibility within our union.”

Ciarán Kavanagh, Dublin North East Branch

Croke Park and Haddington Road hours

“We have fought hard to regain salary increments, the pay scale for new entrants, but our working conditions have never returned to what we once thought of as the norm. A generation of teachers has entered the profession believing that these hours are the norm, and the real damage done by these hours has been to take from the time that teachers previously gave willingly to help students. We must work together through united action with the other teaching unions to end this hours culture. As teachers, we are at our most productive when we dedicate our time to our students, not when we are endlessly upcycling plans and priorities dictated to us from above.”

Declan McInerney, Wicklow Branch

We must work together through united action with the other teaching unions to end this hours culture.



Sinéad Corkery, Dublin South Central Branch and Standing Committee Region 18.

Protected time

“What will this additional [Leaving Cert] assessment component look like in our classrooms? It’s currently 20 hours of teaching time. This equates to me, as a chemistry and biology teacher, overseeing 48 individual investigations in my classrooms. It’s a real change in our conditions. For a high-stakes examination like the Leaving Certificate, how much time will be given to teachers to deliver the demands of this new Senior Cycle? We urge our union to demand professional time for teachers of two hours a week. These two hours will be needed to deliver the demands of Senior Cycle reform.”

Jacinta McGarry, Clare Branch

Posts of responsibility and minimum time allowances

“We’ve seen the way that the business model is being applied to the appointment and evaluation of posts. Really, it’s just do more and more but do it while you’re continuing to prepare and teach classes, deal with Croke Park hours, school self-evaluations, supervision and substitution, and all the other initiatives, projects and developments that seem to be a daily feature of school life now. With increasing hour-long classes, there is very little time for a post-holder to carry out his/her duties.”

Ray Scott, Waterford Branch

Posts of responsibility and minimum time allowances

“In principle I have to be against this motion. We went on strike seven and a half years ago – equal work for equal pay. In principle, I can’t support it because if you’re a post holder and your colleague is not, if you’re on the same pay scale, you’re going to be rewarded at a higher rate per hour for your salary and that’s going to create more divide in the staffrooms. This is going to further erode collegiality. This is going to further strengthen the power of principals.”

Seamus Meskill, Desmond Branch

Points for seniority in interviews

“Seniority refers to the number of years a teacher has worked in a school, and the wealth of knowledge and experience that they have accumulated during these years that can be highly beneficial to the school. At present, posts of responsibility are awarded to applicants through a competency-based interview process and seniority is not recognised among the interview criteria. Given the length of a teacher’s pay scale, the limited promotional opportunities available to teachers, particularly for post-2013 entrants, many teachers are now competing for a small number of posts of responsibility to progress their careers. The suggestion that experience counts for nothing in an interview situation is ridiculous.”

Crena Shevlin, Stillorgan Branch

“I would argue that you cannot afford to not give points for seniority because of the lack of motivation that senior staff members experience – it’s just horrendous. I would say that let’s not put one against the other: let’s fight for the restoration of pensions while also fighting for seniority”.

Sinéad Moore, Fingal Branch

Independent interview panels in post of responsibility interviews

“Posts of responsibility are still dispensed by principals to complying candidates who will not challenge the status quo. Members of the ASTI are still being actively discriminated against, and seniority or management courses don’t seem to matter. We must acknowledge the cohort of teachers who will never apply for a post because they know there is no point. Appointing inexperienced teachers to senior management positions has led to a system where there is a lack of checks and balances, which leads to a misuse of power and eventually brings about disorder and inefficiency.”

Ian Mc Colgan, Dublin North West Branch

Pensions

“The transition to a career average earnings model for pensions has cast a huge shadow over some members, particularly those who find themselves taking unpaid leave for various reasons, such as career breaks, parental leave, job-sharing. Female teachers, as we know, are often primary caregivers. This leads them to take career breaks or opt for part-time work to fulfil these responsibilities. These interruptions in employment inevitably impact the average earnings and, consequently, their pension benefits. We must advocate for equitable pension provisions that safeguard the financial well-being of all teachers, regardless of gender or career trajectory.”

Paula de Barra, Tipperary Branch

“It’s an undeniable truth that newer members will end up paying a higher percentage of their salary for a significantly lesser pension. This is neither just nor sustainable. To be denied the same benefits as our peers is to devalue our work and sends a demoralising message to those considering a career in education. The disparity between pensions serves only to reinforce the unjust two-tier system within our profession. This is about more than numbers on a spreadsheet, but the core values of our union, whether we stand for fairness and equality or stand idly by ensuring an injustice continues.”

Brian O’Reilly, Wicklow Branch



Ian Mc Colgan, Dublin North West Branch.

EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY

Motion 79 called on the ASTI to strongly support the rights of children, both nationally and internationally, to education, to water, to food, to shelter, to medical assistance, and to freedom from violence and murder.

“As teachers, we wish for our students to have happy childhoods, and we long for all children to have an early days full of magic and mermaids, and to experience the wonder of childhood. Obviously, we want children everywhere to be educated. On the wall of our school is a quotation from Nelson Mandela. It says, “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world”. We have children in our schools who have been displaced from their homes in countries such as Ukraine and Syria. They struggle to cope with the changed lives they didn’t expect. Furthermore, 378 schools in Gaza have been destroyed, and we grieve for the children whose access to education is impossible, and for parents who yearn for education for their children, almost as much as they want them to have something to eat. 13,000 children have been injured, 17,000 children orphaned, and around 14,000 children have been killed in appalling acts of genocide. We, as a union, must strongly support the rights of children to education, to water, to food, to homes, to medicine, to happy childhoods free from violence and murder.”

Ann Piggott, Cork South Paddy Mulcahy Branch

PROTECTING EDUCATION

A large number of motions at Convention 2024 addressed members' concerns surrounding Leaving Certificate redevelopment, as well as the role of SEN co-ordinators, and the provision of properly resourced psychological services for students.

Education-related motions at this year's Convention re-affirmed the ASTI's commitment to protecting the well-being of its members and their students. Motion 72 called for a stop to the scheduling of Leaving Certificate oral exams during Eastertime or weekends in the interest of student and staff well-being, and of health and safety. Motion 73 sought that there be no more than one CBA per subject for students at Junior Certificate level. Motion 70 asked that for the second components of both the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations, the digital compilation, storage and submission of students' work to the State Examinations Commission should not be the remit of the classroom teacher. Motions on Senior Cycle redevelopment were preceded by a report from a committee established by Convention 2023 to devise a set of positive proposals. The report called for a more holistic, investment-led approach to Senior Cycle redevelopment, including reduced class size, professional time for workload associated with additional exam components, and a greater emphasis on social context in critical skills development. Motion 69 asked that the ASTI urgently seek to ensure flexibility in the percentage of marks allocated to Leaving Certificate specification second components (currently set by the Minister at a minimum of 40% of the final mark).

Motion 52 asked that the ASTI insist that the chairperson of each NCCA subject development group is elected by the members of that group. Motion 53 demanded that the Department of Education formalise the role of coordinator of educational supports for students with additional educational needs.

Similarly, regarding psychological resources for students, Motion 64 called on the Minister for Education to provide schools with properly resourced supports, which are specifically designated to schools, so that students can access appropriate and timely clinical and therapeutic interventions and supports.



John Conneely, Clare Branch and Standing Committee Region 4.

Additional Leaving Certificate components

"The allocation of 40% of marks to the coursework component of the draft Leaving Certificate [Biology, Chemistry and Physics] specifications was not an educational decision – it was a political decision by the Minister for Education. In March 2022, without any consultation with those working on the specifications, the Minister announced that the second component was to be set at a minimum of 40% initially for the three sciences and eventually for all subjects. This new 'one size fits all' approach has caused widespread concern among teachers, third-level lecturers, and many others involved in education."

John Conneely, Clare Branch and Standing Committee Region 4

Holding of State examinations at Easter

"The holding of oral and practical examinations at Easter was accepted by teachers in good faith as a short-term measure to help out in relation to the impact of the Covid crisis. This has been seen by other agencies as free reign to continue to impose a short-term measure beyond what was agreed. Having oral exams at Easter has a very negative impact on students. All of this also has an impact on teachers, as many teachers will feel that they cannot let their students down by not being in school on these days to support them."

Eddie Noonan, Dublin South 1 Branch

This new 'one size fits all' approach has caused widespread concern among teachers, third-level lecturers, and many others involved in education.

Given the catastrophic mistakes that were made in the Junior Cycle, and the fact that the new Senior Cycle is modelled on the same flawed system, then surely it would be more effective if the Chairpersons were teachers, or at least elected from within the group.

NCCA Subject Development Groups

“At the moment, the Chairperson of these groups is pre-appointed by the NCCA. Given the catastrophic mistakes that were made in the Junior Cycle, and the fact that the new Senior Cycle is modelled on the same flawed system, then surely it would be more effective if the Chairpersons were teachers, or at least elected from within the group? This would ensure that teacher voice would be central to any curricular changes made.”

Adrienne Healy, Dublin North-West Branch and Standing Committee Region 15

Formalise role of SEN co-ordinator

“Your path to education starts your path to employment. It starts for you in school. Yesterday, the Minister for Education reflected on inclusion and on the inclusive practices that we have in our schools, and I can tell you our education system is not inclusive. Our model of providing school places does not provide access to education in an equitable manner. We need to formalise this role and ensure we are providing adequate training and adequate resources.”

Maria Markey-Greene, Dublin North 1 Miriam Duggan Branch and Standing Committee Region 16

Properly resourced psychological services for students

“We need more than just assistance from the Department – SEN and guidance services in school are on fire. Unfortunately, if external services are not functioning well, we are failing these young people despite our best efforts. It is increasingly evident – perhaps from such a long period of lack of meaningful services – that some students in front of us are in desperate need of improved access, and of timely clinical and therapeutic support from a trained clinical expert. We simply do not have the resources for these young people to reach their educational and vocational goals.”

Laura O’Toole, Mullingar Branch

Digital compilation and storage of second components

“As professionals, I believe we really need to watch this space very carefully so that we don’t walk ourselves into a situation where we are individually responsible for the compilation, storage and submission of our students’ work, a situation where we could potentially be liable if something goes wrong. Remember, we will be talking about 40% or 50% – it’s a high-stakes matter.”

Siobhán O’Donovan, Desmond Branch and Standing Committee Region 5

ELECTIONS AT ANNUAL CONVENTION 2024

OFFICERS ELECTED AT CONVENTION



President Elect
Donal Cremin



Vice-President
Pdraig Curley



Honorary Treasurer
Pádraig Murphy

COMMITTEES

Global Solidarity Committee

Dearbhla Cussen
Noelle Moran
Conall Ó Dufaigh
Ann Piggott
Mary Yvonne Wall

Deirdre Mac Donald
Máire G. Ní Chiarba
Sean O’Neill

Sickness Benefit Committee

David Briscoe
Róisín Doyle
Ed Byrne

Investment Committee

Nora Donovan
Tony McGennis
Pdraic McWeeney
Noelle Moran

Business of CEC Sub Committee

John Byrne
Richard Egan

Rules Committee

Richie Bell
Philip Irwin
Anne Loughnane
Michael McGrath
Geraldine O’Brien

Standing Committee Regional Elections Committee

Michael McGrath
Liam O’Mahony
Mark Walshe
Donal Coughlan
Geraldine O’Brien

Steering Committee

Niall Duddy
Susie Hall

Convention photos by Paula Malone Carty.

MOTIONS ADOPTED AT CONVENTION 2024

Motions adopted at ASTI Convention become the union's policy.

The following motions were adopted by Annual Convention 2024:

Motion 69 – Composite motion – Assessment and certificate examinations

Given the recent developments in AI and the unique nature of each subject, that the ASTI urgently seek to ensure flexibility in the percentage of marks allocated (currently set at a minimum of 40% by the Minister for Education) to the additional component assessment(s) (coursework, orals, or practical examinations) of each Leaving Certificate specification (syllabus).

Further, the percentage marks allocated to the additional component assessment(s) of each subject, be determined by each individual NCCA Leaving Certificate development group at a minimum of 20% of the overall marks. **(Dublin North West) (Clare)**

Amendment

Amend by deletion of “at a minimum of 20% of the overall marks.”

The amended motion will then read as follows:

Given the recent developments in AI and the unique nature of each subject, that the ASTI urgently seek to ensure flexibility in the percentage of marks allocated (currently set at a minimum of 40% by the Minister for Education) to the additional component assessment(s) (coursework, orals, or practical examinations) of each Leaving Certificate specification (syllabus). Further, the percentage marks allocated to the additional component assessment(s) of each subject, be determined by each individual NCCA Leaving Certificate development group. **(Carbery)**

Motion 72 – Composite motion – Assessment and certificate examinations

That the ASTI restate its demand that the Easter and midterm breaks and weekends not be used for the sitting of State examinations and that Senior Cycle oral examinations be scheduled during term time in the interest of student and staff well-being and health and safety. **(Dublin South 1) (Mullingar)**

Motion 6 – Salaries and allowances

That the ASTI demand that all years of teaching service abroad in recognised second-level schools shall be included in the calculation of incremental credit. **(Dungarvan)**

Motion 30 – Conditions of work

That the ASTI campaign for the PME to be reduced to one year. **(Cork South Paddy Mulcahy)**

Motion 8 – Salaries and allowances

That the ASTI negotiate a reduction of the 25-point incremental scale to a 20-point incremental scale. **(Kerry)**

Amendment

Amend by addition of the word ‘substantial’ before the first appearance of the word ‘reduction’ in the original motion and also by deleting the words ‘to a 20 point incremental scale’ and directly substituting the words ‘including a reduction in the amount of time for the payment of the Long Service Allowance’.

The amended motion will then read as follows:

That the ASTI negotiate a substantial reduction of the 25-point incremental scale including a reduction in the amount of time for the payment of the Long Service Allowance. **(Tuam)**

Motion 39 – Conditions of work

That the ASTI lobby for the enactment of stronger laws to prevent online abuse and harassment on social media platforms. **(Dublin South Central)**

Motion 49 – Conditions of work

That the ASTI conduct a survey of its members to establish the psychosocial risks (stressors) that teachers are experiencing in their working lives. **(Wexford Tony Boland)**

Motion 38 – Conditions of work

That the ASTI seek the restoration of teachers’ Sick Leave entitlements to the arrangements pertaining before the economic crash of 2008. **(Dublin South 1)**

Motion 52 – Composite motion – Education

That the ASTI insist, in the interests of ensuring that teacher voice is central to the development of new specifications, that the chairperson of each NCCA subject development group be elected by the members of each group. In addition, that all feedback received in the consultation process for the draft specifications (syllabi) be forwarded to each member of the relevant subject development group so that a consensus report on the feedback may be published by the subject development group. **(Clare) (Dublin North West)**

Motion 53 – Education

The ASTI demands that the Department of Education formalise the role of coordinator of educational supports for students with additional

educational needs (sometimes known as the Special Educational Needs Coordinator, SENCO, or AENCO) and ensure standardised responsibilities, training, and support for educators in these positions. **(Dublin North Central)**

Motion 64 – School resources

ASTI calls on the Minister for Education to immediately provide properly resourced psychological services, specifically designated to schools so that students can access appropriate and timely clinical and therapeutic interventions and supports. **(Mullingar)**

Motion 70 – Assessment and certificate examinations

That the ASTI insist, that in relation to second components of all State examinations, the digital compilation of, storage of, and submitting of students' work to the State Examinations Commission not be the remit of a subject teacher. **(Desmond)**

Motion 26 – Conditions of work

In view of the additional workload placed on teachers of Leaving Certificate subjects containing additional components, the ASTI demand that the Department of Education makes within-timetable professional time available for individual teachers of those Leaving Certificate subjects containing additional components (coursework, orals or practical examinations), which it is proposed will be rolled out for all Leaving Certificate subjects. The professional time made available should be in the form of 66 hours per school year, or two hours per week. **(Clare)**

Amendment

Amendment by adding the words “per subject” after the words “or 2 hrs per week”.

The amended motion will then read as follows:

In view of the additional workload placed on teachers of Leaving Certificate subjects containing additional components, the ASTI demand that the Department of Education makes within-timetable professional time available for individual teachers of those Leaving Certificate subjects containing additional components (coursework, orals or practical examinations), which it is proposed will be rolled out for all Leaving Certificate subjects. The professional time made available should be in the form of 66 hours per school year, or two hours per week, per subject. **(Carbery)**

Motion 27 – Conditions of work

That the ASTI campaign for the abolition of the Croke Park Hours, without any financial penalty to teachers. **(Cork South Paddy Mulcahy)**

Motion 51 – Conditions of work

That the ASTI take immediate action to ensure the abolition of all Croke Park extra working hours and all Haddington Road extra working hours for all members of the teaching profession. **(Wicklow)**

Motion 36 – Conditions of work

The ASTI work with other teacher unions to bring the issue of Croke Park hours to every relevant forum to negotiate their end. **(Dublin North West)**

Motion 44 – Conditions of work

That the ASTI ballot members with a view to taking industrial action, up to and including strike action, if the unpaid 33 Croke Park hours are not terminated before the beginning of the 2025/26 school year. **(Fingal)**

Motion 34 – Conditions of work

Recognising the importance of providing humane and compassionate support to our members during times of bereavement, this Convention compels the ASTI to seek a review of Circular Letter 0078/2022, with a view to amending the circular so that a more flexible, humane and compassionate application of the Bereavement Leave Entitlements therein be applied. In particular, the ASTI will seek a modification of the Circular Letter so that:

- the commencement of bereavement leave be at the discretion of the bereaved teacher, taking into consideration funeral arrangements and individual circumstances; and
- bereaved teachers can be afforded the option to split the bereavement leave entitlement, providing teachers with the flexibility to manage their leave in a manner they deem necessary.

This Convention further authorises the ASTI to engage in meaningful dialogue with relevant stakeholders to ensure that any amendments made to Circular Letter 0078/2022 align with the collective needs and concerns of our union members. **(Dublin North East)**

Motion 21 – Superannuation

That the ASTI investigate the impact on pensions of female members of the teaching profession given that pensions are now based on career average earnings. A report on this investigation will be presented to Convention 2025. **(Tipperary)**

Motion 23 – Superannuation

That the ASTI take immediate action to ensure the restoration of pre-2013 pensions provision for all members of the teaching profession. **(Wicklow)**

Motion 79 – Social solidarity

That the ASTI strongly support the rights of children, both nationally and internationally, to education, to water, to food, to shelter, to medical assistance and to freedom from violence and murder. **(Cork South Paddy Mulcahy)**

Motion 18 – Posts of responsibility

That ASTI negotiate for all post holders, in all schools, to receive a time allowance to enable them to carry out the extra duties and work required for their post. AP1s should receive a minimum of four hours while AP2s should receive a minimum of two hours. **(Waterford)**

Motion 16 – Posts of responsibility

That the ASTI demand that points awarded to seniority in posts of responsibility interviews be reinstated. **(Stillorgan)**

Motion 11 – Posts of responsibility

The ASTI demand that all interviews for posts of responsibility in all second-level schools be carried out by an independent interview panel, not to include any current or former principal, in the interest of equality and fairness to all applicants. **(Dublin North West)**

VOX POPS – BETTER IN A UNION

This year teachers at Convention told us “You are better off in a trade union because...”



MARY QUILL,
Cork South Paddy
Mulcahy Branch

“Firstly, much like insurance for my car or home, I see my trade union membership as insurance for my teaching career. Being part of a trade union provides legal representation and advice for teachers if issues arise with school management, parents, students or colleagues. While I hope I will never need such support, I have peace of mind knowing it is there if I do. I also appreciate the sense of solidarity that union membership affords me, as I feel my concerns are shared and represented at a level where bargaining can happen. At the moment, I think it is really important for teachers to have a strong, collective voice in negotiating Senior Cycle curriculum change and pay agreements.”



NATALIE DOYLE BRADLEY,
Dublin North Central Branch

“You are better off in a trade union because you’re not alone. One of the things that I come across when people are talking to me about how tough they find it in school is that they feel isolated. So sometimes you could be the only art teacher in the school, you could be the only special education teacher, you could be the only person who has a difficulty with the principal, or a colleague, or a parent, and when you talk to your trade union generally, they’ve come across that issue before and they know what to do. You’re not isolated anymore – you are part of a group and solidarity. And that matters – absolutely.”



WILLIAM BROWNE,
Carbery Branch

“We need a lot more younger teachers in trade unions to be able to gain more knowledge and information on what’s coming down the line. There’s a lot of radical changes happening at the moment, which we need to be aware of: the Senior Cycle subject redevelopment and project-based assessments. We need to be able to negotiate exams, such as the oral exams during Easter break, and to try and prevent that from carrying on. Things like well-being, CBAs, and pay, and how they’re connected to productivity, must be discussed. I think it is very important for everybody to be in a trade union in order to protect our working conditions. It is also very important for newly qualified teachers to be part of a trade union such as the ASTI in order to be fully informed of where their sector has come from and where it’s going, and to be aware of what is coming down the line and to get involved with their union on these issues.”



RICHIE COSGRAVE,
Dungarvan Branch

“I had a problem regarding recognition of teaching service abroad that affected a very small number of teachers and my voice alone wouldn’t have gotten any traction or much support at all. I approached my branch members – I explained my situation and they advised me on what to do. They were very happy to come on board and help me, support me and get me to where I was speaking at Convention on this topic – a topic that has since been picked up by the *Irish Independent*. It’s on national radio and I hope it’s going to get resolved. This literally only happened because I was a member of the ASTI. I genuinely want to thank the experienced members of my branch – Michael McGrath, Pat Knightly, Liam O’Mahony and Jonathan O’Donovan. Margo McCann wrote to every branch in the country.”



AMY O’KEEFE,
Carlow Branch

“You are better off in a trade union because the power of collective bargaining cannot be underestimated. We are stronger united and together. The voice of the ASTI is made up of all of the voices of its members. Together we can and together we will. I encourage everyone to join their union at the very start of their career and to play an active role in their union throughout their career.”

Trade Union Week

Ireland’s first ever Trade Union Week took place from April 29 to May 3. Part of the Irish Congress of Trade Union’s (ICTU) Better in a Trade Union initiative, the event highlighted the benefits of trade union membership, including enhanced job security, advice and support, improved terms and conditions, and better pay.

The ASTI participated in Trade Union Week, with visits to schools by ASTI representatives, presentations on the benefits of union membership for teachers, and social media messaging promoting union membership.

TEACHING COUNCIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Teaching Council Advisory Committee keeps ASTI members up to date with developments at the Teaching Council.



The ASTI Teaching Council Advisory Committee. Back row (from left): Donal Cremin (ASTI President Elect), Adrian Guinan, Pat Knightly, and Eamon Dennehy. Front row (from left): Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Anne Loughnane, Geraldine O'Brien (ASTI President), Adrienne Healy, and Moira Leydon (ASTI Assistant General Secretary, Education & Research).

Committee membership

The members of the Teaching Council Advisory Committee are:

- Anne Loughnane (nominated in 2022),
- Eamon Dennehy (nominated in 2022),
- Adrian Guinan (elected in 2024),
- Adrienne Healy (elected in 2024),
- Pat Knightly (elected in 2024),
- Geraldine O'Brien (ASTI President), and
- Donal Cremin (ASTI Vice President).

Role of the Committee

The ASTI Teaching Council Advisory Committee was created to keep the ASTI informed of developments at the Teaching Council that affect members. The Committee reports to Annual Convention and CEC, and keeps Standing Committee regularly informed of the work of the Teaching Council.

The Teaching Council Advisory Committee is made up of ASTI members who are nominated, or elected, to the Teaching Council. Adrian Guinan, Adrienne Healy and Pat Knightly were elected to the Teaching Council in March 2024, and appointed to the Committee at Annual Convention 2024. The current ASTI-nominated members are Anne Loughnane and Eamon

Dennehy. The ASTI President and Vice President are also members of the Advisory Committee. Moira Leydon is the Head Office official who assists this Committee.

Teachers become members of this Committee based on their election to the Teaching Council as members of the ASTI or because they are nominated by Standing Committee as the ASTI nominees to the Teaching Council. This is a very effective means of bringing the perspective of the classroom teacher to the Advisory Committee in a democratic way and giving a strong voice to ASTI values on the Teaching Council's committees and panels.

Elections of teachers by teachers to the Teaching Council take place every four years, most recently in February/March 2024, and members are elected by the educational sector – e.g., primary, post-primary voluntary secondary.

The Advisory Committee keeps the ASTI up to date on developments and proposals by the Teaching Council, particularly those that affect the terms and conditions of teachers. Many of these developments have complexities that require a considered response from the ASTI and the advice of the Committee is vital. The latest advisory Committee's report includes updates on teacher supply, fitness to teach, vetting, and student teacher registration. The report also provides data on registration figures, new appointees, and representation at events.

Help us fight for your pension



The year is flying by and some of you may be looking forward to a well-earned rest and retirement from teaching. The ASTI has served you well during your years of service but to supplement and build on that work, you now will need an organisation to fight for your pension rights in retirement. So join the RSTA. You will be made really welcome. The RSTA works tirelessly in conjunction with the Retired Workers' Committee of Congress and the Alliance of Retired Public Servants, to protect pension parity and to further the interests and welfare of retired teachers. Please help us to continue this work. We need to increase our membership, and due to GDPR restrictions, schools cannot inform us of retirements, so there is no way for us to contact retiring teachers directly. This is where you can help. Even if you are not thinking of retirement just yet, you may have colleagues

who will retire this year. Please encourage them to join. Apart from fighting to defend pension parity, we have 18 branches all around the country and they organise a huge variety of cultural events, outings and trips both within and outside of Ireland. (Groups have visited Berlin, Greece, Montenegro, Tuscany, South Africa and toured the WWI sites of Flanders and the Somme, to mention but a few.) Most branches have a Christmas lunch and these are very popular and well attended. See the website www.rsta.ie for general information and branch news. The RSTA needs every retired secondary teacher to join and let us use the strength of our numbers to advance our cause.



Susie Hall (RSTA President).

Susie Hall, RSTA President

RSTA membership application/renewal

Name:

Address:

Home phone:

Mobile:

Email:

RSTA branch:

Annual subscription: €24
Annual renewal date: September 1

Payment options: Bank standing order (recommended by RSTA) or cheque (payable to RSTA)

Return to: Mrs Muriel McNicholas, Cordarragh, Kiltimagh, Claremorris, Co. Mayo.

Contact: murielmcnicholas@gmail.com or 085-118 1330

The personal information requested here is required to administer your membership of the RSTA. It is used by the RSTA in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). See the RSTA Data Protection and Privacy Policy on the RSTA website – www.rsta.ie.

Standing order set-up form

To: The Manager (Bank name and full address)

I hereby authorise and request you to DEBIT my account:

Account name/s:

IBAN

BIC

And to credit the account of:

RETIRED SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

IBAN: IE55 AIBK 9323 6112 7290 80 (**BIC:** AIBKIE2D)

with the amount of **€24** (twenty four Euro)

Start Date: ___/___/20___ **Frequency:** Annually until further notice

Reference: (To identify member's subscription on RSTA bank statement):

Member name

Signature: Date: ___/___/20___

ICTU briefings for union members

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is hosting a seminar on the New Economic Model to inform affiliates of its proposed strategies to promote a high-road economic model, which will seek to broaden labour market opportunities and promote collective bargaining in Ireland.

High-road economic models see employers pay family-supporting wages, compete based on the quality of their products and services offered, and engage workers and their representatives in building skills and competitiveness.

The ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC) 2023 endorsed the Executive Council Motion 'New Economic Model', which called for a debate throughout the trade union movement to help develop a comprehensive long-term model of economic development for both economies on the island of Ireland.

This seminar will cover the following topics: how the State is resourced; the right to collective bargaining; an inclusive and sustainable economy for all; and, how to be prepared for future economic challenges.

The seminar will take place in the Communications Workers' Union (CWU) Head Office on North Circular Road, Dublin, on Monday, May 20, 2024.

Members interested in attending this seminar can register their interest on Eventbrite using the following link:
<https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/ictu-new-economic-model-seminar-tickets-881289178657?aff=oddtcreator>

Skills Box helping with career choices



Second-level students across the country will be given access to new supports that will help raise awareness around the diverse career choices and learning routes available to them through further education and training (FET).

The Skills Box will be distributed to every second-level school in the country and contains 'career charts', which outline the FET career options and education routes for multiple sectors, including construction, tourism and hospitality, healthcare, business, and climate and green skills. Each Box will have a unique QR code leading to digital versions of the charts, and links to further information on course content and providers. The online resources will be updated on a regular basis.

The aim of this initiative is to ensure that people are aware of the wide range of options and diverse career choices available to them through FET – particularly areas with a skills shortage such as climate, construction and healthcare.

The FET Skills Box is an initiative of Education and Training Boards Ireland.

Come work with us!



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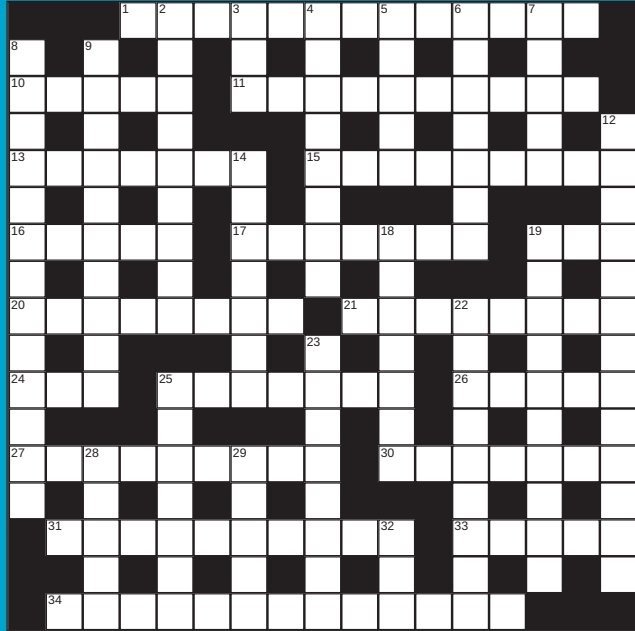


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ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 2403

The winner will receive €250 in One4All vouchers.

If you wish to keep your copy of *ASTIR* intact you may send a photocopy of the crossword. One entry only per member.



Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: ASTIR Crossword No. 2403,
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, June 21, 2024.

ACROSS

1. When you squeeze/a Heinz's bottle/first none will come/and then a lot'll (6,7)
10. Spice up long books or poems (5)
11. Sharing a common border, touching (10)
13. Type of teacher referred to in Breda Lynch's article (7)
15. Term upset when chainsaw quiet (4,5)
16. Dangerous on the road, even better on the cake (5)
17. Not specifically religious (7)
19. Long-eared or short-eared? Who gives a hoot? (3)
20. One husband at a time from Normandy! (8)
21. Substance needed by plants or animals to live (8)
24. ... Besson, French film director (3)
25. Branch responsible for Motion 70 at Convention (7)
26. Informal amphibious reptile (5)
27. Sounds like dead Cantona and Capone could be mathematical (9)
30. WW2 battle near Naples, Italy (7)
31. Grey matter down the tubes? (5,5)
33. The medium is the message (5)
34. in the air/on the street/in your hair – John Spillane (6,7)

DOWN

2. Female sex hormone (9)
3. Easy as ... (1,1,1)
4. Warned or told about something (2,6)
5. Select group from Coke Lite (5)
6. Fast warship available in Curries (7)
7. Also known as Ayer's Rock (5)
8. Current Italian PM (7,6)
9. Irish tonic could be excessively emotional (10)
12. Multinational technology company revenue could be dessert (5,8)
14. Anything you fancy from dress.ie (7)
18. Eldest child of singer Madonna (7)
19. Clear large metal container toppled (10)
22. Tragic opera by Giuseppe Verdi (9)
23. Who's there? Do this to find out (4,4)
25. Fouler, grubbier, smuttier (7)
28. Hilarity, gaiety, cheer (5)
29. Might be for tea or for golf (5)
32. UK health system (1,1,1)

Réiteach do chrosfhocal No. 2402

SIAR	SÍOS
1. Postdoc	1. Posta
5. Loch	2. Slí
8. Seinnteoir	3. Dinimic
9. Bá	4. Cleipteamaine
11. Albam	5. Laika
13. Peachach	6. Cé
14. Dailcheantair	7. Teacher
16. Santaim	10. Catach
18. Athas	12. Bairs
20. Oz	14. Desmond
21. Corinthian	15. Neantog
24. Duais	17. Anois
25. Eugenie	19. Synge
	22. Ian
	23. Pá

Did you miss?

ASTI technology survey 16
Convention 2024 18

COMHGHAIRDEAS

Comhghairdeas le buaiteoir
Chrosfhocail 2402:
Séamas Ó Duibhir, Scoil na
mBráithre, Sráid Shémais,
Cill Chainnigh.
Craobh Chill Chainnigh



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