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Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland



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Prepare to fight back

A lot has changed in education since the last issue of *ASTIR*.

Budget 2009 has subjected our education system to the most severe cutbacks. This is despite our education system being one of the most poorly funded out of 29 OECD countries, relative to our economic wealth. Our young people are being forced to pay for the financial and economic chaos the country is currently experiencing, due in no small way to Government mismanagement and incompetence. Hitting education will not only impact on the future life chances of our pupils, but will also prolong the recession.

Our education system, which performs very well in international comparisons, is reliant on the dedication and hard work of teachers. Just look how we have been rewarded in the Budget. One of the most significant cuts in the Budget is the worsening of the pupil-teacher ratio. Every school will be affected by this measure. It will lead to larger classes, less subject choice and less individual attention for every student. There will be job losses and fewer opportunities for those beginning their career in teaching. Changes to substitution arrangements in schools will cause chaos if implemented this coming January. Schools will be unable to provide cover for teachers absent due to school business (extra curricular activities, field work, etc.) or on uncertified sick leave. This cut is a direct attack on the holistic education delivered by our second-level schools. Some schools may be forced to close or send pupils home if more than a couple of teachers from the school are absent on a particular day.

The suspension of the Early Retirement Scheme means the erosion of another one of our conditions. This scheme was established in lieu of a salary increase under the national wage agreement – the Programme for Competitiveness at Work. A range of grants to schools have also been cut:

■ Transition Year grants

It is widely acknowledged that Transition Year is of great benefit to students. It is also acknowledged that the programme is not adequately funded. Yet Budget 2009 removed Transition Year grants. What a retrograde step.

■ Traveller education and LCA

The Budget cuts on grants for Traveller Education and Leaving Cert Applied are an attack on some of our most vulnerable students who may be in danger of leaving school without these supports.

■ Junior Certificate Schools Programme

The Junior Certificate Schools Programme has been hit, as has the Free Book Scheme.

■ Physics and chemistry grants

Investment in science education is recognised as being of fundamental importance to a knowledge-based society but what has this Government done? Cut the grants for physics and chemistry ... the list goes on.

The turnout of almost 12,000 teachers and parents at the demonstration outside Dáil Eireann against the cuts is an indication of the devastating impact these cuts will have, not just on schools, but on communities around the country.

As this *ASTIR* goes to print, we are continuing to work with our education partners – through the Post-Primary Education Forum – to mount a campaign against these cuts. We urge every member to lobby their local politicians and to highlight to them the impact of these cuts on their schools.

Pat Hurley



Pat Hurley
ASTI President

ASTI announces centenary events



As part of its anniversary celebrations, St Colman's College held an exhibition of photographs taken over the last century. Pictured are: John White, ASTI General Secretary; Pat Hurley, ASTI President; and, Joe Whyte.

In early October, ASTI President Pat Hurley returned to his alma mater, St Colman's College in Fermoy, to celebrate two significant birthdays – 100 years of the ASTI and 150 years of St Colman's. In launching the ASTI Centenary Calendar of Events in the school, Pat Hurley said: "St Colman's and the ASTI are celebrating significant milestones – 150 years and 100 years of making a positive contribution to Irish education. St Colman's played a seminal role in the early years of the



Pictured at St Colman's College are (from left): Gerry O'Sullivan; Ann O'Sullivan; and, Joe Moran, ASTI Vice President.

ASTI. Teachers from St Colman's were among the founding members of the ASTI. The first President of the ASTI – PJ Kennedy – was a teacher at the school".

The Centenary Calendar of Events has been issued to all schools. Events for 2009 include the publication of the *History of the ASTI*, a conference for new teachers, a civic reception in Cork and a gala dinner in the Mansion House in Dublin.

Introducing ASTI's centenary identity



A century of service

To mark the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the ASTI, a centenary identity has been designed, which will be incorporated into all centenary visual material, including publications, displays and backdrops. The centenary identity, designed by Think Media, presents a 'Flying Colours' image, which aims to present the ASTI as a modern trade union with a track record of service. The festive design incorporates a flame of flying colours as an abstraction of the familiar ASTI icon, the flaming torch.

To mark the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the ASTI, a centenary identity has been designed, which will be incorporated into all centenary

Dignity in the Workplace Charter

The managerial authorities for second-level schools – the JMB, ACCS and IVEA – have agreed with the ASTI that the Health and Safety Authority Dignity in the Workplace Charter should be adopted by schools and prominently displayed in staffrooms. The ASTI distributed posters displaying the Charter to each school steward in October. The Charter commits those working in the school to "working together to maintain a workplace environment that encourages and supports the right to dignity at work ... Supervisors, managers and trade union representatives, where applicable in the workplace, have a specific responsibility to promote its provisions".

Consultation on intercultural education

At a conference on intercultural education held by the Department of Education in early October, Minister of State for Integration, Conor Lenihan, called for written submissions from the education partners to assist in the preparation of recommendations for an intercultural education strategy.

The Minister sought views in the areas of mainstreaming, knowledge of English, rights and responsibilities, partnership and engagement. The ASTI has made a formal submission to this process, which will reiterate the message that language support is a vital part of intercultural education provision. The submission highlights the

injustice of recent budget cutbacks, which see a cap of two English language support posts being imposed on each school's allocation. For children who are struggling to adapt to a highly structured learning environment, structured language support is vital, not merely to allow children to communicate and interact in the classroom, but to allow them to fully access and understand the curriculum.

Other recommendations in the submission include the provision of teacher training to equip teachers with skills for second language teaching and dealing with diversity.



ASTI campaign against cutbacks

Public anger in response to education cutbacks announced in Budget 2009 could not be ignored on October 29 when up to 12,000 teachers, school managers, parents, students and supporters turned out to protest and make their voices heard on the issue. Speaking at the event, ASTI Vice-President Joe Moran said: "We are not trying to bring the Minister to his knees, rather we are trying to bring him to his senses. This protest and the campaigns to follow are not about teachers or teacher unions. Parents, school managers and teachers oppose these cuts as a duty to our young people".

The protest was held in advance of a Dáil debate and vote on a motion tabled by the Labour Party deploring the education cuts and expressing concern at the damage they would cause to the education system. At the protest John White, ASTI General Secretary, urged teachers and parents to lobby their TDs about the "most swingeing cuts in education ever".

Meeting with the Minister

ASTI representatives John White, General Secretary, Pat Hurley, President, Joe Moran, Vice-President, and Diarmaid de Paor, Deputy General Secretary were the first to meet with the Minister for Education and Science, Batt O'Keefe. At this meeting the ASTI presented to the Minister the drastic impact these cuts will have on individual schools.

The ASTI also mobilised the Post-Primary Education Forum (PPEF) – a forum involving teacher unions in the post-primary education sector, the National Parents' Council, and management associations – immediately following the Budget.

For more information on the campaign against the Budget cuts, visit www.asti.ie.



TOP LEFT: ASTI General Secretary, John White, addresses the massed crowds outside the Dáil.

TOP RIGHT: Solidarity was shown by interested parties from other unions and organisations.

BELOW: Braving the very bad weather, protesters turned out in huge numbers. LEFT: Both old and young were united in one cause.



Teacher induction project



Pictured at the recent launch of the Report on Phase One and Two of the National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction are (from left): Prof. Sheelagh Drudy, UCD; Dr Maureen Killeavy, co-author and Director of the Post Primary project, UCD; Prof. John Coolahan, Emer Egan, Assistant Chief Inspector, Department of Education and Science; Áine Lawlor, Director, Teaching Council; Dr Jim O'Brien, Head of School and Director of the Centre for Educational Leadership, University of Edinburgh; and, Regina Murphy, co-author, St Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra.

Schools interested in participating are advised to contact the Teacher Induction Project Office, based in the School of Education at UCD, Tel: 01-7168672, or Email: ann.owens@ucd.ie.

Recent developments in education internationally

Global solidarity

ASTI is currently chairing the ICTU Committee on Global Solidarity, which focuses on the 'core labour standards' of the International Labour Organisation to protect basic workers' rights worldwide. The campaign will work at local, national and international levels towards strong and effective regulation to protect fundamental human rights and to promote a globalisation that serves the needs of all the world's peoples.

Discipline in Italian schools

To coincide with the introduction of a new subject, 'citizenship and constitutional studies', to the Italian curriculum, a number of measures to improve behaviour in schools have been introduced. Behaviour is now to be considered when assessing the overall performance of secondary school students. A poor evaluation of their conduct could result in pupils having to repeat a year and losing up to five marks in public examinations. While this response could not be transplanted to the Irish system, Irish schools do require more support and innovative responses to promote good behaviour in schools. Excellent pilot programmes such as the Cool Schools programme to tackle bullying must be made available nationwide and on a long-term basis.

Code of behaviour audit checklist

An audit checklist to assist schools in carrying out an audit of an existing code of behaviour has been developed by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). The reference document is available on www.newb.ie.

Thinking of retirement in 2009?

The ASTI is organising a series of regional retirement information seminars for members. If you intend to retire at the end of (or during) this school year, you are invited to attend one of the following seminars:

| Venue | Date |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Green Isle Hotel, Naas Road, Dublin | Tuesday, November 18 |
| Radisson Hotel, Sligo | Tuesday, November 25 |
| Days Hotel, Kilkenny City | Tuesday, December 2 |
| Days Hotel, Galway City | Tuesday, December 9 |
| Rochestown Park Hotel, Cork City | Thursday, December 11 |
| South Court Hotel, Limerick City | Tuesday, December 16 |

All seminars start at 4.30pm with tea/coffee and sandwiches at 6.45pm.

- ASTI travel allowance of 70c per mile will be paid for return travel from your home address to the nearest of the above venues (no other allowance is payable).
- If you have to leave school early in order to attend a seminar, you should make an early request for leave to your school principal.

Please note: Attendance at these seminars is limited to ASTI members who intend to retire at the end of (or during) this school year 2008/09.

Contact Sarah Fagan at ASTI Head Office if you have any queries regarding these seminars, Tel: 01-6040173, or Email: pking@asti.ie.

Leadership survey

In response to the OECD study on school leadership, the Departments of Education North and South have given funds to Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) and the Regional Training Unit (Northern Ireland) to commission a study into leadership in schools. The study, conducted by consultants PricewaterhouseCoopers, is already underway and, given that over half of the principals in Irish schools are due to retire within the next five years, this study is particularly pertinent.

SPHE publications

The SPHE Support Service has recently published 'The Implementation of SPHE at Post-primary School Level: A Case Study Approach', which examines the contribution made by SPHE to the experience of Junior Cert students and to the junior cycle curriculum.

The report included the views of teachers, SPHE co-ordinators, principals, and development officers, as well as students and parents, and found that SPHE is challenging, worthwhile and valuable, and that quality teaching and relevant resources are essential for its successful implementation in schools. Curriculum overload, timetabling pressures and lack of status, however, have an impact on SPHE provision. The report suggests that more emphasis needs to be given to whole-school in-service training in order to create a whole-school approach that will support the SPHE programme. 'Working Things Out Through SPHE', a youth mental health resource for trained SPHE teachers, was also published by the SPHE Support Service. The resource includes an interactive DVD that contains the personal stories of nine adolescents who have successfully managed difficult problems in their lives.

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Bothar study trip



In March 2008, a number of teachers travelled to Zambia as part of a study trip organised by the development aid agency, Bothar. Participants on the trip were taken into the field to allow them to meet with families and to see firsthand how Bothar projects work. They also had the opportunity to visit several schools. The next Bothar trip for educators will be to Tanzania in April 2009. For more information, contact mary@bothar.ie or visit www.bothar.ie.

A group of teachers who recently travelled to Zambia with Bothar.

Deadline for motions

Branches are reminded that motions for Annual Convention 2009 must reach ASTI Head Office not later than November 30, 2008.

Ms Eileen Flynn

The ASTI would like to mark the passing of Ms Eileen Flynn of New Ross, Co. Wexford, who was dismissed from her school in 1983 for what one journalist recently described as her refusal to "be ashamed" of who and what she was.

Eileen challenged her dismissal from a secondary school. She was dismissed because she was an unmarried mother living with the father of her child, which the school's trustees believed to be contrary to the values and beliefs they wished to foster in students. Her appeals to the Employment Appeals Tribunal and to the courts did not succeed.

Eileen was not a member of a teaching union, which limited the ASTI's role in representation, though trade unions did rally to what they saw as a civil liberties matter. Such was the indignation within the trade union movement, combined with the determination of the ASTI to protect its members, that to our knowledge there has never been another such dismissal.

It is also worth noting that the response of her school may not have been the response of every school and that, at that time, the vast majority of schools were managed by a single manager and not by a board, as was the case from the late 1980s.

On the enactment of the 1998 Employment Equality Act, and with the understandable fears of ASTI members as to how the qualified protections (on ethos grounds) might apply to teachers, the ASTI decided to do everything possible to protect its members from any repetition of such an event.

While Eileen Flynn did not succeed in her appeals, the very fact of her challenges and the indignation that her dismissal unleashed made a repetition more difficult. To her husband, family and colleagues, we extend our sincere sympathies on their loss.

STARS

Some 37 second-level teachers took part in the 2008 Science Foundation Ireland Secondary Teacher Assistant Researchers (STARS) programme. The programme is designed to equip secondary school teachers with new skills and knowledge, which in turn can be passed on to pupils, thereby encouraging an active interest in science.

As part of the programme, teachers receive support to spend eight weeks during the summer holidays engaging in research alongside a researcher or research team funded by Science Foundation Ireland. STARS' primary goal is to help teachers to develop their interest in science as researchers, connect them with science faculties in a variety of universities and institutes of technology, and to enhance the teaching of science across our education system.

The participating teachers were awarded certificates by the Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr Jimmy Devins TD, in August. Speaking at the award ceremony, the Minister praised the STARS participants for "enthusiastically embracing the opportunity to forge close links with, and to work alongside, the scientific research community in Ireland. These teachers' active, hands-on interest in the very latest scientific developments is something from which their own students will benefit through the course of the forthcoming academic year and beyond".



Photograph courtesy of Jason Clarke.

Pictured at the Science Gallery in Trinity College Dublin were (from left): Professor Frank Gannon, Director General of SFI; Cian O'Mahoney, ASTI member and teacher at Douglas Community School, Douglas, Co. Cork, who was awarded a STARS Certificate; and, Dr Jimmy Devins TD, Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation.

ASTI member wins Teacher of the Year



Rose Uí Shuilleabháin, Rehab Teacher of the Year, pictured with Joe Moran, ASTI Vice-President, and Patricia Wroe, ASTI Immediate Past President.



Rose Uí Shuilleabháin, Rehab Teacher of the Year, pictured with Fiona Nic Charthaigh, Principal, Maria Immaculata Community College, Dunmanway, Co. Cork.

The first ever Rehab Teacher of the Year Award has been won by ASTI member Rose Uí Shuilleabháin, who teaches Irish and PE at Maria Immaculata Community College, Dunmanway, Co. Cork.

Rose was recognised by her colleagues, pupils and their parents as an inspirational teacher whose hard work and ability to instil confidence gives every student in her care a chance to shine. She is considered a mentor and friend to all her pupils, both during and after school hours. Rose was honoured for her teaching as well as the extracurricular work she has done in the school, such as setting up a group to promote the Irish language and coaching various sports teams. Rose says she doesn't gauge success by the number of medals won; far more important for her is the role that sport plays in building the self-esteem and confidence of her students, and in instilling in them a sense of dedication.

One particular reason behind Rose's award was the part she played in

saving the life of one of her students. 14-year-old Daniel Ross collapsed and suffered a cardiac arrest at the Munster Cross-Country Championships in January of this year. Rose, who had completed a lifesaving course shortly beforehand, acted quickly to perform CPR and manual resuscitation on the student. But for Rose's courageous and cool intervention, Daniel would not have survived. Daniel attended the People of the Year Awards ceremony with Rose on the night she received her award.

The Rehab People of the Year Awards honour outstanding contributions by individuals to life in Ireland. Nominations are welcomed on an all-island basis. This is the first year the Rehab People of the Year Awards has included a special award for Teacher of the Year, awarded in recognition of the very important role that teachers play in the lives of others, nurturing young people's talents, expanding their horizons and introducing them to the world of learning.

ACTION website

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has launched a website to provide information about past and ongoing work of the NCCA. The site is called ACTION, which stands for Assessment, Curriculum and Teaching Innovation on the Net, and it is available at <http://action.ncca.ie>. The new site differs from NCCA's other websites as it has been designed to show rather than tell, the how-to of curriculum implementation and change.

Three special projects are currently housed on ACTION, including Assessment for Learning, ICT Framework and English as an Additional Language. The site can host different types of media to show projects in action, for example videos, images or podcasts.

Finger injuries

According to Health and Safety Authority (HSA) statistics, finger injuries rank second only to back injuries as the most frequent work-related injury. Over the last three years, 2,749 finger injuries were reported to the HSA, while employees in the education sector reported 31 finger injuries over the last year alone.

Manual handling and the use of tools and machinery are significant causes of finger injuries in the workplace. ASTI Assistant General Secretary Pat King suggests that teachers read HSA guidance on working with equipment and manual handling, and that those who work with technical equipment ensure that it meets safety standards and that suitable guards and protection devices are installed.



Christmas at Head Office

ASTI Head Office will close on Tuesday 23 December 2008 at 12.30 and reopen on Monday 5 January 2009.

Annual Convention 2009

ASTI Annual Convention 2009 will be held in Killarney from April 14-16. Make sure to look out for further information and booking forms in *Nuacht* and *ASTIR*, and on the ASTI website – www.asti.ie.

Teaching Council bursaries

Some 25 teachers were awarded bursaries totalling €100,000 as part of the Teaching Council research bursaries scheme. The teachers are each undertaking research with a focus on teaching, learning and assessment. The Teaching Council has launched the scheme for 2009/2010. For more information, visit www.teachingcouncil.ie. ASTI members Anna-Marie Higgins, Caroline O'Brien and Eileen Butler were among those awarded bursaries.

Pictured at a ceremony for Teaching Council bursary recipients. Back row (from left): ASTI members on the Teaching Council: Máire Ni Laoire; Lily Cronin; Jack Keane; Bernadine O'Sullivan; Susie Hall; and, Dermot Quish. Front row (from left): Áine Lawlor, Director of the Teaching Council; Bursary recipients Anna-Marie Higgins, Caroline O'Brien and Eileen Butler; and, Joan Ward, Chairperson of the Teaching Council.



Special rates for part-time teachers

Part-time teachers joining the ASTI benefit from reduced membership subscription rates. Special membership rates for part-time teachers include:

- a rate of €118.30 per annum for fixed-term *pro-rata* contract teachers on 11 hours or more;
- a rate of €53 per annum for fixed-term *pro-rata* contract teachers on fewer than 11 hours; and,
- a rate of €53 for substitute teachers (non PRC or RPT).

There are also special rates for teachers with CIDs who teach for fewer than 18 hours.

For more information, contact ASTI membership, Tel: 01-6040162, or Email: membership@asti.ie. Membership application forms are available on the ASTI website – www.asti.ie.

Teaching Council focus groups

As part of its role in promoting teaching as a profession, the Teaching Council is currently planning a website, which will highlight the rewards associated with teaching as a career and publicly acknowledge the work that teachers do in preparing young people for life.

In order to ensure that the content accurately reflects the work of teachers and the rewards of teaching in Ireland today, the Council is currently planning a series of focus group meetings for teachers, which will take place regionally in late 2008. Practising teachers at primary or post-primary level who would like to contribute to this process are invited to contact Etain.furlong@teachingcouncil.ie. Later in the year, when more details are available in relation to venues and timing, the Council will contact all teachers who have expressed an interest in participating. When contacting the Council, teachers are requested to provide their registration number, which will be used to ensure a balanced attendance at meetings, having regard to education sectors, gender, subjects taught, regions, etc.

Global Schoolroom

Global Schoolroom was set up in 2006 by two ASTI members, Gwen Brennan and Dr Garret Campbell, who spent four weeks in the northeast of India facilitating teacher training workshops. The initiative is designed to help Irish teachers share their educational experience with their counterparts abroad to improve teaching standards, and so raise the quality of education provided.

Global Schoolroom has been sponsored since the outset by Cornmarket and is also supported by the three teacher unions. Following a very successful trip by eight Irish teachers in 2007, a team of 18 teachers, including ASTI members, travelled from Ireland to India's northeast for the month of July this year. Prior to their departure, the 2008 team spent some time preparing and training on the delivery of Global Schoolroom's new three-year Diploma in Teacher Education. This course has been accredited by UCD and diplomas will be awarded to Indian teachers who successfully complete all the required modules over the three years of the programme. The Global Schoolroom team was split into five groups to deliver the course in a number of different centres to approximately 300 local teachers.

The planning and preparation for Global Schoolroom 2009 is currently underway.

If you would like to apply for a place on Global Schoolroom's trip to India in July 2009, log onto www.cornmarket.ie/globalschoolroom to download an electronic copy of the application form. Alternatively, contact Breda O'Driscoll, Tel: 01-408 4116, or Email: breda.odriscoll@cornmarket.ie.

Please note: The deadline for receipt of application forms is November 24, 2008.

Membership details

It is very important that ASTI Head Office has the correct contact address for each member. Ballot papers for any future ASTI ballots will be sent to each member's most recent address. You can update your details by downloading the change of membership form on the ASTI website – www.asti.ie – or by emailing updated details to membership@asti.ie.



Pat Hurley goes back to school

ASTI President Pat Hurley, currently seconded to Dublin for his work as ASTI President, recently went back to catch up with colleagues in his school, CBS Midleton.

Pictured above are Pat and the entire staff of CBS Midleton.

Schools volunteer abroad

Calcutta

Students and teachers from St Joseph's Secondary School, Stanhope Street, Dublin 7, travelled to Calcutta last February to work in a school catering for street children. The group also visited and worked with children who attend schools in shelters, and visited the poor and ill. Gabrielle Cunningham, one of the teachers involved, said it was a very enriching experience for all involved. The school is currently organising a return trip for early 2009.



Catherine Murphy, a student at St Joseph's Secondary School, Stanhope Street, with one of the rescued street children in Calcutta.

South Africa

As part of Portmarnock Community School's South Africa Project, in February this year 33 students travelled to Kwazulu-Natal, near Lesotho, to work with HIV/AIDS orphans and their

communities. The group, which also included 41 adults with a variety of skills, worked on the construction of a feeding centre

in Franklin and an orphan house in Makoba.

The group also worked in Sacred Heart Secondary School, which is twinned with Portmarnock Community School. Over the coming years the South Africa Project hopes to work with the school towards the establishment of a supply of electricity, the construction of facilities, and setting up an IT lab and a teacher support network.

Students were divided into groups and rotated in different areas and, according to Niall FitzGerald, project co-ordinator: "They were a credit to their parents and school. Wherever they went they left a lasting impression". The Project is currently planning next year's programme.

Both of these projects were supported by ASTI funding.

Worldwise

The Irish Aid Schools Linking and Immersion Scheme, Worldwise, aims to raise awareness of development issues among Irish students, teachers and the wider community.

Worldwise provides funding to second-level schools and colleges involved in immersion and linking projects with partner schools or organisations in developing countries. Grants have been fully allocated for the 2008-09 school year; however, in preparation for the next funding deadline of March 27, 2009, information seminars and application workshops are taking place around the country.

For a list of workshops and seminars, visit <http://www.irishaid.gov.ie>.

ASTI seminars for non-permanent teachers



Cork seminar

Pictured at an information seminar for non-permanent teachers in Cork recently are (from left): Pat Hurley, ASTI President; Julie Roche; Ruth Nodwell; and, Bernard Moynihan, ASTI Industrial Relations Official.



Galway seminar

An ASTI information seminar for non-permanent teachers was held recently in Galway. Among those in attendance were (from left): Deirdre Fallon; Fiona Page; and, Jacinta Fahy.

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Vetting of teachers

The Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children was established in November 2007. The Committee issued an interim report in September outlining recommendations on the proposal in the amendment bill to give legal authority for the collection and exchange of information concerning the risk or the occurrence of endangerment, sexual exploitation or sexual abuse of children.

Following consultation, the Committee recommended that the Government prepare legislation to establish a statutory scheme for the vetting of all persons involved in working in any capacity with children; for the statutory regulation of the manner in which information in relation to criminal records may be exchanged and deployed for the purposes for ensuring the highest standards of child protection within the State; and, to require that all agencies, organisations, bodies, clubs, educational and childcare establishments, and groups working with children ensure that all of those working under their aegis are subject to vetting.

Since the establishment of the Teaching Council, all newly qualified teachers must submit to a vetting procedure prior to their registration with the Council. Discussions are currently underway as to the vetting process for teachers already in service. The ASTI believes that in relation to all professionals working with children, clarity is required around the issue of "soft information". The current understanding of this term is that it is information regarding people who are identified as a risk to children but who do not have a criminal conviction for child abuse. The definition of soft information requires a much more comprehensive analysis and clearer definition so as to preserve a proper balance in seeking to protect children without opening the way for the spreading of malicious or false rumours about an individual.

RSTA Christmas lunches

Branch officers are busy arranging Christmas lunches locally. The following lunches have been arranged:

Kildare

Wednesday November 26 at 12.30pm in the Silken Thomas. Lunch will be preceded by a Branch meeting in the Kildare Education Centre, Friary Road, Kildare Town.

Dublin

Wednesday December 3 at 1.00pm in Wynn's Hotel.

Limerick

Wednesday December 3 at 1.00pm in the South Court Hotel.

Cork

Thursday December 4 at 1.00pm in the Ambassador Hotel, Military Road. Lunch will be preceded by mass at 12 noon in Mary Mount for deceased members of the RSTA.

Wicklow

Friday December 5 at 12.30pm in the Powerscourt Golf Club. Branch members and partners are welcome. A welcoming drink will be provided for all.

Mayo

Saturday December 6 at 1.00pm in the Old Arch Bar and Bistro, Claremorris.

Galway

Tuesday December 9 at 2.00pm in the Park House Restaurant, Eyre Square.

Kerry

Tuesday December 9 in the Royal Hotel, Killarney. Lunch will be preceded by mass at 11.00am in the Franciscan Friary for present and deceased members of the RSTA.

Extraordinary general meeting

The EGM will be held in the South Court Hotel, Raheen, Limerick at 2.00pm on Wednesday February 4, 2009. The meeting is open to all members of the RSTA. Each branch is advised to send two voting members to the meeting. The names of the representatives should be forwarded to the National Secretary not later than January 15, 2009. Any member who does not have a copy of the draft rules should get in touch with Eileen Kelly, National Secretary, Tel: 01-2986951.

Christmas celebrations

ASTI President Pat Hurley, and the officers of the ASTI, will host the annual Christmas buffet/coffee morning in ASTI House on Tuesday December 16, from 11.00am to 1.00pm.

Please RSVP Eileen Kelly, Tel: 01 2986951, before December 11.

Meeting the President



Pictured at Arás an Uachtaráin are (from left): RSTA member Margaret Walsh; Dr Martin McAleese; President Mary McAleese; and, RSTA member, Phil Dunning.

Thank you

Noreen Briscoe, Galway Branch, has completed 11 years of service on behalf of the branch. Her colleagues want to say a special 'thank you'!

Congratulations

Members and friends of the Kildare Branch have successfully completed their walk in the Camino, Spain. All agree it was worth the effort.

New York, New York



A group of RSTA members visited New York this summer. Pictured on the boardwalk at Coney Island are: back row (from left): John Kennedy; Michael McMahon; and, Louis O'Flaherty. Front row (from left): Aileen O'Donnell; Anne Kennedy; Marie O'Flaherty; and, Vourneen Gallagher.

Bottom of the table

DIARMAID DE PAOR analyses the latest OECD 'Education at a Glance' report, and finds that Ireland's position has not improved.



They didn't fix the roof while the sun was shining!

September again and the annual 'Education at a Glance' report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is published; another report that is, yet again, an indictment of the Government's failure to invest in education. As in previous years, the report shows that, as one of the world's richest countries, Ireland's record in this area is shameful. And remember, this report typically deals with figures up to 2006 at the latest – so the excuse of our current economic woes holds no water.

In 'Education at a Glance 2008', Ireland's investment in education is shown time and time again to be in the bottom half of OECD countries in measure after measure of investment. For example, we come 27th out of 29 countries when it comes to the amount of GDP per capita invested in each second-level student. Of the OECD countries measured (there are no figures available for Turkey), only the Slovak Republic and Mexico spend a smaller proportion of their wealth on second-level education.

It has been argued that one of the reasons for this low level of investment is that we are coming from a very low base (because of difficult economic times in the 1980s) and we need to be allowed time to catch up. However, despite 15 years of economic boom, spending on education has not kept pace. The report deals with the increase in spending on education and throws up some interesting, if depressing, figures.

Breaking down the figures

The report does show that spending in Ireland has increased in recent years. However, the report also shows that the proportion of our GDP invested in education actually decreased in the period from 1995 to 2005. Just over a decade ago, when the Celtic Tiger was just a cub, Ireland invested 5.2% of GDP in education. By 2005 that figure had dropped to 4.6%. This figure should be read in the context of an average OECD spend of 5.8% of GDP on education. This means that the average OECD country spends over 25% more of its wealth on educating its children than we do. Yet again, only two countries (of the 28 measured) spend less than us. This time the Slovak Republic is joined by Greece. Those of you who teach in overcrowded classrooms will not be surprised to learn that when it comes to pupil-teacher ratio, Ireland, yet again, comes towards the bottom of the league. In fact, only seven out of the 30 OECD countries have worse pupil-teacher ratios than ours. This supports the evidence of the ASTI's 2007 survey, which showed that almost two-thirds of 15-year-old students in Irish schools are in classes of 25 or more, while 16% are in classes of 30 or more.

In the context of public service spending

The figures in 'Education at a Glance' should not come as a surprise to anyone who has read another OECD report published this year.

In 'Ireland: Towards an Integrated Public Service, an OECD Public Management Review', the OECD points out that: "Public expenditures have risen sharply, but from a low base and at a slower rate than overall economic growth". This tendency for public expenditure to lag behind economic growth has placed Ireland in a familiar position on a table that shows overall government spending as a percentage of GDP. This report gives the lie to myths propagated in some of our newspapers and by many of our economic commentators, and states that:

In comparison with other OECD countries, Ireland has been able to deliver public services with a public sector that is relatively small given the size of its economy and labour force. Even when factoring in infrastructure investment, Ireland has the third smallest total public expenditure as a percentage of GDP, and this figure has actually decreased over the past 10 years.

Over and over again, we read how the Irish public service is overstaffed and that we could solve most of our economic woes by adopting a policy of 'slash and burn' across a wide range of state and semi-state bodies and organisations. What the OECD says is this:

Government policy has... actually decreased the total number of public sector employees as a percentage of the labour force and decreased the overall public sector wage bill as a percentage of GDP.

Miracle workers

So where does this leave Ireland's public service, and its schools in particular? The answer is struggling and performing minor miracles every day. Despite the chronic under-investment in Irish education, we still manage to perform well in terms of producing well-educated well-rounded students who are adaptable and capable of performing well in the workforce. I will not restate the arguments about the importance of education to our economic well-being. They have been expounded again and again. In an article in *ASTIR* last year, written on the occasion of the publication of 'Education at a Glance 2007', I discussed the OECD's consideration of the economic investment in education. These arguments are re-emphasised in this year's report, which devotes two chapters to

analysing the private and public benefits of education. Apart from increased earning power for individuals, the report also emphasises the increased tax revenue accruing to governments from these individuals. The report goes on to state:

In practice, raising levels of education will give rise to a complex set of fiscal effects on the benefit side, beyond the effects of revenue growth based on wages and payments to government. For instance, better-educated individuals generally have better health, which lowers public expenditure on provision of health care and thus public expenditure. As earnings generally rise with educational attainment, there is more consumption of goods and services among the more educated, and this gives rise to fiscal effects beyond income tax and social security contributions.

In conclusion, Ireland needs well-educated young men and women leaving our schools; young men and women who have the knowledge and skills to adapt and thrive in a fast-changing world and therefore contribute to continuing economic prosperity in the future. In order for the education system to continually adapt and perform, we need proper investment. We did not fix the roof while the sun was shining. If we do not fix it as the storm clouds are gathering and the rain is beginning to come in, by the time the storm has passed the foundations may have been so badly damaged that it will take a long time to rebuild.



Diarmaid de Paor
ASTI Deputy General Secretary.



WorldWise aims to raise awareness of development issues among Irish students, teachers and the wider community, and to heighten interest in and the relevance of development education within the post-primary curriculum.



Irish Aid
Department of Foreign Affairs
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha

Are you interested in linking with a partner school in the developing world?

Do you already have links with schools or organisations in the global south?

Would you like to learn more about forming partnerships with schools in developing countries?

WorldWise provides funding to Irish second-level schools and colleges that are involved in immersion and linking projects with partner schools or organisations in developing countries.

Preparations are underway for the next round of funding, with an application deadline of **27 March 2009**. Information Seminars are taking place around the country in November and January, followed by Application Workshops in early 2009.

If you'd like to find out more, check for details of upcoming events at www.irishaid.gov.ie/worldwise/about_semin.htm or contact the WorldWise team at (01) 873 1411 or worldwise@leargas.ie



The big issues

GEMMA TUFFY spoke to the Labour Party's education spokesperson, Ruairi Quinn.

The important place that education holds among the Irish public was not underestimated by the Labour Party when it appointed political veteran Ruairi Quinn as its spokesperson for education in September 2007. The former Labour Party leader was first elected to the Dail in 1977 and has held five ministerial positions to date, including Minister for Finance from 1994 to 1997, and Minister for Labour from 1984 to 1987.

"There seems to be a very strong social consensus among parents and education providers that education is a good thing that should be supported," says Ruairi Quinn. He believes that second-level schools are performing well, but is concerned that a minority of students who drop out of the system are being neglected. He blames the Government for failing to ensure early and consistent intervention. "Children are falling out of the system for a variety of reasons, many of those related to literacy, and if you come into the second-level system unable to read or with poor literacy, you are destined to fail," he says.

As opposition spokesperson, Quinn prefers to stick to what he identifies as the main issues in education, such as funding, educational disadvantage and third-level fees: "You can have arguments about remedial teachers, pupil-teacher ratios, and resources for science labs, but this is the detail". The real issue, he adds, is the need for greater investment in education.

Controversy

Not shy of controversy, earlier this year Quinn told one newspaper that the hijab should not be worn in schools in which the Department of Education is the patron. A media circus ensued. He defends his position, pointing out that he gave an honest answer to a specific question asked by a journalist. "It was a considered comment," he says, adding that his opinion is based on the experiences of other countries, which "welcomed people into their economy, but failed to fully realise the need to integrate people into society". The Irish Government, he says, has been boasting about the increase in the labour force, but the recent crises in relation to primary school places demonstrate its failure to understand the implications for the education system. "I would be concerned that the hijab – which is a dramatic statement of dress – accentuates differences at a time when the immigrant population has increased rapidly. I would hate to see this country experiencing anti-immigration backlashes."

Ruairi Quinn on ...

Teacher unity

Ruairi Quinn was Minister for Labour and Public Services during the Teachers' United campaign in the 1980s and was involved in direct negotiations that led to the settlement of the dispute. "What struck me was the strength of the teaching profession when the three unions came together. And in the subsequent general election it struck me that the teaching profession was so revered. Just think of the possibilities that



Photograph courtesy of the Labour Party

Labour spokesperson on education, Ruairi Quinn.

Funding of education

Some months ago, Ruairi Quinn told *The Irish Times* that Ireland needs to double its spending on education over the next five years. Given the deterioration in public finances and the economic outlook since he made this comment, does he still stand by it?

"Yes I do. We need a national consensus on the issue that recognises some facts. Our population is growing. The present Government is spending less as a percentage of GDP on education than was the case 10 or 12 years ago. In the voluntary secondary sector, we have failed to address the contribution of the religious, who have largely disappeared, and this sector is now underfunded compared to the VEC. Wherever you look in education, there are funding issues. We have a centre-right Government, which has consistently starved education ... Now we need value for money and efficient spending ... But arguing over pupil-teacher ratios and resources for science labs avoids the elephant in the room, which is that if you want a knowledge-based society and a knowledge-based economy, you have to invest in it ... this broad strategic attitude must be faced up to."

could be created, not just from the point of view of the trade unions, but in terms of teachers working more closely together on a professional level ... and being able to get more out of the profession and teaching as a career".

A favourite teacher

Ruairi Quinn recalls Seamus Grace (now deceased), his third-year English teacher at Blackrock College, who did not always stick to the prescribed curriculum, but whose teaching methods were "liberating ... He taught us to think for ourselves, to argue our point of view".



Ruairi Quinn pictured with students from CBS Westland Row, Dublin at the GCE World's Biggest Lesson 2008.

Fee-paying schools

A fierce opponent of third-level fees, which were abolished by his colleague, the former Labour Education Minister Niamh Bhreathnach, in 1995, Quinn is quick to dismiss assertions by some commentators that the end of fees led to a boom in applications for fee-paying second-level schools. "I wouldn't accept that. There has been a boom in disposable income over the past 10 years and I think grind schools have been the main beneficiaries of this. Fee-paying schools are confined to a small geographical area," he says. But he is adamant that this is no argument for the return of third-level fees as it misses the point – that education in Ireland is underfunded.

The present Government is spending less as a percentage of GDP on education than was the case 10 or 12 years ago.

Ruairi Quinn is ...

TD for the Dublin South East constituency. First elected to the Dáil in 1977, he has also served as a Senator and City Councillor. He was appointed Minister of State for the Environment in 1982, and went on to serve as Minister for Labour ('84-'87), Minister for Public Service ('86-'87), Minister for Enterprise and Employment ('93-'94), and Minister for Finance ('94-'97). A former leader of the Labour Party, he is an architect by profession.

League tables

Quinn is sympathetic to the idea that league tables distort the truth about schools. However, he adds that: "We are in an open consumerist society, where people have access to information about many things", and that there "is a gap between what people want to know and what the Department of Education and the teaching profession are prepared to make known". This, he says, is regrettable, given that second-level schools are performing well; he believes that in the absence of official information, parents will use the current "informal league tables" as a guide, when "official information" could be "balanced information". "Straightforward comparison of schools' Leaving Cert results can be very misleading, but not everyone agrees that a school's achievements are based on points in the Leaving ... I think the Department of Education and the teaching profession should work to bring forward a set of criteria through which information on schools should be made available." Such information, he feels, could include "support services for special needs students, the range of skills contained within the staff, and professional development courses taken by teachers".



Gemma Tuffy,
Media and Communications Officer, ASTI.

Securing the future for the next generation

ASTIR takes a look at some of the issues explored at the recent ASTI Education Conference.

Recent months have seen the ASTI, along with many other commentators, urging that continued investment in education is needed in order to help Ireland through the current economic downturn. The theme of this year's ASTI Education Conference, 'Securing the Future for our Young People' was chosen in this context and, according to Christina Henehan, Chairperson of the ASTI Education Committee, offered teachers a chance to reflect on past success, to take a broader look at trends in education, and to inform teachers of the way things are likely to develop in the future.

The Conference was addressed by Dr Rory O'Donnell, Director of the National Economic and Social Council (NESCC), who provided an overview of recent work by the NESCC illustrating the contribution Ireland's educational system made to the country's economic development over the last decade. Finland's education system, often hailed as one of the most successful in the world, is similarly tied to that nation's economic development. Mr Olavi Arra of the National Education Union Finland addressed the conference on the Finnish education system to see what lessons Irish educationalists might learn from the Finnish model.

Education and the economy

The Irish economy is widely acknowledged to have been one of the world's most successful over the last decade, with rates of economic growth well above the OECD average. An emphasis on education and technological innovation is among the factors identified by groups such as Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland as having a significant impact on the country's success. Economic growth is acknowledged to have rested on the combination of a highly educated labour supply, strategic investment and pragmatic policy in relation to attracting inward investment. In 2003, at a time of heightened inward investment, Dr Heinrich von Pierer, then President and Chief Executive of Siemens AG, spoke of his respect for the Irish educational system and its contribution to Ireland as "an opportune business environment".

The Government has seen much success in its stated goal of developing Ireland as a knowledge economy. Education and training is a vital

component in that aim and the National Development Plan 2007-2013 allocated €25.8 billion to that priority area. This commitment to prioritise education must not be rolled back at this critical time. A recent report by the NESCC, 'The Irish Economy in the Early 21st Century', stresses the need to sustain progress in education in order to bolster the economy. A key theme in this report is the far-reaching cumulative effect of education; good primary education provides a foundation for successful second-level education, which in turn feeds into the quality of third- and fourth-level graduates – a key factor in attracting, sustaining and developing business. In this context, while it must be acknowledged that we are facing tighter economic circumstances, education must be properly resourced and careful identification of priorities for investment is necessary.

The Finnish example

The NESCC report urges that Ireland look to international best practice to indicate priorities for investment and policy in education. Finland, like Ireland, is a country that cannot compete on low costs and has, since the 1970s, been investing focus and resources into education and training as a matter of economic survival. By conscious measures the country has achieved an education system that continually scores top marks in OECD PISA studies. The Irish Government might take note that Finland has consistently spent a higher proportion of its GDP on education than Ireland, even as it was emerging from a serious economic crisis in the early 1990s. Funding for education in Finland is provided by both the Government and local authorities, and is based on actual operating costs for each form of education on a per unit basis. Finland's current priorities for educational development, as set out in its most recent plan for education, include raising the level of education, upgrading competencies among the population, improving the efficiency of the education system, and preventing exclusion.

Like Finland, Ireland has achieved high educational standards, which must now not only be sustained but improved upon. The expert group on Future Skills Needs estimates that by 2020 Ireland will face a shortfall of some



4,700 graduates a year, and while the Leaving Certificate completion rate has improved over the past decade, there remains evidence of high levels of serious absenteeism in schools. Education is a key to social inclusion and to improving life chances. Regardless of whether a student progresses to third level, schools build the foundations of literacy and numeracy and teach students how to learn – building skills for life as well as work. This is acknowledged by the NESC report, which notes that all the important work that takes place in schools must be considered when measuring the success of an education system. The report emphasises the need for positive educational experience and notes the pivotal contribution of the gifted teacher in this regard, stating: “a high status for the teaching profession is a national asset that should be carefully guarded”.

Budget fallout

Strategies to ensure a positive learning environment, to counter the exclusion of marginalised children, and to encourage all children to reach their potential are required at this time. Budget 2009 implies, however, that this need is not being acknowledged by the Government. Among the cuts outlined in the Budget were an increase in class size, the delay of the implementation of the EPSEN Act, the reintroduction of a ceiling of two on language support posts, and the withdrawal of teachers' posts provided

under disadvantage schemes to non-DEIS schools. This is a serious failure of the state on behalf of some of its most vulnerable children at a time when their future is most at risk.

The recent Budget also saw cuts in child benefit for children of 18 years of age, making it more difficult for children to stay in education. Finland, in contrast, takes a practical and wide-ranging view to educational inclusion – all education is free and school meals and transport are either free or subsidised. Finland's education system places an emphasis on attitude as well as investment, and operates an egalitarian, broad-based education system where all students are educated at the same level until they are 16, when they decide whether to go on to academic upper secondary school or to vocational education. Very few students drop out of education or training altogether; according to the most recent OECD figures, Finland has a 95% upper secondary completion rate.

Education is vital to economic and social wellbeing and, as we enter into a time of economic uncertainty, there is a need for quality education to ensure that our young people are supported and equipped with the knowledge and social skills to enable them to participate in and contribute to our rapidly changing social and economic environment. The clear message from ASTI Education Conference 2008 was that Ireland cannot afford to under-invest in education in this critical period.



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

Certificate Examinations 2009

Appointment for Oral and Practical Examinations.

Applications are invited for appointment as Assistant Examiner of:-

(1) Oral tests at the Leaving Certificate Examinations

(2) Practical / Project tests at the Certificate Examinations

Completed application forms should be returned to the State Examinations Commission (SEC) to arrive no later than **Friday 28th November 2008**. Postage must be prepaid on all applications. A supply of application forms for the above positions has issued to all second level schools.

Application forms are also available from the recruitment section of the SEC website www.examinations.ie or by contacting:

Orals Section: 090644 - 2745 / 2747
e-mail: orals@examinations.ie

Practicals Section: 090644 - 2751 / 2862
e-mail: practicals@examinations.ie

Application forms through Irish are available on request from the SEC, Cornamaddy, Athlone.

The SEC is committed to a policy of equal opportunity.



The inclusive school and interculturalism

DERMOT QUISH argues for the intercultural approach to creating truly inclusive schools.

A major aspiration cherished for the education system by the Celtic Tiger in the bloom of its health has been the training of our young people, at all levels of the system, to develop the knowledge economy.

The inclusive school

A conflict of interests underpins the system. The conflict exists between those primarily concerned with academic achievement and those concerned with holistic education. Teachers are often caught in the middle and are expected to achieve on both counts.

The *Codes of Professional Practice* (2007), published by An Chomhairle Mhuinteoireachta, studiously avoid any reference to teacher responsibility for examination results, but they do state our role in passing on the core values of social justice, equality and inclusion:

Teachers in their professional role show commitment to democracy, social justice, equality and inclusion. They encourage active citizenship and support students in thinking critically about significant social issues, in valuing and accommodating diversity, and in responding appropriately.

The 1998 Education Act formalised the rights of all children to education, including the right of access to all schools. The Act obliges schools to provide for a diversity of needs, values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society. Since 1998, a policy of inclusion has been adopted and promoted at both primary and post-primary levels. A number of documents and guidelines have been issued to schools with the aim of raising awareness and cultivating a policy of inclusion of all students.

Inclusion is thus seen as a strategy for responding to diversity and a means of delivering social justice (Rix and Simmons, 2005; Dyson, 1999).

The Gleeson Report on Development Education in Post Primary Schools (2007)

Part of the research in this Report was a survey of the attitudes to new nationals of second-year Junior Certificate students and first-year Leaving Certificate Established and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme students (fifth year).

Using a sampling frame similar to that used in the PISA study, a large representative sample of 120 out of the total population of 743 post-primary schools was selected for the study. Responses were received from 1,193 post-primary teachers and 4,970 young people. This means that the scale of the study is unprecedented across EU and OECD countries.

The results were heartening and indicate that the present generation, as a result of actual contact with newcomers and the quality of education received in school, has very positive attitudes and construct very low levels of social distance in dealing with new nationals in the classroom and outside. This is a major improvement on findings in the past among adults. For example, the 1980s sociological research findings of Michéal Mac Gréil included the statistic that 10.8% of Irish people believed that black people were inferior to white people. A more recent Eurobarometer survey in 2000 found that 13% had negative attitudes to minorities (NCCA, 2006: p.6). However, one particularly disturbing finding of the Gleeson survey is the strength of negative feelings towards Travellers.



Interculturalism

In October 2006 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) issued its progressive publication, 'Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School, Guidelines for Schools'. Its subtitle, 'Enabling students to respect and celebrate diversity, to promote equality and to challenge unfair discrimination', encapsulates the core principles that point the way for the document's philosophical direction. Interculturalism is defined as a belief that recognises that we all become personally enriched by coming into contact with and experiencing other cultures, and that there should be a learning engagement between people of different cultural backgrounds. The publication defines intercultural education as follows:

It is an education which respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all parts of human life. It sensitises the learner to the idea that humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of life, customs and worldviews, and that this breadth of human life enriches all of us. It is education which promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination and promotes the values upon which equality is built. (NCCA, 2006: p.i)

The education methods promoted by the guidelines are a synthesis of the learning from multicultural education and anti-racist education approaches that were commonly used internationally from the 1960s through to the 1990s. Some of the key features are:

- targeting all students of all ages, not just those in diverse schools;
- use of dialogue and story to facilitate student expression;
- recognition of the importance of the hidden curriculum with its images and values; and,
- in-depth focus on ethnicity and culture, and not just on colour.

The NCCA guidelines were developed by Dr Roland Tormey and the Centre for Educational Disadvantage Research, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. They are an outstanding contribution nationally and, I suspect, internationally, to the education discourse on cultural diversity in the classroom. They bring the issues beyond the multicultural dimension favoured in the UK or the assimilationist position in France. The problem with pure multiculturalism is that it can entrench social and cultural fragmentation, which may threaten social cohesion.

The problem with assimilation is that it fails to recognise the need of minorities to find recognition and self-identity through their ethnic cultural background.

Interculturalism provides for a dialogue between the host country and the new nationalities and between the new nationalities. The resulting processes of sharing, communicating, stimulating, inspiring and supporting can enhance all of our lives. Indeed, we are talking about forces that have always been central to the development of civilisation. This approach is premised on a dynamic and not a static concept of social culture. As teachers, our work involves touching the future. Interculturalism is the medium through which we must move forward in a world, and an Ireland, experiencing greater contact with cultural diversity.

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Dermot Quish

Dermot Quish is a former President of the ASTI. He took an MA in Curriculum and Assessment and is currently studying for a Doctorate (Ed. Doc) at St Patrick's College, DCU. He teaches geography in Santa Sabina, Sutton, in Dublin. He represents Leinster voluntary secondary schools on the Teaching Council of Ireland.

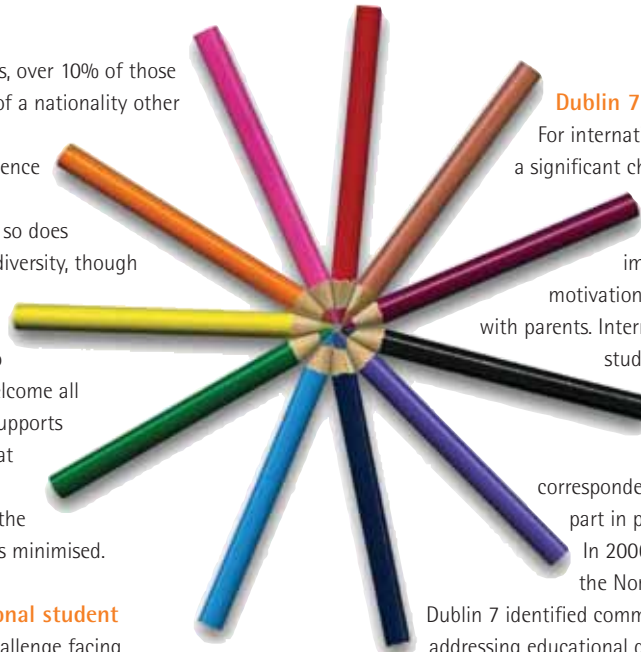
Intercultural initiatives

BRIGID FITZGERALD looks at three initiatives that are trying to make a real difference to international students and their families.

According to 2006 Census figures, over 10% of those currently resident in Ireland are of a nationality other than Irish. This represents a 66% increase on the 2002 figure. Evidence suggests that, as the number of international residents increases, so does the variety of nationalities. This diversity, though welcome, presents new challenges for schools. Teachers and schools have worked hard to meet these challenges and to welcome all students, but a variety of extra supports are needed in order to ensure that international students are adequately catered for and that the impact on day-to-day teaching is minimised.

Challenges for the international student

Language is the most obvious challenge facing schools and international students. Language support teacher posts have been created but despite the clear need for resources in this area, the recent budget saw the reintroduction a cap of two language support teachers per school, except in exceptional circumstances. According to Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary: Education and Research: "The allocation is not sufficient and fails to take account of individual circumstances. Moreover, language support alone is not enough to meet all the needs of international students, or to support schools to work towards good intercultural relations". This is acknowledged by the Department, which has stated that schools should have policies and procedures in place to promote and facilitate the inclusion of all children, that they should be committed to creating an inclusive environment and to providing equality of curriculum access. While the NCCA has issued guidelines to identify the ways in which intercultural education can be integrated into the curriculum at second level, other measures are required. The guidelines state that subject teachers are not only teachers of their subject, but they are also language teachers and their classrooms are language classrooms. However, as Moira Leydon points out, teachers have received virtually no training to develop this new role: "To ensure the success of any curriculum interventions, teachers must be provided with the appropriate training, support, skills and knowledge". A properly-resourced approach, supported at a national level, is required. However, individual initiatives have demonstrated the positive and practical work that can be done in the area of educational interculturalism. These initiatives show that the challenges facing the education system in accommodating international students and celebrating diversity are not insurmountable, provided that appropriate and considered plans, policies and resources are put in place.



Dublin 7 Schools Cultural Mediation Project

For international students and their families, language can be a significant challenge when entering the Irish education system. Unfamiliar school structures, policies and practices may also prove problematic. To improve levels of participation, achievement and motivation, there is a need for schools to build relationships with parents. International students are no different to Irish students in this respect. They do, however, have the additional challenges whereby their parents may not speak English and are therefore unable to assist with homework, understand correspondence from the school or school policies, or take part in parent-teacher meetings.

In 2006, members of the Intercultural Working Group of the North West Inner City Network and principals in Dublin 7 identified communication and connectivity as a key challenge in addressing educational disadvantage among minority language children. The Dublin 7 Schools Cultural Mediation Project was established to respond to this challenge in a practical and direct way.

The aim of the project was to promote mutual respect, good relations and frequent interactions between education services and migrant parents in the area. Through interpretation and translation services, the project sought to ensure that parents of international students in schools in the Dublin 7 area were accommodated to participate in their children's education and to become a part of their school community. The willingness of schools to engage with the service at an early stage brought the commitment that was needed for the programme to succeed. Between January 2007 and March 2008, 75 policy documents and over 250 smaller communications were translated into 15 different languages. Principals indicated a marked increase in the number of parents attending meetings and responding to information circulated. As well as the interpretation and translation service, social gatherings in schools provided ongoing support to parents and supported cultural integration between parents. Parents built trust in the schools and increased confidence in interaction with staff, and in so doing, got a greater sense of involvement in their children's education.

Despite the positive response to the programme, funding from the Department of Justice was discontinued in June of this year. The ASTI has written to the Minister of State for Integration, Conor Lenihan, on behalf of the project and to urge that schools need initiatives of this kind to ensure that already marginalised students are supported.

Education Inclusion Initiative

As a result of the work of the D7 programme, two similar projects were established, including the Education Inclusion Initiative (EII) run by the Lantern Centre – an intercultural centre sponsored by the European

Province of the Christian Brothers. This initiative was set up with a similar aim to that of the D7 programme – to support schools in the task of developing greater inclusion of families in the education of their children. The EII network includes 15 schools in Dublin 8 and Portlaoise, which cater for families from 44 different nationalities. The connection to the Lantern Centre allows EII to engage directly with international families and to attempt to establish reasons why parents are not more actively involved in their children’s education. Michael Murray, who runs the Centre, believes that cultural diversity is an ongoing issue: “We are only at the tip of the iceberg. There will always be issues of exploitation and dislocation and there is no cure-all. But you have to help people to learn to cope. Guidelines are not enough, you need resources to implement the guidelines and policy needs to come from consultation”. EII works towards two aims – firstly, to encourage parents to go to the schools, and secondly, to make sure the schools are ready to meet them.

Like the D7 Schools project, EII offers a translation and interpretation service to schools to aid communication with parents whose English is limited. Additionally, however, the initiative aims to improve intercultural competence within schools through the provision of in-service professional development. The initiative part-funds teachers from the schools in its areas to pursue a postgraduate diploma in intercultural competence – two modules of which are administered through Trinity College School of Education as part of the initiative.

According to Michael, teachers must be taught the knowledge and skills required to become open to multiculturalism. The first module in the diploma attempts to cater for this aspect. The second module involves the teacher taking on, researching and implementing a project that furthers intercultural relations or education in their school.

The initiative offers the translation and interpretation service free of charge but often there is a reliance on good will rather than responsibility – teachers take the duty on of their own accord but don’t really have the time. Michael believes there is a need for advocacy in schools and hopes that posts of responsibility will be created in schools so that one person takes on and champions the issue of interculturalism. He lobbies school trustees to create such positions in the hope that the training provided by the EII will afford teachers the ability in advance so that when such a post is created, there will be a qualified and committed teacher to take it on.

Intercultural liaison

Newpark Comprehensive School is one school that does have such a role and a committed teacher. Some years ago, teachers and management in the school became aware of how little they knew about international

students, and how urgently they needed help and training for the intercultural classroom. At that time, the school had a number of unaccompanied minor students, as well as students from migrant families and embassy students.

Following research, they contacted the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) who provided intercultural and racism awareness training for 40 teachers in the school free of charge and outside of school hours. This training allowed for a safe space for teachers to examine their own attitudes and views in preparation for welcoming and accommodating international students. As numbers of international students grew, the school came to recognise that international students have needs outside language learning, which are often very difficult for schools to address. A need for a role to go beyond English language support was identified and an intercultural liaison person was appointed in the school. The role, which was filled by Fiona Ni Fhaolain, is wholly dedicated to the issue of interculturalism. Fiona looks after pastoral care in relation to international students; she liaises with form teachers and parents and keeps up to date with what is happening externally. She works closely with other teachers and management in an advisory and awareness-building role.

Fiona also provides a link between home and school for international students. Early on it was found that parents of international children were not coming in to the school or were reluctant to do so. The school held a social evening for parents of international students to meet with a few key people from the school and parents from the PTA. The social evening is now an annual event and means that when parents come into school at other times they see friendly and familiar faces. Derek Lowry, Principal of Newpark Comprehensive, believes that time for planning is crucial in accommodating international students: “If you are going to include children properly you need someone with extra time to take on the task, and including the issue in the whole school is also important. Teachers do great work, but co-ordination and time to plan are vital”.



Making history – some milestones in the ASTI's past

As the ASTI prepares to celebrate its centenary in 2009, *ASTIR* looks back at some significant events in the Association's 100-year history.



Pictured at the launch of the ASTI's Centenary Calendar of Events at St Colman's College are (from left): John White, ASTI General Secretary; Gerry O'Sullivan and Matt Birmingham, Fermoy Branch; and, Pat Hurley, ASTI President.

1909 – Foundation

On St Patrick's Day 1909, a group of teachers from Munster gathered in Cork College of Commerce in response to an invitation issued by teachers from St Colman's College, Fermoy, to establish 'an association similar to the INTO'. A meeting was held in the Mansion House, Dublin, in July 1909, at which the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland, was founded.

1912 – A first victory

Following consultation with the ASTI, Augustine Birrell, Chief Secretary for Ireland, announced a scheme that saw an annual Teacher's Salaries Grant of £40,000 made available to intermediate education – a lay teacher salary of £120 in boys' schools and £80 in girls' schools.

1919 – Trade union

In July 1919, the ASTI voted to register as a trade union and to seek affiliation to the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress.

1920 – First strike

On St Patrick's Day 1920, a resolution was passed by the Munster Provincial Council in Cork that strike should be considered as an option for redressing grievances such as a cost of living wage increase demand made by ASTI's Standing Committee. At a general meeting in Dublin, held on April 7, the Cork Branch was given authority to call for a localised strike, which began on Monday May 3, 1920, and was the first strike by Irish teachers.

1937 – Security of tenure

In response to lobbying by the ASTI, a security of tenure scheme was ratified by the Department of Education and Science.

1946 – Salary scheme

In June 1946, the Minister for Education announced a salary scheme for secondary teachers, including increases in the salary scale and qualification allowances, as well as a rent allowance.

1971 – Gaining strength

By the early 1970s, following an exam boycott in 1964 and an abortive strike in 1971, the ASTI had established itself as a vibrant organisation with rising membership.

1974 – Teaching hours

An emergency resolution was passed at the 1974 convention instructing members not to accept a teaching load of more than 22 hours a week for the forthcoming academic year.

1980s – Teachers united

The most significant event for the ASTI in the 1980s came on December 5, 1985, when 20,000 teachers joined together to form a mass rally in Croke Park to demand a pay increase of between 18% and 22%.

A list of events planned to celebrate the ASTI centenary year has been distributed to all schools.

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Recent salary decision in favour of part-time teacher

A rights commissioner has found that a part-time teacher paid privately by a school is entitled to the same salary *pro-rata* as a full-time teacher paid by the Department of Education and Science.

The teacher was working in the school on a contract of indefinite duration (CID), following four successive fixed-term contracts. The teacher performed the same work as a comparable teacher in the same school paid by the Department of Education and Science, and held the same duties and responsibilities as a full-time teacher.

The claim rested on the fact that if the claimant had full hours, and was in a Department-funded position, she would be paid by the Department of Education at the appropriate rate based on the teachers' salary scale, and would progress up the incremental scale. Before the claim was brought to the rights commissioner, the ASTI had made the case to the school to pay the correct rate, to no avail.



The case

For the purposes of the claim, the claimant submitted a comparison with another specific Department-paid teacher in the school. Unlike this teacher, the claimant was not entitled to sick leave, or to other Department-funded leave facilities.

The school stated that the teacher's remuneration had no relationship to the Department of Education, as is the case for all privately-paid teachers in the school, both full and part time.

The school also contended that there was no basis for the claimant making a comparison between herself and an incrementally paid teacher employed by the Department for the purposes of remuneration. The school submitted that the proper comparator for the claim is a fully privately-paid teacher within the school.

The decision

On consideration of the submissions and arguments, the rights commissioner awarded in favour of the claimant. The decision stated that the claimant and the comparable Department-paid teacher perform the same work under the same and/or similar conditions. The work performed by each teacher is equal to the work performed by the other employee concerned, having regard for matters such as skill, physical or mental requirements, responsibilities and working conditions. The rights commissioner therefore concluded that the claimant's case was "well founded" and awarded the teacher a CID that was comparable to colleagues in the full-time staff.

Máire Mulcahy, Assistant General Secretary, commended the teacher for sticking with the claim and seeing it through. She said: "This decision vindicates the ongoing work of the ASTI to secure uniform salaries and conditions of employment for teachers, irrespective of their hours or source of salary". A number of cases involving the ASTI have resulted in the school agreeing to pay the correct Department of Education salary to privately paid teachers. However, the rights commissioner's decision is open to appeal and a similar decision in favour of a teacher in another school has been appealed to the Labour Court.

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Alternatively call Opel Ireland on 01-216 1033.

Offer is open to ASTI members and their families. Terms and conditions apply.

Obituary

Mr Aidan Harte

At the start of the new school year, we were jolted by the death of our member, Aidan Harte, of Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim.

Born in 1939 in Cootehill, Co. Cavan, Aidan was educated in the local national school before going as a boarder to St Patrick's College, Cavan. After the Leaving Certificate, he joined the ACC bank, Dublin, while at night he studied for his BA in UCD. He taught in Terenure College before returning to teach in Kilnaleck VS, Cavan. In 1966 he went to Uganda, where he taught for three years. On his return he joined the staff of Loreto College, Cavan, where he taught until his retirement.

A year before he retired he was diagnosed with cancer and this began another new stage in his life, which he referred to as his 'Chemo Saga'. As local news correspondent for the *Leitrim Observer* he shared very publicly his hopes, treatment and joy in his initial success with his readers.

He was a keen student of local history and week after week he regaled his readers with happenings from the past. For many years he was an active member of the local Cornmill Theatre, playing 'Peader' in *The Honey Spike* and 'the bishop' in John B. Keane's *The Field*, among many others. He took a keen interest in the success of his students and many bore testimony to his great humanity and support in difficult situations. He enjoyed meeting his many friends at the RSTA meetings and outings. He was proud of the growing strength of the North Eastern Branch.

After a brief respite, his illness returned. As the curtain opened on the new school year the lights of the stage of life were dimming for Aidan. The final curtain closed for him on September 2, as he passed away peacefully in Sligo. There were large crowds at his removal and funeral as former colleagues, students and friends paid tribute. The funeral mass was celebrated by Fr Charlie Heery, a classmate in St Pat's, who brought smiles and not a little laughter relating the fun and joy Aidan brought his fellow students at a drab time in Ireland's boarding school life. The Loreto students sang at the mass and formed a guard of honour while the hearse bore Aidan to his final resting place.

Suaimhneas siorraí dá anam uasal.

Written on behalf of the North Eastern Branch of the RSTA by Jim Hannon.

The Employee Assistance Service

What is the Employee Assistance Service?

The purpose of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is to provide teachers and their immediate family members with easy access to confidential short-term counselling and to assist in coping with the effect of personal and work-related issues. The Service was introduced in 2006 as a benefit to teachers and is funded by the Department of Education and Science.

Who is the Service available to?

The service is available to teachers whose positions are funded by the Department of Education and Science, their spouses or partners, their dependents above the age of 16 and their mother/father where appropriate, and can be accessed by a dedicated freephone number or email address.

What services are available?

- Telephone counselling – single sessions or up to six counselling sessions; and,
- face-to-face counselling – up to six counselling sessions.

The EAS can help you with issues around, but not limited to, bereavement, physical health, relationships, depression, stress, isolation, anxiety, emotional health, and interpersonal difficulties.

How do I know the Service is confidential?

VHI Corporate Solutions, an external provider, delivers the EAS, and their staff follow strict ethical guidelines and codes of practice, and are bound by the rules of the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP). This means that any contact with you remains confidential and that no information about you is available to anyone without your written consent.

Do I have to be a member of VHI to access the Service?

No, the service is open to all teachers who are paid by the Department of Education.

The EAS is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

For additional information on the EAS, just click on the Department of Education and Science website – www.education.ie – and follow the link provided.

Carrick-on-Shannon



Officers:

- Chairperson: Martin Talbot
- Vice Chairperson: Seamus Mullen
- Secretary: Maureen McKeon
- Treasurer: Nuala Rogers
- Equality Officer: Seamus Mullen
- Organiser: Margaret Earley

Number of members: 143

Meetings

The Branch holds meetings about once a month in the Bush Hotel in Carrick-on-Shannon. Usually, a meeting is called when something important comes up. The group also discusses ongoing issues and any member can raise an individual concern for the Branch to discuss. Any issues that can't be resolved locally are communicated to Pat King in Head Office.

At a recent CEC meeting are (from left): CEC members from the Carrick-on-Shannon Branch, Martin Talbot; Maureen McKeon; and, John Connolly.

Activities

The branch had a retirement function in October, which had a very good attendance and was also attended by the ASTI President, Pat Hurley, and General Secretary, John White.

Local history

Michael Lynch and John Connolly are two members who have been very active in the branch in recent times. John has been to a great many conventions, either as a CEC member or as a delegate. He is one of the few in the branch who has not missed a single convention since he started attending.

Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013

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



These include:

- Comenius In-Service Training**
training for staff involved in school education
Deadlines: 16 January, 30 April, 15 September 2009
Please note that deadlines relate to specific training periods
- Comenius School Partnerships**
pupils, students and staff from schools across Europe working together on joint projects
Deadline: 20 February 2009
- Comenius Assistantships**
encouraging intercultural awareness and language learning
Deadline: 30 January 2009
- Comenius Regio Partnerships**
local and regional authorities with a direct role in school education, schools and other actors in education, working with European partners on topics of mutual interest
Deadline: 20 February 2009
- Contact Seminars and Preparatory Visits**
opportunities to meet potential project partners and prepare for partnerships
- Study Visits**
networking opportunities for education and vocational training specialists
Deadline: 9 April 2009

If you are interested in finding out more about these or any other activities under the Lifelong Learning Programme, please contact us: (01) 873 1411 or education@leargas.ie
www.leargas.ie





Seamus Heaney Lecture Series

The Seamus Heaney Lecture Series 2008-2009 began in October of this year and will continue to March of 2009. The theme of this year's conference, organised by St Patrick's College, is 'All changed?' and lectures will explore questions of culture and identity in contemporary Ireland. Lectures are free and will be held at St Patricks College, Dublin, commencing at 8.00pm. Lectures will include:

- November 17, 2008: Multiculturalism and Multilingualism in Irish Schools
- December 1, 2008: Irish Migrant Experiences and Diasporic Identities
- February 2, 2009: Cultúr na Gaeilge nó pobal na Gaeilge? Irish Language and Identity from Douglas Hyde to Des Bishop
- February 23, 2009: Globalisation and Identity: Reflections from the Irish Experience
- March 2, 2009: Poetics of the Stranger: Hospitality and Imagination
- March 23, 2009: Theatre of the Oppressed

F1 in Schools



F1 in Schools is a global competition that challenges second-level students to build, design and race model CO₂-powered Formula 1 balsawood cars. Secondary schools all over Ireland are invited to submit their entries for the 2009 challenge. Register your team on www.F1inschools.ie.

Vita challenge

Students are being offered the chance to win a trip to Ethiopia next spring as part of the Schools for Vita Challenge. Launched by the development agency Vita, the fundraising challenge gives winning schools the chance to send two students plus a teacher to visit its projects in Ethiopia. For further information contact Siobán Hamilton, Tel: 01-8820108.

Diploma in Irish

Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge in the National University of Ireland, Galway, is offering a diploma in Irish course in conjunction with the Cavan Institute. The course is delivered on a part-time basis over two years. For further information, contact Mary Ni Niadh, Tel: 091-495248, or visit www.acadamh.ie.




Certificate/Diploma in Special/Inclusive Education

The Special Education Department of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and the Institute of Child Education and Psychology, Europe (ICEP Europe) invite applications to the online **Certificate/Diploma in Special/Inclusive Education**, commencing **January 19th, 2009**. Closing date for applications - **November 29th, 2008**.

The programme aims to develop teachers' knowledge and skills in working with pupils with special and additional educational needs in mainstream classrooms.

Students access and complete their studies online supported daily by tutors and scheduled online live classroom sessions.

- Accreditation by Dublin City University
- Open to all qualified teachers (primary and post-primary)
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Detailed information and application forms available at www.spd.dcu.ie or by contacting Admissions Office, St Patrick's College, (01) 8842025 or email admissions.office@spd.dcu.ie Information also available from ICEP Europe at www.icepe.eu



This programme is funded by the Special Education Support Service, Teacher Education Section, DES, under the National Development Plan





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*These courses are part funded by the Special Education Support Service and the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Science under the NDP



STSG anniversary

The INTO Separated Teachers Support Group is holding its 20th anniversary celebratory dinner in the Grand Hotel, Malahide, Co. Dublin, on Saturday January 24, 2009, at 8.00pm. Past members of the group are welcome.

Further information about events is available from Chairperson Maura Killackey, Tel: 0505-21694, or 087-1233456, or from Secretary Christina Henry, Tel: 01-8481405, or 087-6201153.

IFI education programme

The Irish Film Institute (IFI) has launched its autumn/winter education programme 2008/2009. A variety of films are on view at locations around the country, including films in Irish, French, German and Spanish. The programme also includes a number of preview shows, talks and workshops. For more information, Tel: 01-6795744, Email: schools@irishfilm.ie, or visit www.ifi.ie.

Cinemagic

Cinemagic, an international children's film and television festival, is hosting a festival in Dublin in May 2009 and is asking teachers interested in the moving image and the media to join its educational panel. If you are interested, contact Laura Carlisle, Email: laura@cinemagic.org.uk.

Concern Debates adjudicators

Concern Debates is currently recruiting volunteers to join their panel of adjudicators to help judge schools debating competitions around the country. Debates take place on week night evenings and adjudicators would generally attend one debate a month. No experience is necessary, as training will be provided. For more information, contact Gráinne, Tel: 087-3299865, or visit www.concerndebates.net.

Local Business Buzz!

Agri Aware has launched the Local Business Buzz! Challenge 08/09. The competition is a creative way for students to learn about farming and the food industry in their locality. The competing groups will be required to interview a member of management from a local agri-business, develop an ad for radio, and create and design a four-page magazine. For more information, Tel: 01-4601103, or visit www.agriaware.ie.

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Young Environmentalist Awards

ECO-UNESCO, Ireland's environmental education and youth organisation, is celebrating 10 years of its Young Environmentalist Awards programme with a free exhibition, workshops and training sessions. The organisation is also inviting all young people aged between 12 and 18 years to celebrate by carrying out an environmental action project. For more information, visit www.ecounesco.ie or contact Karen Sheeran, Tel: 01-6625491, or Email: yea@ecounesco.ie.

Croatian school partnership

A teacher in a mixed Croatian secondary school near Rijaka would like to establish a partner relationship for his pupils with a school in Ireland. The connection would allow students to establish contact, supervised by teachers, in order to exchange ideas, similarities, differences, etc. Interested teachers can get further information by contacting Derek Egan, Tel: 086-4021459.

Anti-bullying resource

A template and materials for an anti-bullying campaign for schools are available free of charge at www.antibullyingcampaign.ie. Just log on and register to download material.

Euro competition

The Euro competition is an online poster design competition for schoolchildren between 10 and 14 years of age. Young people are invited to join in the Euro's 10-year celebrations by designing a poster on the theme '10 years of EMU and the Euro'. For more information, visit www.eurocompetition.net.

Eureka!

A new series of science programmes aimed at Transition Year students has started on RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta. The programme seeks to promote an interest in science among young people and to demonstrate its use in life and business. It is broadcast every Wednesday at 8.00pm.

Woodwork teachers' reunion

Woodwork teacher John Tutty is organising a 30-year reunion of the Coláiste Charman woodwork class of 1979. The event will take place in May 2009 at a venue to be arranged. For more information, email john.tutty@terenurecollege.ie.

Teachers of Spanish and Italian

Ten-week language upskilling courses, sponsored by the Post-Primary Languages Initiative, will be offered to teachers of Spanish and Italian in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway, commencing in January 2009 (with the exception of Galway, where the Italian course will commence at the end of November 2008). For further information and application forms, please contact the Post-Primary Languages Initiative, Tel: 01-8057794 (mornings only), or Email: languagesinitiative@mie.ie.

The English language support teacher

Brian McCann is an English language support (ELS) teacher at Newpark Comprehensive School, Dublin. He is also the Post-Primary Liaison Officer with The English Language Support Teachers' Association, and a director on the board of Calypso Productions, which caters for English language support students.

What work is involved in your role?

The role of the ELS teacher is to promote English across the curriculum. Classes are in small mixed-ability groups or, in certain circumstances, on a one-to-one basis. Resources are selected from or inspired by the curriculum. Extracts from subject texts are photocopied and graded activities in vocabulary, grammar and comprehension are then developed from those extracts. Taught language skills involve a complex mix of grammatical, semantic, syntactic and orthographic components, along with course content.

ELS and TEFL are still frequently confused but they are actually quite different. In ELS, a second language is defined by its utility in a new educational system, in a new language world. TEFL, on the other hand, trains students' linguistic competence in socio-cultural situations.

How did you get involved in the work?

After completing my HDip in education, I did an MPhil in applied linguistics at Trinity College and later an MBA in educational management in the area of ELS at the University of Leicester. I was very interested in the sociolinguistic forces that inform language acquisition and learning, and my research centred on the intrinsic value of intercultural exchange in language learning.

For many years I have been encouraging the involvement of ethnic minority post-primary students in drama and film; hence, my association with Calypso Productions and the Tower of Babel theatre company. They form a vibrant, social, and intercultural environment for teenage learners.

What would a typical working week/day be like for you?

At the beginning of each year the working day is replete with interviews and assessments. A base level is set for each individual student and a plan of work is set out. Students with English as a second language have to be identified, assessed and allocated support classes as quickly as possible. The staffroom is a vital domain as it is there that I liaise with subject teachers, requesting information on current difficulties in class or homework. I pre-empt work planned for mainstream classes by preparing the students in advance. The positive effect of this is in augmented self-esteem, reduced anxiety and a more homogenous teaching group for the subject teacher.

What are some of the challenges you face in your job?

An ELS teacher works with refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants. In some cases they are war victims who have experienced torture or witnessed the murder of parents and siblings. Details of their horrific memories occasionally emerge in their written work or verbally in class. It's challenging to observe them in such pain at such a young age. Drawing their attention back on target has to be achieved with sensitivity. Students will often come to the school with little or no English and really



English language support teacher Brian McCann.

need more allocation than a few classes a week for two years. Yet the DES only allows for an even allocation across all students, regardless of the severity of their needs. There is an appeal system but appeals are not always granted. Many need language support throughout their six years at school.

Another challenge is the language barrier between school staff and both the ethnic minority students and their parents. The DES should set up a proper translation and interpreting service, with appropriate, professional rates of payment. This is especially important where students present with general or specific learning disabilities. Their psychological assessments would best be conducted in their mother tongue. Certainly, existing reports from their own countries ought to be translated into English.

One of the biggest obstacles facing the ELS teacher is in the area of special needs. There is still no proper arrangement in place for the identification and assessment of students from ethnic minorities who have learning disabilities. Because of this situation, many students linger for years with no learning support or resource hours. Culpability for their learning difficulties is often erroneously placed on their English language deficit. I feel very disillusioned about the radical cuts to the area of English language support in the recent Budget. Batt O'Keefe and Conor Lenihan expressed such concern for intercultural education only weeks ago, yet now the Government has demonstrated shallowness in their understanding of the educational needs of these students.

Are there any aspects of your job that you particularly enjoy?

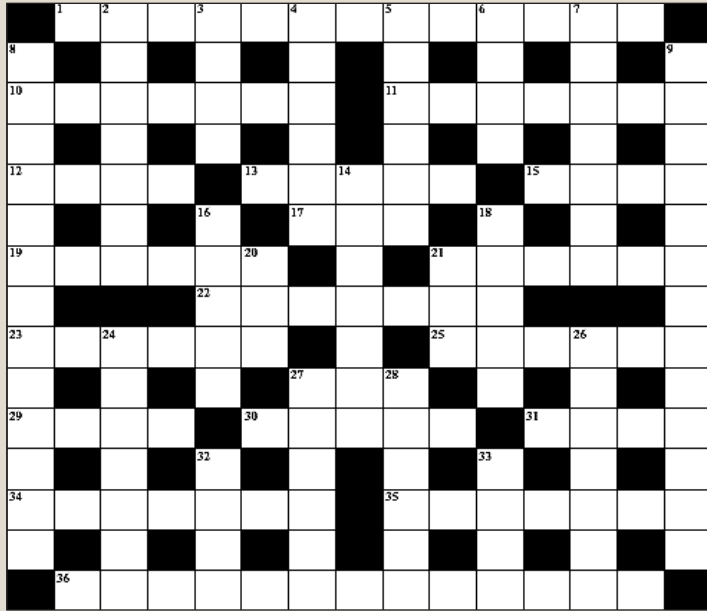
I enjoy teaching in a multicultural environment. I am fascinated by socio-geographic contrasts. I also enjoy the successes students achieve in their Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations. It is always very satisfying when students can independently produce clearly communicated pieces of writing, bolted together with the correct conventions and mechanics. Ethnic minority students have a lot to contend with when they arrive in Ireland. To guide their way through the curriculum is extremely arduous for them and for their teachers. They often return after leaving school to offer thanks and that is very satisfying.



ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 0805

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Entries to: **Astir Crossword No. 0805, Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.**
To arrive by: **Friday, December 5, 2008**

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 The ASTI is working with school management associations to promote this in schools (7,2,4)
- 10 Will I cite one for not being permitted? (7)
- 11 I dare in Roman coinage (7)
- 12 Trademark (4)
- 13 Stale stories? (5)
- 15 I do love this false god (4)
- 17 "If it be ..., 'tis not to come" (*Hamlet*) (3)
- 19 All Ed and I did was to become united (6)
- 21 Nomads are partial to a juicy plum (6)
- 22 Chinese fruit with a whitish juicy pulp (7)
- 23 Easily managed when coiled (6)
- 25 Could be grown in Brussels? (6)
- 27 Animal found in your computer, perhaps (3)
- 29 I run to destruction (4)
- 30 Mwai Kibaki is President of this country (5)
- 31 Emer is nothing more than a small lake (4)
- 34 You succeed and are charming in a childlike way (7)
- 35 Composer of *Nessun Dorma* (7)
- 36 A chemical hike for this coach (7, 6)

CLUES DOWN

- 2 You can't do it because it's this whereas 10 across means you shouldn't have done it! (7)
- 3 Project Maths is under the aegis of this body (1.1.1.1.)

- 4 Numbered among this famous Venetian painter's work is "The Assumption of the Virgin" (6)
- 5 First name of composer of the musical *Phantom of the Opera* (6)
- 6 24 down is one example of this (4)
- 7 Erred so behind the partition wall at back of the altar (7)
- 8 The ASTI has commissioned this company to carry out research into teacher workload (8,5)
- 9 Plighting like the poet John Montague on the LC English course (7,3,3)
- 14 Could be east or west in Scotland (7)
- 16 Tintinnabulation is the sounding of these (5)
- 18 Snakes draw breath sharply with this note (5)
- 20 Colouring matter (3)
- 21 Your paymasters! (1.1.1.)
- 24 A famous 6 down from the region of Tuscany (7)
- 26 This bloke is a four-sided stone pillar tapering at the top (7)
- 27 "Listen my children and you shall hear, Of the midnight ride of Paul ..." (*Longfellow*) (6)
- 28 Could be shortsighted (6)
- 32 No sharers here for this snack! (4)
- 33 Government agency that provides advice, etc., on the use of IT in schools (1.1.1.1.)

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 0804:

Gerard Brennan, Coláiste Dún Iascaigh, Cahir, Co. Tipperary, Tipperary Branch.

Solution to ASTIR crossword No. 0804

| Across | Down |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Spotlight | 2. Polloi |
| 9. Casual | 3. Tsetse |
| 10. Algebraic | 4. Inroad |
| 11. Asthma | 5. Heights |
| 12. Moustache | 6. Marsupial |
| 13. Spirea | 7. Wuthering |
| 17. HSE | 8. Alma mater |
| 19. Domingo | 14. Ad nauseam |
| 20. Trainee | 15. Ombudsman |
| 21. ISA | 16. Interests |
| 23. Acumen | 17. Hoi |
| 27. Indonesia | 18. ETA |
| 28. Sestet | 22. Synergy |
| 29. Bratwurst | 24. Goethe |
| 30. Adapts | 25. Sequel |
| 31. Hyperlink | 26. Wilson |



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