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Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland



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Turning anger into action

The anger and frustration of teachers, public servants and other citizens of this country was voiced loudly on February 21, when 120,000 people took to the streets in Dublin to protest at the Government's mishandling of the economic crisis.

Teacher anger

Teachers' anger at the Government's mismanagement of the economy has been rising steadily since last October when schools were hit with draconian cutbacks to education, which not only affected our working conditions but will significantly affect the quality of education for the students in our schools.

Along with cuts to grants and funding, the cutbacks saw an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio, which will result in larger class sizes, the dropping of subjects and approximately 1,000 fewer classroom teaching jobs.

Teachers starting out in their careers are particularly at risk; they do not have full-time secure positions and are often employed on a year-to-year or a part-time basis. These are the teachers of the future, in whose hands the education of the next generation rests; it is not acceptable that they should have their careers taken from them.

It simply does not make economic sense to jeopardise jobs or to reduce investment in education at a time when we need more than ever to focus resources in that area, which can ensure that we are in a position to take full advantage of any upturn in the economy.

An unjust levy

The latest attack on teachers has come in the form of a poorly planned and inequitable public service pension levy. Our pensions are part of our pay and conditions of work. We do not earn enormous sums of money, nor can we accrue bonuses or overtime. Pensions have long been viewed by teachers as deferred pay. Attacking our pensions amounts to cutting our wages.

Teachers are willing to play our part in solving the economic crisis. However, we cannot engage in any solution that is less than fair, equitable and measured – something the Government has thus far failed to provide. Teachers and other public service workers did not cause the crisis. It was caused by the risky gambling of unregulated bankers, speculators and property developers. Yet, these people are not being asked to pay. Instead the Government, whose policies and regulators allowed this crisis to happen, is targeting teachers and other public servants to pay for their mismanagement of the country's finances.

There is a more just option, one that involves collective responsibility. It will involve pain but this pain will be shared equally. A progressive taxation system is a much fairer option than the pension levy; those who have the ability to pay more will do so proportionally. The public and private sectors must stand together in the call for a different response – a response that protects jobs, those of non-permanent teachers as well as those at endangered firms like SRT Technics; one that protects pensions, both public service and private schemes like those held at Waterford Crystal; and, one that ensures fairness in taxation and the upholding of employment rights.

Send a message to the Government

At the time of going to print we are conducting a ballot, in conjunction with the other teacher unions and the public service unions, on a range of different types of industrial action.

The ballot is part of the ongoing campaign of opposition against the Government decisions, which affect all working families in Ireland, including private sector workers, public sector workers and families who rely on public services.

The campaign against the education cutbacks and the public service pension levy may be long but it is vital. These measures must be opposed at every opportunity. One such opportunity will be the local and European elections in June. I urge you to ensure that your voice is heard by your local candidates.

Pat Hurley



Pat Hurley

ASTI President

Teachers march for a better, fairer way

On February 21, well over 100,000 people gathered on the streets of Dublin to demonstrate their anger at the Government's handling of the current economic crisis.



From left: Pat Deery, Monaghan Branch; Maire Mulcahy, ASTI Assistant General Secretary; Pat Cahill, Emeritus member; Mary Ohle, Dublin North West Branch; Pat Hurley, ASTI President; Bernadine O'Sullivan, Dublin North West Branch; Liz Crumme, Stillorgan Branch; and, Jack Keane, Clare Branch.

The demonstration was organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the participants were members of unions representing both public and private sector employees, including members from the teacher unions – the ASTI, IFUT, INTO and TUI.

The Government's mismanagement of the crisis has been of serious concern to the ASTI and the other teacher unions since the Budget last October, which saw schools face draconian cuts to funding and resources, including an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio that will result in overcrowded classrooms and job losses for teachers.

A poorly planned and inequitable pension levy, announced in January 2009, compounded the crisis in education by re-affirming the Government's view that the public sector and public services must bear the pain for the economic crisis. Commenting on the demonstration, ASTI General Secretary John White said: "There is no denying that Ireland is in the midst of a serious economic crisis and measures must be taken to counter this crisis. These measures must, however, be considered and equitable. The Government's attempts at a national recovery plan have, to date, proved extremely misguided and unfair".

Education cuts

Mr White added: "A competitive and innovative economy cannot grow from an education system in crisis. Schools are already operating on shoestring budgets, and from September next will be hit with larger classes and a more limited choice of subjects. Those students most vulnerable will face a reduction in English language support teachers and home school liaison teachers, and the removal of grants for

The ASTI is anxious to demonstrate the impact of the Budget 2008 cuts on schools and students, and to have strong evidence to hand to counteract any 'spin' that the cutbacks are not affecting education.

Traveller education, Leaving Cert Applied, and schoolbooks. Telling of the Government's short-sighted approach is the fact that at a time when expertise in science and technology is most in demand, grants for physics and chemistry are being cut".

Media campaign

The ASTI is anxious to demonstrate the impact of the Budget 2008 cuts on schools and students, and to have strong evidence to hand to counteract any 'spin' that the cutbacks are not affecting education. The ASTI is circulating a questionnaire to selected schools, which will allow the union to gather information that can be presented as case studies to politicians, the media, etc. If you think your school would make a good case study, please contact the ASTI Communications Office, Tel: 01-604 0172. Case studies will be presented without school names, unless the school wishes to be identified.



Sinead Hobbs, a teacher at St Kevin's CBS in Wicklow, is pictured at the ICTU march with her husband, Ambrose Dowling, and their children Des and Sean.

Job losses

As a direct result of the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio, there will be almost 1,000 fewer classroom teachers for students attending second-level schools next September. This means job losses and reduced hours for many part-time teachers.

For the latest news on the ASTI's campaign against the cutbacks, visit www.asti.ie



Left to right John White, ASTI General Secretary; Mike Jennings, IFUT General Secretary; and Peter MacMenamin, TUI General Secretary.

Case study

The ASTI has been contacted by a married couple, both teachers, for whom the proposed increase in pupil-teacher ratio will have a profound effect on their working conditions, careers and family from next June.

The teachers qualified 10 years ago and are currently on second- and third-year fixed-term contracts in their respective schools. They did not make a financial killing during the Celtic Tiger years; they have no shares, no second property or investments. They are heavily mortgaged teachers and parents, trying to juggle a financial tightrope on a daily basis.

Currently, their mortgage repayments stand at €1,400 per month.

Childcare costs are an additional €1,200 per month. They have basic healthcare, life assurance and house insurance to pay, on top of petrol and car maintenance costs, utility bills and food bills. This was manageable but only because they had two salaries coming into the household.

In October 2008, they say their world was turned upside down when one of their biggest fears was realised in the Budget.

They knew the Budget measures meant larger class sizes, fewer subject choices, and reduced funding for schools in an already under-funded system.

They also knew they would mean fewer teachers and inevitable redundancies. The couple's great fear is that the job losses would be on a 'last in first out' basis because, despite each having ten years teaching experience, they are the last on the seniority list in their respective schools. The couple outline the very real consequences the proposed increase in pupil-teacher ratio will have on their situation as follows:

- We will be out of teaching jobs in June 2009.
- We will have no salary in September.
- It will be very unlikely that we will find new teaching posts in September, as schools across the country are cutting staff.
- We will be unable to pay our mortgage by October 2009.
- We will each earn €200 on the 'dole' per week. This will barely pay our mortgage, but not our food or other daily bills.
- We will be out of a home and on the 'street' within a year, as confirmed by a conversation with our bank manager and our family solicitor.

The couple are keen to point out that in talking to *ASTIR*, they are not seeking sympathy but are calling on their ASTI colleagues to support their temporary work colleagues.

You can do this by:

- supporting the ASTI's campaign of opposition against the Government's handling of the economic crisis;
- contacting your local TD or calling to their constituency office. Tell them how the education cuts will affect teachers and children in your school. Remind them that our children deserve a better future and you will accept nothing less;
- lobbying all TDs to get the decision to change pupil-teacher ratio reversed. Get them to write a letter on your behalf to the Minister for Education and Science. Remind them of your vote; and,
- informing parents in your school via letters and public meetings on how the increase in class sizes will affect their child and what they can do to get the pupil-teacher ratio reversed to 18:1.

News feature



Double whammy for public servants

The following article by JOHN WHITE was originally published in the *Irish Examiner* of February 5, 2009, following the announcement of An Taoiseach's plans to deal with the economic crisis.

Angry and unhappy teachers, already reeling from the Budget education cutbacks of last October, make for unhappy staffrooms these days. Public servants, including teachers, are poring over figures and percentages to see just how much worse off they might be following An Taoiseach's speech to the Dáil on Tuesday February 3. Not only have they to factor in a pension levy of an average of 7.5% (tax deductible) but they must also assimilate the fact that there is a pay freeze for all of 2009 and the payment of 2.5% due on June 1, 2010, will not be paid. Teachers are, therefore, experiencing a double whammy that will very significantly reduce their standard of living.

Much of the public discussion is based on the view that the public service is bloated.

This view was, of course, exploded by the recent OECD Report, which showed that by EU standards we have a small public service.

Sharing the burden

The second-level education system is already reeling from the cutbacks announced in the budget. These essentially mean that any vacancies in schools next September will most probably not be filled. This represents a tragedy for the fine young teachers graduating from our universities and I would call on the Government to review the decision to increase class sizes and to do everything in terms of concessionary hours and replacement teachers to deal with this problem. It is no use telling the 3,000 temporary and part-time teachers in staffrooms around the country that they have secure, permanent and pensionable jobs. They do not! We cannot forfeit a whole generation of young teachers.

Teachers are citizens of the State and they see their friends and neighbours losing their jobs. They want to play their part in ensuring that their pupils and, indeed, their own sons and daughters, will have a future in this country. The message I am getting from teachers is that they recognise the dire financial straits the country is in and they are willing to play their part in rescuing the country but they want the burdens to be shared fairly and equitably.

During the years of the Celtic Tiger, teachers, and indeed all public servants, were seen as somehow not part of the booming entrepreneurial economy, despite the fact that the creation of our educated, flexible workforce was central to our real economic growth. However, now that the housing bubble is bust, there is no sense that those who generated the false boom from 2002-2006, as opposed to the export-led growth of the previous decade, are having to pay. We need a real signal, such as President Barack Obama's curb on bank executive pay, in Ireland, to begin to create this sense of fairness.

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The Irish Congress of Trade Unions entered the partnership discussions on dealing with the recession on the basis that it wasn't an exercise in just targeting public sector pay and jobs. Congress wanted a social solidarity

pact in order to deal with the crisis. Such a pact has the virtue of engaging all sectors of the community in addressing the horrendous financial problem faced by the country. It also has the virtue of protecting the marginalised and fostering a discussion on the level of public services our community is willing to pay for. In these discussions, while some progress was made, as David Begg, General Secretary of Congress stated, no road map was possible in the time available. Because there was no depth to the commitments being offered to the unions on sharing the burden equitably, for example on taxation, these discussions failed.

The second-level education system is already reeling from the cutbacks announced in the Budget. These essentially mean that any vacancies in schools next September will most probably not be filled.

A failed ideology

Much of the public discussion is based on the view that the public service is bloated. This view was, of course, exploded by the recent OECD Report, which showed that by EU standards we have a small public service. Indeed, I would invite any of our right-wing economists who keep on referring to public servants as having no knowledge of the real world, to spend a week or two in one of our second-level schools. There they will find teachers with poor resources, struggling to provide a world-class

education to up to 30 students of all ability levels. Talk to any teacher on a Friday evening having completed 35 classes with vibrant, questioning and sometimes ill-disciplined pupils, that they are working in a bloated service. Such attempts to drive a wedge between those who work in the public and private sectors should be seen for what they are – the products of a failed right-wing ideology, which has at least in part created our current crisis.

In place of such divisive scapegoating, we need a stabilisation of our economy, which fosters the creation of sustainable jobs, which improves competitiveness, which values the work of public servants, and which ensures that those who benefited most from the boom should make a particular contribution to the adjustment required. We need a fair system of taxation. If teachers could see such a plan, their anger these days could be assuaged somewhat.



John White

ASTI General Secretary

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– Mike Lynch PE Teacher St Clements College Limerick

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News

BT Young Scientist and Technology Awards

In January, two students from Kinsale Community School, Co. Cork, were named BT Young Scientists of the Year 2009. John D. O'Callaghan and Liam McCarthy's project tested the health of cattle using washing-up liquid. The winning project was called 'The Development of a Convenient Test Method for Somatic Cell Count and its Importance in Milk Production', and the boys were mentored in carrying out their work by their teacher, ASTI member Mairead Dullea. It is thought that their research could be commercialised for use by farmers in Ireland and further afield. They will go forward to represent Ireland at the 21st European Union Contest for Young Scientists taking place in Paris in September.

Rachel Clancy, Hannah O'Byrne and Sarah Deegan from Loreto College, Foxrock, Dublin, were named winners of the 'safefood Award' at this year's Young Scientist Awards. Their project investigated whether chemical compounds found in dark pigmented fruits, red wine and black soya beans could help to control type 2 diabetes. The students decided to focus on this research as each has a personal experience of diabetes, with close relatives or family members suffering from the disease.

ASTI member Sinead Greene, who teaches at Salesian College, Celbridge, Co. Kildare, was named Analog Devices Technology Educator of Excellence 2009.

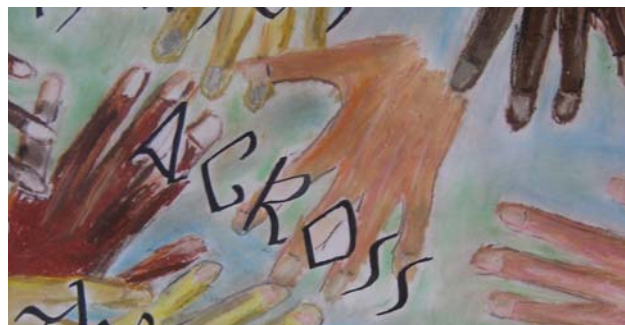


BT Young Scientist 2009 winners, John D. O'Callaghan and Liam McCarthy, students at Kinsale Community School, Co. Cork, pictured with BT CEO Chris Clark and An Taoiseach Brian Cowen TD.



Pictured at the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition 2009 in the RDS, Dublin, are winners of the safefood Award, Hannah O'Byrne, Sarah Deegan and Rachel Clancy, from Loreto College, Foxrock, Co. Dublin, with Dermot Moriarty of safefood.

Human rights framed by young people



One of the works exhibited at the Irish Commission for Human Rights exhibition, entitled 'Hands Across the World Unite', by Orla Morgan, Emma Delaney, Rebecca Delaney, and Joy Mulcahy, students at Coláiste Choilm, Ballincollig, Co. Cork.

An exhibition of human rights posters by CSPE students held to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights opened in December last year. Launched by John Shaw, President of the Law Society of Ireland, and Dr Maurice Manning, President of the Irish Human Rights Commission, the exhibition celebrated the anniversary of the Declaration and represented the concerns of young people in relation to human rights.

Speaking at the launch, Dr Manning said: "Civil, social and political education makes an important contribution to increasing awareness and understanding of human rights, as evidenced by the human rights posters on display. However, building a culture of human rights in Ireland requires that human rights are incorporated not only in the curriculum but in the whole approach to and delivery of education". The exhibition has since been on display in libraries around Dublin and will, over the coming months, be displayed at Dundrum Library, Kevin Street Library and Ballymun Library.

Younger students teach older people to log on

A new national initiative bringing Transition Year students and older people together to share computer and life skills went nationwide in January. More than 100 secondary schools across the country are taking part in the programme, which sees the students train older people in basic computer skills. The initiative is promoted nationally through TV and online advertising but is promoted locally by the students themselves.

Research has shown that older people often feel computers are 'not for them' and 'difficult to learn'. The programme uses one-to-one teaching and pairs Transition Year students with older people from their local communities. The initiative is also designed to give Transition Year students the opportunity to drive, and engage in, a unique, cross-generational learning experience, and to support the Transition Year rationale of promoting students' personal, social, vocational and educational development. For more information on this programme, Tel: 01-214 7414.

Mobile Phone Recycling Month 2009

This year, the Make-A-Wish Foundation is hoping to collect 100,000 used mobile phones. To help achieve this figure, the foundation is inviting schools to participate in one of its 'Recycling Months'. For every phone collected during the Recycling Month, one of the Foundation's corporate sponsors will make a donation of €1 to your school to invest in whatever the school needs. This is not a voucher scheme or computers for schools programme: it is independent funding in the form of a cheque made out to the participating school. The appeal will not cost the school anything, as the Foundation will provide schools with a collection box, posters and letters for pupils to give to their parents. Many households in the country have at least one old mobile phone lying unused in a drawer or cupboard. When donated, that phone will help to grant the wish of a child living with a life-threatening illness.

Make-A-Wish Ireland granted the wishes of over 150 children in 2008 alone. The only limitation to a wish is the child's imagination. For more information about the charity, visit www.makeawish.ie, or contact the Make-A-Wish Recycling Appeal, Tel: 1890 890 890, or 087-122 1954.



Padraig Harrington launches the Make-A-Wish recycling appeal.

Cornmarket launch advice 'hotline' for teachers on new pension levy

In light of the introduction of the new pension levy, Cornmarket has had a number of enquiries from teachers about how the new levy will operate and what effect, if any, it will have on their retirement benefits.

Cornmarket has now set up a pension levy hotline for teachers who wish to find out more about how the levy affects them personally and how much it will cost them, both before and after tax relief (based on the information available at present about how the levy will operate). If you or any of your colleagues have any questions about the new levy, call the hotline on 01-408 4000. Cornmarket will give you a full breakdown of what the levy will mean for you using their 'pension levy calculator' software. Alternatively, call the ASTI for further information.

CPR programme for Transition Year



The Irish Heart Foundation is inviting all Transition Year teachers to lend their support to a new 'CPR 4 Schools' initiative. The initiative aims to train 27,500 students in lifesaving resuscitation skills known as CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and is asking Transition Year teachers to find space in the curriculum to facilitate in-class demonstrations of CPR kits, which the charity will distribute to every Transition Year student in the country in April. These kits include a mini mannequin, instructional DVD and booklet, and provide a CPR lesson in 25 minutes.

The charity is also asking students and teachers to join in fundraising activities over Happy Heart Weekend, May 14-16. See www.irisheart.ie for more information.

Info@ncca moves online

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) publishes a magazine – info@ncca – three times a year. From April 24, this publication will issue in electronic format only.



The very high number of emails received from schools and individual teachers requesting extra copies of the publication, and stressing the need for each teacher to have their own copy, has led the NCCA to rethink its production policy. Producing a print copy of info@ncca for each teacher would be prohibitively expensive, especially given the current climate, so it was decided to concentrate on the digital version.

Every teacher will now have access to a copy of info@ncca, as opposed to sharing the copies previously received by each school. There will be an online survey in the April issue so that readers can record their response to both content and format.

In order to receive a copy of the next issue and all following issues, the NCCA is asking teachers to go to www.ncca.ie and subscribe by clicking on the 'Subscribe to Newsletter' banner. This will ensure that an email will be sent to each subscriber on publication.

According to the NCCA, the response to info@ncca has been overwhelmingly positive. Teachers, they say, have engaged with the 'teaching and learning in the classroom' approach and appreciate being informed on developments in curriculum and assessment.

News

Science Olympiad

Six second-level students represented Ireland at the 2008 International Junior Science Olympiad in Korea in December: Thomas Hayes, Pobalscoil Inbhear Scéine, Co. Kerry; Aidan Kelly, Drogheda Grammar School; Jack Hutchinson, Gonzaga College, Dublin; Srujana Vedicherla, Mount Carmel Secondary School, Dublin; Darren McMahon, St Macartan's College, Monaghan; and, Leila Smith, Loreto College, Foxrock, Co. Dublin. In early October last year principals in all second-level schools in Ireland were asked to nominate one student who had achieved a minimum of six As, including maths and science, in the 2008 Junior Certificate. Approximately 90 such students then took part in the Irish Junior Science Olympiad in November and the top six students were invited to represent Ireland in Korea.

Note for job-sharers who are members of the salary protection scheme

Job-sharers who are members of the salary protection scheme should be aware that by increasing premium payment from 2.41% to 4.82%, their salary protection benefit, should they need to claim, will be based on the full-time salary and not the job-sharing salary. It is important to also note that this change must be implemented within one month of a teacher commencing job-sharing, as otherwise their benefit will be based on their job-sharing salary. Enquires about this should be made by contacting Cornmarket Group Financial Services Limited, Tel: 01-408 4025.

ASTI members volunteer in Africa

Anne Butler and Elizabeth Hayes, two retired teachers from Tipperary, recently travelled separately to Africa to volunteer with the development charity, Playing for Life.

Anne, who is an emeritus member of the ASTI, spent five weeks teaching English to adults and members of a youth group in the large urban parish of Esso in Tanzania. Of her experience Anne says: "Teaching English in Esso was totally different to teaching in Ireland. Because the classroom had not been completed when I arrived, I began teaching outside in the shade of a tree and the response from parishioners was amazing. I had no resources, books, blackboard, etc., but the enthusiasm of the students more than made up for that and teaching was easy. In my years teaching French and history in Ireland, I had never been asked by students after two hours of class: "Please continue teaching", or "Can we have classes on Saturday?"

Anne intends to return to Esso later this year and encourages other teachers to consider volunteering in this entirely different environment. In September 2008, Elizabeth Hayes, who taught in Colaiste Dun Iascaigh, Cahir, Co. Tipperary until 2007, spent time working in Malawi on a Playing for Life vocational skills training programme. She taught students in the tailoring programme at a college where about 150 students study a trade or skill with a view to finding employment or starting a business. Like Anne, she was impressed by the students' enthusiasm for learning. "Their willingness to learn and their involvement in the class was amazing", she says.

Playing for Life works towards the relief, assistance and empowerment of peoples in need in less developed areas of the world through sport and vocational training. See www.playingforlife.ie for more information.



Elizabeth Hayes teaching sewing in Malawi.



Anne Butler pictured with some of her students in Tanzania.

Teaching Council update

The Teaching Council was established in 2006 with the remit of ensuring standards of entry and quality of teaching. It requires teachers to register annually. Teachers whose registration year commences on March 28 annually will have received registration renewal documentation in February.

Registration fee and tax credit

The registration renewal fee is unchanged for 2009 at €90 and has been approved by the Revenue Commissioners as a work expense for income tax purposes. While it had been agreed that credits would be processed automatically by the Revenue Commissioners, the Teaching Council has now been informed that the Revenue Commissioners are not in a position to do this in respect of 2008 credits due. The credit is still applicable; however, teachers wishing to claim the credit must contact their local tax office and ask for a review of their 2008 liability, including their final 2008 payslip or P60. The Revenue Commissioners have advised that it will not be necessary to produce a receipt in respect of the registration renewal fee. The 2009 credit will be centrally processed. The Teaching Council will provide the Revenue Commissioners with a list of all teachers who have paid the renewal fee up to September 2009 and the Revenue Commissioners will then increase each teacher's tax credits by €90 to take account of the fee paid.

Registered teacher access

If you wish to check your registration status with the Teaching Council, you can do so by logging on to www.teachingcouncil.ie and clicking on 'Registered Teacher Login'. You will need your registration number and password, but if you have mislaid your password, you can enter a combination of personal details to register a new password. You can also use this area to request that your details be changed.

Teachers volunteer in South Africa

A number of second-level teachers from around the country will take part in The Niall Mellon Township Trust's upcoming Building Blitz, taking place between March 20 and 27 in South Africa. The Trust will bring over 500 Irish volunteers to build houses for South Africa's poorest families in the township of Mbekweni, in Paarl, 60 minutes from Cape Town. It is the first time that the charity will have a female majority on the trip and they will be working on construction teams with some of the charity's South African staff. The aim is to complete 75 houses during the one-week Building Blitz.

The Niall Mellon Township Trust operates a year-round house-building programme for impoverished families living in the townships of South Africa and has built 11,000 houses since its inception in 2002. Each year the charity organises a number of Building Blitzes comprised of Irish volunteers who raise funds to travel to South Africa to build houses for families in the townships. The Trust is currently building in 23 townships, 13 in the Western Cape and 10 in Gauteng.

If you are interested in volunteering on their next Building Blitz, it will take place in Cape Town from November 7-14, 2009. For more information, Tel: 01-494 8200, or download an application form from the website at www.nmtownshiptrust.com.

Contribute to ASTIR

ASTIR is looking for teachers to write articles of general interest to other teachers with a focus on work or personal pursuits. Send contributions to astir@asti.ie.

New arrangements for claiming maternity benefit

From January 1, 2009, teachers paying Class A PRSI must complete Part 2 'Payment Details' of the Department of Social and Family Affairs MB10 application form. Teachers no longer sign the authorisation for the Department of Social and Family Affairs to pay the benefit directly to the employer. The completed MB10 form should be forwarded to the Maternity Benefit Section, Social Welfare Services Office, St Oliver Plunkett Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal (Tel: LoCall 1890 690 690). The maternity benefit payment will then be paid directly to the teacher's bank account. Salary payable from the Department of Education and Science during the period of paid maternity leave will be reduced by the amount of maternity benefit payable. The current rate per week for maternity benefit is €280. The Department of Education and Science will, therefore, deduct €560 per fortnight from the teacher's salary. It is important that all application forms (ML1 and MB10) are submitted in time, i.e., six weeks prior to commencement of leave if possible, in order to facilitate timely deductions from salary and to avoid an accumulation of deduction arrears. As a result of this change, it will no longer be necessary for teachers who take maternity leave to submit a claim for a refund of tax or PRSI.

ASTI submission to intercultural education policy

Late last year, the ASTI made a submission to the Department of Education and Science Consultation on Intercultural Education Policy. In this submission the ASTI called for greater investment in education in order to ensure that all students achieve high educational standards. As pointed out in the submission, Ireland cannot ignore the experiences of other developed countries in terms of the risks associated with widening social divisions arising from educational disadvantage and low levels of attainment among migrant children. The submission points out that the presence of multi-lingual students in schools is a major asset but resources are needed to build on this asset and realise the curriculum policy goals for greater language proficiency among all school leavers. Early and effective language acquisition is the key to all learning and is particularly significant at second level, where the curriculum is highly differentiated and the Certificate examinations aim to promote the highest standards of achievement. In that context, early and reliable assessment of students' language needs, as well as quality English as an additional language teacher provision, is vital. The submission recommends the implementation of an additional capitation fee for foreign national students that would assist schools to provide immersion programmes, homework clubs, language tuition for parents, etc. Such interventions would be particularly helpful in schools with large numbers of foreign national students. The ASTI welcomed the balanced response of the Minister for Integration on the issue of school uniforms last year, as it is the ASTI's view that education policy should strive to achieve a balance in terms of supporting the work of the school and enabling the school community to exercise its judgment in respect of how best to integrate its foreign national students.

News from RSTA branches around the country



Some members of the Dublin and Wicklow Branches of the RSTA who marched in the demonstration against budget cuts on December 6, 2008.

North Eastern Branch group outing

The group enjoyed a short mid-week break to celebrate the return to work of our teaching colleagues from Tuesday, September 9 to Thursday, September 11, in the Bush Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim.

The group had a number of day trips and outings over the break, including:

- The Arigna Mining Experience: a DVD presentation and guided tour by a former mineworker in the old coalmines at Arigna, Co. Roscommon;
- a cruise on the river Shannon in the 110-passenger *Moon River* pleasure cruiser;
- some members visited King House in Boyle and Boyle Abbey, while others went to Strokestown Park House, Famine Museum and Gardens; and,
- the more energetic managed to spend some time in Lough Key Forest Park and a few people took in the Barracks in Cootehall featured in John McGahern's novel.

The wet weather took from the enjoyment of the cruise but the other activities were highly enjoyable. There are three fabulous restaurants in Carrick-on-Shannon that are well worth a return visit.

Upcoming events

Wednesday, May 20

Lunch at 12.30 in the Headford Arms, Kells, Co. Meath, will be followed by a coach tour to:

- Clonbreaney Farm, a restored manor farmyard;
- the homestead and gardens of St Oliver Plunkett's family at Loughcrew, Oldcastle, Co. Meath;
- Loughcrew Cairns (3,000 BC);
- and,
- tea (sandwiches, finger food, etc.) in the Headford Arms at 7.00pm.

The group will be guided by a local tour guide.

The all-in cost will depend on the numbers attending, but should be no more than €50 per person (if we fill a coach, it will be considerably less).

To book or for more information, contact Michael Mc Mahon, Tel: 042-966 1097, or 087-753 5280.

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Convention

Democracy in action at ASTI Convention

JOE MORAN, ASTI Vice-President, looks forward to ASTI Convention 2009 in Killarney.

The Kerry Branch Convention 2009 Organising Committee are (from left): Eileen Revington; Michelle Mangan; Mary Crowley; John O'Donovan; Lily Cronin; Breda Lyons; and, Sean O'Brien (not pictured).



Teachers are the professional educators. The role of teachers in society is vital, unique and far-reaching. The extensive media coverage of the ASTI Convention reflects the importance of educators in Irish society. Teachers are central to the work of schools, to student achievement, and to the achievement of broader social and economic goals.

We, as teachers, must work effectively together to defend and advance our professional interests. A strong, organised and effective teaching profession needs your active involvement in your union. For a century, the ASTI has advanced the interests of education and teachers through the active involvement of members in its structures.

Come to Convention

Convention is at the heart of the ASTI. Activities and decisions taken there can have a major effect on your life as a teacher. The various branches around the country are delighted to have new delegates to represent them at Convention. Whatever you do during your teaching career, please include going to Convention as a high priority.

Personally, I had been teaching for 15 years before I first ventured to Convention in 1995. The ASTI President at that Convention in Ennis was the late Seán Higgins. Gearóid O Tuathaigh of NUI Galway was the President's guest speaker. Both speeches were profound and had a huge influence on my thinking. We, as teachers, are great communicators, and you may well be one of our great speakers and thinkers of the future. Convention is at the heart of democracy in the ASTI.

From the minute you arrive, you will be canvassed by candidates for President, Vice-President, Treasurer, National Organiser, Education Committee, Equality Committee, etc. Then there are the election results and the speeches given by the successful and unsuccessful candidates. You will always be impressed by the graciousness and sincerity of the candidates. New policy initiatives begin at Convention. A motion proposed by a member at a branch meeting has gathered support around the country and now may become ASTI policy. This is your opportunity to get the union to adopt your priority as policy. From specialist teachers to postal ballots, the motions create great debate. Core policies are often re-enforced, such as our policy on not assessing our own students for state exams.

Not all work

The speech of the Minister for Education and Science may not be the highlight, but representatives of all the organisations linked to education are there too, so you never know who you may have an interesting chat with. In fact, the social side of Convention is most enjoyable. But be warned: late nights dancing and socialising in the bar are always stamina sapping for those of us over 40! As well as the Convention Banquet on the first night, a special centenary function will be held this year on the Wednesday night in the Malton Hotel. Other things to enjoy include golf, a poc fada competition, day trips and the hotel's leisure centre facilities. You will make friends for life, contacts in every part of the country, and gain a renewed pride in your profession. Irish teachers are top quality people and you will be reminded of that so often at Convention.

These are very difficult times for teachers and we must support one another. A trade union is ultimately about supporting its most vulnerable member. Coming to Convention signals that you are part of that support and you want to have an input into the future of your profession.

I look forward to seeing you in Killarney!

A full report on Convention will appear in the May edition of *ASTIR*.



Joe Moran

ASTI Vice-President

Acting up or opting out?

Truancy in second-level schools

ASTIR looks at recent research that sheds light on the issue of truancy in Irish schools.



As teachers well know, truancy is an age-old phenomenon in schools. There is abundant evidence that poor attendance at school has substantial costs for the young person and for the broader society. In a paper published in the journal *Educational Review*, researchers from the ESRI refer to international research that underlines the link between persistent absence from school and early school leaving, and the potential for young people to become involved in antisocial or criminal activities. The research looks at patterns of truancy in Irish secondary schools, which it defines as the interplay between student characteristics, school context and student attitudes. Factors such as gender, socio-economic status, school social mix, and students' perceptions of their school and teachers all impact on the likelihood of truancy. An important distinction is also made between different types of truancy, ranging from skipping single classes to missing several days or school events.

Interlinked factors

The ESRI takes this research a step further by assessing whether the effects of individual factors change when factors relating to school context and students' attitudes are taken into account. The ESRI research demonstrates that links between truancy and student characteristics are influenced by factors relating to school environment and student attitudes. The report states that truancy levels are linked to social class background (classified as a student characteristic), with the highest rates of truancy found among children whose parents are from unskilled manual groups and non-employed households. School social mix (a school context factor) is also predictive of truancy patterns, with those attending schools with disadvantaged status significantly more likely to play truant. While boys are more likely to be absent from school than girls, the ESRI notes that the number of female truants is on the rise.

Significantly, the ESRI research finds that school social mix operates over and above the effects of the individual student's social class. This finding is consistent with other research, most notably the OECD's PISA studies. The latter have consistently found that Irish second-level schools make a difference in terms of developing students' potential and enabling them to overcome disadvantages in their lives. When student attitudes were then taken into account, it was found that, across all types of schools, students who experienced a school climate as supportive were significantly less likely to truant. The ESRI research refers on a number of occasions to the importance of

school climate and discipline in reducing truancy among students. Poor disciplinary climates were more associated with higher levels of truancy. The ESRI also notes that international research suggests that parental involvement is also a salient factor in explaining students' behavioural patterns, including truancy.

Targeting the vulnerable

The publication of the research last November followed the announcement of a broad range of education cutbacks, which the ASTI has stated will only deplete the resources available to teachers and schools working with young people who are vulnerable to absenteeism and drop out.

These include:

- the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio;
- the cutting of €2 million from the capitation grants for Traveller children;
- the abolition of grants for the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied, LCVP and Transition Year;
- the removal of additional capitation and teachers from 'non-DEIS' schools, including home school liaison teachers;
- and,
- the re-introduction of the cap on language support teachers.

The ASTI continues to campaign against these cuts.

The ESRI research is particularly significant because, although little research has been carried out on truancy and school absence in the Republic of Ireland, international research has shown that poor attendance has substantial costs for the individual and wider society, with non-attendance being strongly linked to high rates of socio-economic disadvantage.

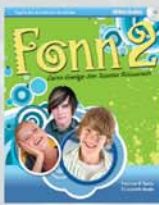
The report 'Acting Up or Opting Out? Truancy in Irish Secondary Schools' by Merike Darmody, Emer Smyth and Selina McCoy was published in the journal *Educational Review* in November 2008.

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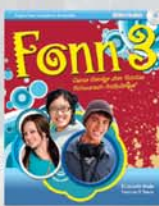
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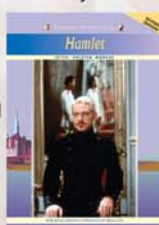


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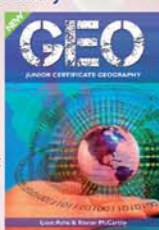
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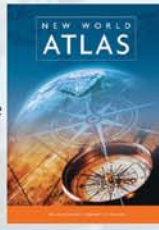
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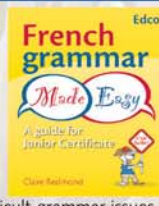
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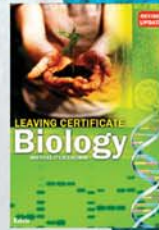
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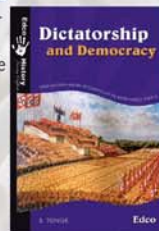


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09

NEW PUBLICATIONS

The Chief Inspector

Brigid Fitzgerald spoke to Chief Inspector Eamon Stack about the role of the Schools' Inspectorate, and the move towards self-evaluation by schools.

Under Eamon Stack's leadership, the Schools' Inspectorate at the Department of Education has gone through a period of significant reform and structural change. When he became Chief Inspector in 1997, inspection at second level had largely gone into abeyance. This was because of a crowded Inspectorate remit, which included some of the work now undertaken by the State Examinations Commission, NEPS and the NCSE. In the year following his appointment, the 1998 Education Act gave a clear remit to the Inspectorate, so Eamon set about putting in place a reformed structure to evaluate the quality of education provision in schools and centres for education; to support and advise schools and teachers; and, to advise on education policy.

A transparent system

Eamon is keen to point out that the establishment of this 'renewed' Inspectorate was rooted in dialogue and partnership: "Our first job was to be transparent about what we were going to do, how we were going to do it, and why we were doing it". This pragmatic approach remains pivotal to his view of the subject inspection and whole school evaluation work undertaken by the Inspectorate today. "Inspection is about evidence gathering, being able to form judgements not just in one or two areas but also on the totality of the education being provided in a school – to see the bigger picture."

Despite this emphasis on evidence gathering, Eamon is keen to distance the work of the Inspectorate from the idea of policing. It's not about catching anybody out, he says: "We are about promoting internal improvement and development rather than a policing model of external inspection. It's not: 'we tell you what to do and we'll be back to see that you did it'. That would not be effective because you simply cannot impose quality into an organisation. People must want to improve."

"Measuring quality is one thing, but we are as concerned about the things a teacher or principal can do to improve quality, as we are about measuring it", he says. "We recognise that change and improvement are ongoing. What we want for a school is for it to be better next year than it is now."



Classroom experience

In his early career Eamon was a teacher of business studies subjects in a number of schools in Limerick and Kerry before being appointed the founding Principal of St Nessen's Community College, Limerick, a post he held for 14 years. This rounded experience is an important factor in his current work: "I taught in a school and I ran a school as a principal so I like to think I have a good understanding of the complexities involved in school life. I recognise that schools change all the time".

His team of inspectors also comes with experience from across the education sector and Eamon believes this is important. "Inspectors with classroom experience are able to identify with and understand the anxieties that people may have", he says, adding that these anxieties are lessening as schools become more familiar with the Inspectorate's work.

Teachers are pivotal to maintaining and improving the quality of education our young people receive.

Co-professionals

The ultimate aim of the Inspectorate is to affirm and improve the quality of education, and teachers are, of course, central to that aim. "The Inspectorate regards teachers as co-professionals and we make every effort to foster positive relationships based on trust and mutual respect; we know that teachers are pivotal to maintaining and improving the quality of education our young people receive".

So what makes a good teacher? Eamon believes that teachers themselves have best answered that question: "It's nowhere better expressed than in

Interview



the Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct, which spells out very clearly the core values of the teaching profession and for me, the teacher who lives up to those has to be, by definition, a great teacher. It's about the educational experience that a teacher gives young people: the focus on educational outcomes, and the relationships, where the student's learning is at the centre." He says these are all things that inspectors can and do see evidence of in schools.

Seeing the whole school

The whole school evaluation process takes account of all aspects of a school, not only classroom teaching and learning. A good school, according to Eamon, is "a place where everybody has a clear commitment to excellence. They have an awareness that what they do in that school is very important". He lists 10 elements that are evident in good schools, and while he points out that exam results alone do not indicate the full value of a school's work, holding high expectations for each student is very important for every school. Principal among the elements he highlights is a focus on teaching and learning, and student involvement, internal responsibility and ownership, good governance and distributed leadership are also vital. The phrase 'professional collegiality' is to be found in much recent literature about good school environments, including in Inspectorate literature. It is, according to Eamon, another important feature of a good school. "To have a whole school approach you have to have teachers working together. Collegiality is about people working with a common purpose. In schools there is one fundamental key purpose: improving the quality of learning and student outcomes. You can have a lot of collegiality about many things in schools, but the key focus has to be on student outcomes and what can be done to improve them."

Qualities of a good school:

- Core focus on teaching and learning • Student involvement • Implementation and monitoring systems • Professional governance • Empowering leadership • Internal responsibility for change • Collegial professionalism of teachers • Ownership of quality assurance • Parental involvement • Makes best use of available external support.

We are now planning how best the Inspectorate can assist schools to engage in a meaningful way in whole school self-evaluation in the years ahead, and new models of external evaluation will take account of the growing culture and practice of self-evaluation.

Measuring success

Since 2006, over 2,500 inspection reports have been published on the Department's website and in January this year, the Minister for Education and Science, Batt O'Keeffe, told inspectors at their annual conference: "The publication of your reports is a very positive development ... but ... external inspection reports are not the only development needed in this area". This provoked the interest of the media, who saw in it a hint at the issue of league tables. Eamon denies the connection: "Anytime anybody raises an issue about more information about schools it seems to evoke the response: 'We don't want league tables. It's not about league tables and there is no question of that ... But there is a considerable amount of important information, other than exam league tables, that schools could give, if they so decided, to the public about their schools ... School inspection reports have helped plug the information gap, but I don't think they've plugged it completely. I think that schools can provide more information on the operation of a school: what it stands for; its educational objectives and plans for the next few years; how it is achieving the objectives it has set for itself, and so on. There is a considerable amount of information that a school could publish that may be regarded by some schools as very basic information, but that very few outside the school are aware of, and most of it is good".

Self-evaluation

Recognising this knowledge supports the Department's move towards encouraging self-evaluation as a part of the inspection process: "Now that schools have a growing experience of external evaluation, they are beginning to see that you don't have to be an inspector to begin to ask questions about your own practice and about how you might improve". According to Eamon: "Teachers and schools should take Inspectorate evaluation findings as an objective external view and use them to guide their own improvements. We must trust schools to act professionally and the school responses published with our evaluations are showing that schools accept the recommendations being made and in fact often outline the first steps that have already been taken to address areas identified for development".

A good teacher:

- Excites, inspires and engages • Presents clear and stimulating lessons • Facilitates co-operative learning, higher order thinking and problem solving • Instils a love of learning • Is interested in the learner and his/her needs • Constantly develops his/her practice • Has empathy with students • Is adaptable • Is a committed learner.

With over 13,000 inspections since 2005 (and only one formal appeal since the revised procedures came into operation in 2006), Eamon is proud that the Irish Inspectorate is now a model that other countries look to for guidance. But, he says, models of inspection and quality assurance are not directly transposable between countries or cultures. Finland, one of the best performing education systems in the world, is also a system where school inspection was abolished in the 1980s. With a move towards self-evaluation, is there a chance the Inspectorate might make itself redundant? "We are not yet in that place. There hasn't been a culture of robust evaluation in our education system. We have begun to make a contribution to bringing it about; if we are successful with that and if, in the future, every school engages in robust self-evaluation and publishes their reports, then who knows! But the one thing I can tell you is that in Finland, schools are self-critical, self-evaluatory and challenge themselves on an ongoing basis."

It's about the educational experience that a teacher gives young people: the focus on educational outcomes, and the relationships, where the student's learning is at the centre.

Planning for the future

Continual improvement is not only for the schools evaluated by the Inspectorate; in order to ensure that the inspection systems, processes and reports don't become bland or outdated, the Inspectorate is already looking at and planning modified inspection processes. "I think there will be significant developments in evaluation over the next five to seven years. There will be refinements and improvements and new quality assurance priorities. We believe that we have produced one model and we're learning a lot from it. We are finding out that there are things we can improve on and do differently. In the process of changing we will engage in dialogue with all the partners. There will be no surprises in this and we will set out the reasons for our changes because it will be no different to what we would be saying to a school: 'you must constantly look at what you're doing and why you're doing it.'" Indeed, the Inspectorate has already implemented a modified and shorter WSE process at primary level, one that involves sampling a range of the curriculum subjects to be inspected.

Eamon concludes by saying that: "We are now planning how best the Inspectorate can assist schools to engage in a meaningful way in whole school self-evaluation in the years ahead and new models of external evaluation will take account of the growing culture and practice of self-evaluation". As schools make progress with self-evaluation, the Chief Inspector points out that "schools could be allowed to choose one of the subjects or areas to be inspected as part of a WSE in the future. As it isn't about catching teachers out, why wouldn't you let them have a say in some aspect of what's done?"

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Who governs your school?



What tenets and structures underlie your school? Does it matter if your school is a community or comprehensive, VEC or voluntary secondary school? In this, the first of two articles, ASTIR examines models of patronage and the composition of boards of management at second level. The next issue of ASTIR asks: 'Does it make a difference?'

School patrons

According to the Education Act 1998, the patrons of a school are "the persons who ... stand appointed as trustees or as the board of governors of a post-primary school or, where there are no such trustees, the owner of that school". Recognised patron bodies at second level include religious orders, bishops, vocational education committees (VECs), An Foras Pátrúnachta, and trustee groups as recognised by the Minister for Education and Science. In recent years, three new trusteeships representing Catholic religious congregations have been established to assist in the provision of education through Catholic schools. For example, Le Chéile represents 12 different congregations and is the trustee for 45 voluntary secondary schools, as well as a joint trustee for seven community schools. Educate Together, which is a primary school patron body, is currently

campaigning to be recognised as a patron at second level. Patrons and trustee bodies have the power to nominate and appoint members to boards of management.

The principal has overall responsibility for the instruction provided to students in the school and for the education and personal development of students in the school.

Boards of management

All community and comprehensive schools and colleges and the great majority of voluntary secondary schools now have boards of management.

A board of management is appointed by the patron to manage the school on the patron's behalf. Under the Education Act 1998, boards of management are charged with providing an appropriate education for each student in the school. The board of management appoints a principal to manage the school on a day-to-day basis. The principal has overall responsibility for the instruction provided to students in the school and for the education and personal development of students in the school.

Teacher representatives on boards of management

Teacher representatives are full members of the board of management. While the primary purpose of these representatives must be to represent staff interests, they should concern themselves with and fully participate in all the discussions and decision-making of the board. As well as safeguarding the interests of staff and giving professional advice, they should play a positive role in the overall development and promotion of the school.

Voluntary secondary schools

Voluntary secondary schools are under the trusteeship of religious orders, dioceses or boards of governors.

The articles of management for Catholic secondary schools provide for a board of management consisting of eight persons appointed by the trustees. Four members are nominated by the trustees. Two parents/legal guardians of children currently in the school are elected by the parents/legal guardians. Two teachers are elected by the teaching staff. The term of office for each board is three years.

Non-Catholic secondary schools adopt varying instruments of management.

The Board of Management is the employer in voluntary secondary schools.

Community schools

Community schools represent a coming together of two traditions in post-primary education – the secondary school and the vocational school. Community schools are owned by the Minister for Education and Science, who vests the ownership in religious and VEC trustees. Each school is an independent school managed by a board of management and dealing directly with the Department of Education and Science.

Community schools are fully funded by the Department of Education and Science. Many of these schools were established as a result of the amalgamation of voluntary secondary and vocational schools in a locality. They offer a wide range of both academic and vocational subjects and are run by boards of management, which, in the main, are representative of local interests.

The board of management of a community school consists of 10 members. Three members are nominated by religious authorities. Three are nominees of the local county VEC. Two parents of pupils in the school who are resident in the area are elected by parents. Two teachers are elected by the teaching staff.

The board of management is the employer.

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Feature

VEC-managed schools

Vocational schools

Vocational schools are owned by the local VEC, as established by the local authority. In the past these schools were oriented towards technical education, but they now generally provide a wide range of both academic and practical subjects. Boards of management are subcommittees of the VEC and include VEC representatives, and representatives of parents, community and teachers.

Community colleges

Community colleges are owned by the local VEC. They are largely funded by the Department of Education and Science, with the balance being provided by the VECs. Each college is part of the local VEC and board of management decisions must be ratified by the chief executive officer of the VEC.

The boards of management for these schools are sub-committees of the VEC. The composition of these boards is a matter for local negotiation. Membership of the boards includes VEC representatives and parent, teacher and community representatives. Two teachers are elected by the teaching staff.

Community colleges include designated community colleges and greenfield community colleges.

Designated community colleges

Designated community colleges are almost always amalgamated or assimilated community colleges. These colleges come about as a result of a merger between a voluntary secondary school and a vocational school, or in the case of an assimilated college where the religious trustees withdraw from a school and the VEC agrees to take on the trusteeship of a school and thus maintain a post-primary school in a town/area.

Designated community colleges normally follow the instrument of management drawn up and implemented by two to three of the catholic archdioceses.

These boards comprise three members of the religious authority, three members of the VEC, two parents of children attending the school, two teachers employed in the school, and a place is reserved for a minority religious order or local community interest.

Greenfield community colleges

As the name suggests, greenfield community colleges are new and wholly managed by the VEC, in whose area they are situated.

Such schools arise in areas of population growth or new development areas: witness the chain of greenfield colleges on the perimeter of Dublin and in some other areas. There is no universal instrument of management, and there is no single model. Some enjoy what is called designated status by virtue of a deed of trust, which is modelled on the Archdiocese of Dublin model, or the partnership model in Co. Cork, or the model employed in Limerick. In these colleges the instrument is the same as in designated community colleges: three nominees of a religious or diocesan authority, three nominees of the VEC, two parents of children attending the school, two teachers employed in the college, and a place is reserved for a minority religious representative or local community interest.

A VEC may otherwise choose to opt for a different model to that of the designated community college. This model, based on the 1930 Education Act, is as follows: three to four nominees of the VEC, of which two must be members of the VEC, two nominees of the parents, two nominees of the teachers, and up to four members nominated by the board who represent local organisations, associations, partnership bodies or primary schools within the catchment area.

The VEC is the employer in all VEC-managed schools.

Comprehensive schools

Comprehensive schools operate under the trusteeship of religious denominations.

'Catholic' comprehensive schools

A deed of trust has been agreed for those comprehensive schools that are under the trusteeship of the Catholic bishops. The board of management is composed of two nominees of the diocese, one nominee of the VEC, the chief executive officer of the VEC, two nominees of the parents and two nominees

of the teachers. The teacher representatives are elected by the teaching staff. These eight members may co-opt a ninth member to the board. The term of office is five years.

'Church of Ireland/Protestant' comprehensive schools

These schools are under the trusteeship of the Church of Ireland or the Church of Ireland and the Donegal Protestant Board of Education.

The board is composed of six nominees of the trustees, one chief executive officer, two parents and two teachers. The teacher representatives are elected by the teaching staff. The term of office is five years.

Gaelcholáistí

Gaelcholáistí or Irish schools can be any type of school – voluntary secondary, community or comprehensive school, or community college. An Foras Pátrúnachta is the patron body for a number of primary gael scoileanna and one gaelcholáiste at second level.

The ASTI has produced an information leaflet entitled 'Boards of Management in Post-Primary Schools', which contains information and advice for teacher representatives. The leaflet is available at www.asti.ie. The ASTI also organises training days for teacher board of management representatives each year.

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The schools of 2029

JIM O'BRIEN looks at international efforts to plan for the future of education and asks: Where is Ireland's roadmap for the future?

In light of the unprecedented economic and social challenges Ireland will face over the next number of years, it is vital that the Government prioritises the development of coherent, creative and visionary education policy. In the national interest, we must ensure that the Irish education system is developed in such a way that present and future generations can be confident that the right decisions are being made to ensure economic growth, social cohesion and quality education for children. Strategic planning has long been regarded by our government as a measure to drive change in education. School development and planning is but one example of this approach and has been a statutory requirement in Irish schools since the enactment of Section 21 of the 1998 Education Act. The Department of Education and Science requires school planning to be systematic, collaborative, ongoing, progressive, and enhancing. The practice involves a cycle of setting targets; defining objectives; identifying needs; prioritising aims; and, designing, reviewing and monitoring plans. The result is that schools today are bursting at the seams with the proliferation of programmes, policy statements and planning documents, covering everything from curricular and administrative activities to sports facilities, catering and caretaking, etc. Yet what is happening in Ireland now has already happened in many English-speaking countries around the world where, in fact, governments are asking: 'Are we asking our schools to do too much?' and 'Are the schools of the present a good model for the future?'

Options for the future

As early as 1996, leading OECD countries, worried at the rapid rate of change in technology coupled with growing societal problems, commissioned the education section of the OECD, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) in Paris, to examine the future direction of education. CERI was asked to assess alternative visions for the schools of tomorrow. In doing so it considered a wide range of issues affecting OECD countries such as ageing populations, single parent households, materially-rich, time-poor family life, and educational

exclusion, to mention but a few. OECD education ministers asked CERI to draw up a set of possible directions that schools might take, in order to remain relevant in the future.

Six possible scenarios were developed and presented to the 2001 OECD Conference in Paris. They were grouped into three categories:

- Category 1a and 1b: Maintaining the status quo
- Category 2a and 2b: Reschooling
- Category 3a and 3b: Deschooling

Category 1 – Maintaining the status quo

Each scenario has two categories that are broadly similar and provide an alternative snapshot of what future schools might look like. Scenarios 1a and 1b examine the prospect of schools continuing with their existing system of strong government control, a growing bureaucracy of assessment and accountability, a stretching of resources due to increased social problems in schools, and reduced funding. It is a scenario with which ASTI members are very familiar – a mix of underfunding and increased social dysfunction leading to extremely difficult working conditions. This is not a pleasant picture of the schools of 2029. Scenario 1b is called the 'meltdown scenario', in which Scenario 1a metamorphoses into a nightmare vision of rapid decline in school discipline and educational standards. This scenario envisions a future of low teacher morale, low pay, an exodus of the better qualified teachers, weaker trade unions, greater government control over schools and a long-term crisis in education. It is a scenario not unlike what occurred in the public sector schools in the UK and US in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Category 2 – Reschooling

Scenarios 2a and 2b envisage a much more appealing future for education. They see vastly increased funding for education and widespread



recognition for schools, students, teachers and their achievements. Scenario 2a sees schools as core social institutions. As well as educational skills, schools would focus on social skills and citizenship. Funding would increase greatly to provide better buildings with a wide range of social and community services. Schools would be staffed by highly trained personnel with good pay and working conditions. This is the scenario that found favour with OECD education ministers at the 2001 conference. Scenario 2b describes a different future in which schools become centres of excellence for education only. It sees the social agenda of the previous scenario being left to outside agencies, allowing schools to return to concentrating strictly on high standards of education and to become learning organisations with high expectations, highly trained personnel, high levels of continuous professional development, and favourable work and pay conditions for teachers.

Category 3 – Deschooling

Scenarios 3a and 3b are deschooling scenarios and see the future as one of privatised education. Scenario 3a is a future of 'learning networks'. CERI saw these as possibly developing in countries where public confidence in the traditional school system had broken down completely. Instead of spending a large proportion of budget on education, government would allow the dismantling of the current school structure and its replacement with online learning networks. Huge reductions in capital spending and running costs would flow from this model. There would be far less dependence on teachers as we currently understand the term and governments would cut costs on buildings and staff. The final scenario, 3b, is an 'encouraging the market' model. Like the networking model, it would stem from widespread dissatisfaction with the existing school system. This would allow new providers to come into the education sector, with government taking a more passive role. Driven by market forces, huge changes would be introduced into the way schools are owned and run.

A plan for Ireland

Following the CERI research, OECD countries chose Scenario 2, 'Reschooling', as the best way forward for education. Countries such as Holland, Canada and, to a certain extent, England are already moving towards this model by adapting various aspects of the two reschooling scenarios, using schools as core social centres while also working to achieve the academic excellence aspired to in Scenario 2b. Ireland, on the other hand, seems to be moving in the opposite direction. This is despite the fact that the Irish teaching profession is committed to a holistic education in schools. With the recent changes to the pupil-teacher ratio, Ireland has the second largest classes in the OECD. We have one of the lowest spending rates on education of all the OECD countries – 4.3% of GDP as compared to the average spend of 5.1%. After 10 years of unprecedented boom, does the Department of Education and Science have a long-term plan for education in Ireland? Does it know where it is taking Irish education in the next two decades and does it know how to get there? Where is the road map for the schools of 2029?



Jim O'Brien

Jim O'Brien is a teacher at St Ciaran's Community School, Kells, Co. Meath.

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Meet the Presidents part II

Some more former ASTI Presidents look back at their involvement in the union, and reflect on how times have changed for teachers.



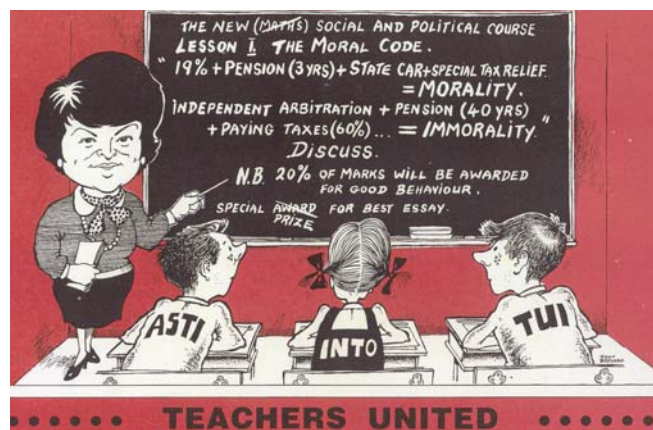
Louis O'Flaherty, ASTI President 1985/'86, looks back on his time as President and at the Teachers United campaign.

Is the past a foreign country?

Since L.B. Hartley's seminal novel *The Go-Between* was published in 1953, his opening line: "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there", or mutations of it, have become almost proverbial. In recent months I have begun to doubt the basic thesis of Hartley's statement. Ireland in 1985 was most certainly a strange place if not altogether a foreign country, but I am not totally convinced that we did things that much differently then. In the summer of 1985 throngs of people were flocking to Ballinspittle in Co. Cork to stay up all night in the hope of seeing a statue move. That definitely seems like a foreign country and would be unimaginable today. But there were more obvious comparisons with today's Ireland. For one thing the country was bankrupt. There was mass unemployment and emigration was rife. Marginal tax rates were 65% plus various levies and mortgage rates were hovering in the mid teens. On August 1, 1985, I took up office as President of the ASTI. The changeover of the presidency of the ASTI always takes place when activity in the education sector is at its lowest level. The new incumbent can usually expect a period of calm before the mad rush of September. But that was not to be. In 1985 we didn't have national wage agreements and teachers seeking pay increases had to resort to the Teacher's Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme, which had been established in 1973. The parties involved were the three teacher unions, the managerial authorities, and the Ministers for Education and the Public Services, who all made their case to an arbitration board, which ruled on the matter and made recommendations. Normally these recommendations were accepted by government and implemented.

Teachers United

In December 1982 teacher unions had lodged a pay claim for a 10% special award to restore relativity with other groups. In July 1985 the claim was conceded by the arbitrator but was not made public. Details of the scheme appeared in the press in early August. On August 14, John Boland, Minister for the Public Service, issued a statement saying that no pay increases or special awards would be made to those in the public sector. The trade union response was swift and fierce. Kieran Mulvey, General Secretary of ASTI, went head to head with John Boland on the current affairs television programme *Today Tonight* and said that he would be seeking an early meeting of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) to organise a strong industrial response. The following day the ICTU said that the statement from government constituted "a declaration of war on the trade union movement" and the next day the Local



Government and Public Services Union rejected the pay policy and instructed its members to convene strike meetings. On August 19, the Minister for Education, Gemma Hussey, delivered a speech in support of the stance already adopted by John Boland. She said: "It is vital that all the organisations who publicly clamour for increases should address themselves to the morality of what they are about; are they so bound up in self-justification that they can't stand back for the sake of the country and see that the preservation of secure jobs is well worth a delay in pay increases?" As the month of August merged into September the Irish trade union movement was mobilised against the Government on a series of issues involving income tax and unemployment. Anger with the Government was nowhere more apparent than in the three main teacher unions, which had come together to form Teachers United. The closing months of 1985 were a heady time for teacher trade unions. One-day strikes and regional rallies were held all over the country. Stirring speeches of friendship and solidarity were made, culminating in a mass rally of 20,000 teachers in Croke Park on December 5. Space does not allow for a complete description of all the events of that very eventful year but the matter was not resolved until the following May.

Redeployment settled

There was one further matter that complicated the industrial dispute for the ASTI but that did not affect the other teaching unions. For many years the ASTI had been trying to secure a satisfactory redeployment scheme for its members. A proposal involving redeployment, boards of management and home school links was scheduled to be balloted by members on September 24, 1985. Some prominent members of the ASTI felt that the terms of the proposed settlement should be rejected. Happily, the proposals were accepted and many opponents of the scheme have since become principals or management functionaries but, more importantly, no member of the ASTI since then has lost a job because of school closure. But to go back to where I started, in one sense Hartley was right; it is unlikely that in 2009 we will witness the same scenes of mass hysteria that occurred in Ballinspittle in 1985. Those aspects of Irish religious fervour seem to have eased somewhat but other things have not changed. The language of begrudgery and resentment against teachers, which was then evident, has reappeared as it always does when there is a recession. When times are good, teachers are ridiculed for not being to the forefront in the purple of commerce but when the market blinks teachers become the cosseted and underperforming leeches of our society. It is for this reason that I believe that Alphonse Karr, 100 years before Hartley, better summarised the human condition in his pithy epigram: "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose".



Joe Costello, ASTI President 1990/'91, *reflects on his involvement in the union over the years.*

It seems strange now looking back almost 20 years to the time when I was privileged to be President of the ASTI. It was a different Ireland in those days.

1980s

Looking back over a few copies of *ASTIR* the main events came flowing back. I got seriously involved in the ASTI in the early 1980s when the given wisdom was to close down schools and hospitals in the city centre and move them to the suburbs of Dublin. I was teaching in Loreto College in North Great Georges Street, right in the heart of Dublin. Virtually the entire lay staff was opposed to the proposed transfer of the school to Swords. We campaigned against it and persuaded the ASTI to hold a special convention in Liberty Hall in 1981 where we received the support of the union. However, our efforts failed and Loreto College, North Great Georges Street is now the thriving Loreto College in River Valley, Swords, Co. Dublin.

In the following years I was elected to CEC, Standing Committee, to the position of Vice-President and finally to the Presidency.

The 1980s were an exciting decade to be involved in the ASTI. The particular highlight was the marshalling of 20,000 INTO, TUI and ASTI members into Croke Park in a massive protest on December 8, 1985, to protest at the Government's failure to implement an arbitrator's pay award.

Presidential year

My presidency in 1990-'91 was a hectic year. I spent the summer and autumn of 1990 travelling the country promoting the ASTI SOS Campaign – Save Our Schools.

With Ray McSharry (Mac the Knife), a fellow Sligoman, as Minister for Finance, there had been sharp educational cutbacks in previous years, including a worsening of the pupil-teacher ratio in an attempt to correct the national finances.

The campaign bore fruit and, in December 1990, a new pay deal was agreed with the teacher unions for a cumulative 16% salary increase, including 9% social partnership increase over three years and an improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio.

When the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) was voted on at the Congress of Trade Union Conference in Liberty Hall in January 1991, I had the good fortune to be able to go to the rostrum and welcome the new three-year pay deal on behalf of the ASTI and the secondary teachers of Ireland. Kieran Mulvey, our General Secretary, who had done Trojan work in the PESP negotiations, had tendered his resignation. Charlie Lennon, the Assistant General Secretary, was appointed his successor by acclamation at the Annual Conference in Waterford in 1991. John White, the present General Secretary, was selected as Deputy General Secretary shortly afterwards.

In the meantime, in consultation with Standing Committee, I had decided to exercise my presidential prerogative under Rule 57 to hold a Special Convention to clarify once and for all the position of the elected members in the running of the ASTI.

On March 9, the Special Convention was held in the Gresham Hotel in Dublin. It voted overwhelmingly for the proposed changes to the ASTI rulebook. A new rule asserted that the President was the chief officer of the Union. Other changes clarified the position that the General Secretary was answerable and accountable to the CEC and to Standing Committee as occasion arose. The vote for each rule change was overwhelmingly in favour.

1991 was the 75th Anniversary of the 1916 Rising and I proposed that we would re-name the offices in Baggot Street after Thomas MacDonagh, one of the Proclamation signatories and a founder member of the ASTI in 1909. A commemorative plaque was erected. I am pleased that the new offices in Winetavern Street are now called Thomas MacDonagh House.

Looking back at my presidential address in April 1991, the issues are familiar enough today: the largest class size in the EU and the lowest per capita expenditure, the need for school discipline with national guidelines facilitating a school-based code, the need for an early retirement package for teachers, the perennial dispute over teacher assessment of their pupils in State examinations. But there were exciting developments too. The new National Council for Curriculum and Assessment had been established with strong teacher representation. The development of a new three-year senior cycle was well underway and many schools were introducing a Transition Year. The ASTI campaign for in-service education and training to enhance professional development was bearing fruit. We were hopeful of an elected Teacher's Council to replace the Registration Council.

As my Presidency was coming to an end, *Hot Press* decided to interview me, concentrating more on my involvement with the Labour Party, Amnesty International, the Prisoners' Rights Organisation and Dublin's street traders than on my union involvement. A month before I left office, I was elected to Dublin City Council for the first time. On the Sunday that Meath beat Dublin by a point in the last of their three great contests I was in the ASTI office putting the final touches to the Civic Charter, which was the blueprint for the running of Dublin City Council under the Rainbow Coalition that had been formed. Later that evening I lost a tied vote for nomination as Lord Mayor of Dublin. It would have been an interesting situation to have been Lord Mayor of Dublin at the same time as President of the ASTI. But it was not to be.

I will always remember the good times I had and the good friends I made in the ASTI. I look forward to participating in the centenary celebrations of a strong outspoken union that has done so much to enhance the quality of education and to enhance the profession of teaching in Ireland over the last 100 years.



John Mulcahy, ASTI President 1996/'97, *writes about 30 years of ASTI involvement.*

I couldn't have avoided the ASTI even if I tried. I spent my year of teacher education in the North Monastery CBS in Cork, sharing a staffroom with luminaries such as Donnchadh Ó Murchú, Derek Nolan and Pádraig Ó Riordáin – all presidents of the ASTI. When the latter two addressed the Higher Diploma class about the terrors of probation year, I was a ready convert, and duly completed the membership form on attaining my first job in Coláiste Iognáid Rís, Deerpark, Cork.

These were heady days for the ASTI. The first meeting I attended of the Cork Branch was packed to capacity to discuss the subsuming of special functions allowances into posts of responsibility. We young Turks felt sold out and voted for strike action. Prior to the strike some of us, anticipating a long struggle, talked about taking the boat to England, as the bank tellers had done during their strike the previous year. I was watching the late news the night before, when I heard the announcement that the strike had been called off. On going into school the following morning, I found that half the staff had gone to Dublin to demonstrate outside the Department office and ASTI Head Office.

Becoming more involved

In 1979, due to a dynamic election campaign, employing sophisticated strategies, I was elected School Steward – in other words, I was told it was my turn! It turned out to be a momentous year. The next branch meeting I attended happened to be the last meeting of the old Cork branch, which dated back to the founding of the ASTI. During the AGM in Connolly Hall, the resolution to dissolve the branch was carried, and the attendance split into two adjoining rooms where two new branches were established, Cork North and Cork South. The remaining funds of the old branch were invested in a barrel of stout and a barrel of lager and everyone adjourned to the nearby Teachers Centre, where we drank and sang into the early hours. What a wake!

Within two years I was Chairperson of Cork South. In those days, before industrial relations officers were employed full time, branch officers were much more involved in industrial disputes. School closures were one issue that caused huge concerns and worries to staffs in the days before redeployment. In my time in the branch, I had to deal with three, and I am glad to report that through the exertions of the branch, all teachers secured positions. Another issue that took up a lot of time was rationalisation. A number of school amalgamations were taking place and the VEC was pushing hard for community colleges, in cases where the local community clearly favoured community schools. The Cork South Branch gave its full support to the staffs concerned and succeeded, against the

odds, in securing ministerial approval for community schools in Passage West and Kinsale.

In 1980 I transferred to Bishopstown Community School and my first time serving on a national body was on the Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee. We were the oddballs: no contract, disputed conditions of service, interviews for posts and government by boards of management. The C&CAC was an extremely active body and soon important concessions were won on conditions of service such as sick leave and personal days. A major achievement was winning the right to recruit ASTI members in greenfield and amalgamated community colleges.

Demonstration and action

In 1986 I was elected to Standing Committee. The previous year the Government refused to pay the arbitration award of 10%, which led to strikes and the decision taken at convention to "black" the examinations. Action committees were established in every county and I worked closely with colleagues in the INTO and TUI to organise the demonstration in Cork. We crammed 3,000 teachers into Neptune Stadium that day, and one press correspondent stated that the sight of angry teachers brandishing mounted placards reminded him of the Nuremberg rallies! Be it so, the idea was quickly copied by the national organisers for the Croke Park rally of December 5, 1985.

The cohesion and collegiality shown in the campaign showed what could be achieved by teacher unity. The Council of Teacher Unions was formed and a blueprint was drawn up for unity, but when the time came to jump, the INTO balked. I still feel that a great opportunity was lost, but the volume of work undertaken then would still be a valuable basis for another attempt in the future.

I was elected Vice-President in 1995 and followed Tommy Francis as President in 1996-'97. I came into office on the back of a rejected PCW ballot and much of my year as President was spent in renegotiating the deal. It was a fraught time and I remember well the CEC meeting where the decision to put the renegotiated package to ballot was passed by a single vote!

It has been my privilege to have worked closely with some remarkable and dedicated officials over the years, working alongside them as acting Education Officer on two occasions. Finally, my involvement in the ASTI has brought me into contact with thousands of teachers, many of whom I now count as my closest friends. To all of you, may you enjoy the centenary celebrations, and let us all be proud of our Association as it enters its second century.



Catherine Fitzpatrick, ASTI President 2001/'02,
*reflects on the changing nature of the teacher's role
 and her own role as an ASTI activist over the last
 quarter of a century.*

I started teaching in the Vocational School, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly in 1975 and two years later got a job in the Patrician Academy, Mallow, where I have been Principal for the last two years. The vacancy arose in Mallow due to the then Minister for Education, John Wilson, reducing the pupil-teacher ratio from 20:1 to 19:1. As I write this article I am struck by the irony that the pupil-teacher ratio is once again 19:1 following a long struggle over a considerable number of years by all the education partners to achieve a pupil-teacher ratio of 18:1.

Role change

During my teaching career I have witnessed significant change in the teacher's role, much of this change driven by and consequent to societal change and increased participation rates. When I started teaching, a teacher was viewed as a source of knowledge, imparting information to students who were generally compliant and accepting of a teacher's authority. Teachers are now viewed as facilitators in the classroom, enabling students to take responsibility for their own learning and to develop the skills to be independent learners. The 'chalk and talk' approach of the past has been replaced by a variety of interactive methodologies incorporating audio-visual and computer technology. Students are more assertive and outspoken and less inclined to accept authority figures. This has resulted in a more dynamic relationship between student and teacher and more emphasis on relationship building.

Reflecting on my years as an ASTI activist, I would say that I was increasingly aware of the growing complexity and the multi-dimensional nature of the teacher's role as it developed over the years. Teachers, apart from teaching, were involved in whole school planning, designing programmes, developing and sourcing teaching materials, delivering pastoral care and student welfare programmes, organising extra-curricular activities, and acting as mentors and counsellors. The ASTI Education Committee has been very active in preparing discussion documents and position papers to develop policies aimed at enhancing teacher professionalism and at supporting teachers in their multi-dimensional role. Increased participation levels in education in the '80s and '90s resulted in a much more diverse student population, requiring different curricula and programmes to cater for the needs of all students. Teachers, in my view, responded admirably to the challenge and got involved in drafting new

curricula, syllabi and programmes through their involvement in, initially, the Curriculum and Examination Board (CEB) and later, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). I was the ASTI representative for French on both the CEB and NCCA course committees.

ASTI activity

My experience as an ASTI activist dates from 1980 when it was proposed to introduce the Junior Certificate. I proposed a motion at Annual Convention that year from my branch, Desmond Branch, refusing to co-operate with the introduction of the Junior Certificate unless the government provided adequate resources. Convention supported the motion but legal advice sought by the ASTI at the time indicated that teachers could not refuse to co-operate with the introduction of the Junior Certificate. Nevertheless, the Government had to address the issues of adequate resources and in-service for teachers and it became the norm that curriculum change was accompanied by minimum in-service for teachers. The development of the Second Level Support Service, and thus more opportunities for professional development for teachers, was a welcome development in recent years and offered recognition that teachers too are lifelong learners.

As an ASTI activist, I served on many ASTI committees and subcommittees, most notably the Education Committee, Equality Committee and Standing Committee. When I got involved in the ASTI at national level and attended my first few conventions and CEC meetings I was very aware of the dearth of women in positions of leadership. I was one of a number of women in the '80s who were nominated by the ASTI to attend a nine-day training course for women organised by the ICTU. This expanded my horizons where trade union issues were concerned and gave me the opportunity to meet women from other trade unions and gain an insight into their issues. It also gave me the confidence and enhanced my skills to pursue leadership positions in my own trade union.

I was elected Vice-President of the ASTI in 2000 and President in 2001. It was a privilege and an honour to serve in these positions. During my tenure as President, the ASTI was embroiled in a very difficult pay campaign, which resulted in very interesting and lively debates at Standing Committee and CEC! That period is best summed up by saying: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times".



Susie Hall, ASTI President 2004/'05,
*recalls her first-hand experiences of the
 need for union support.*

It is strange how circumstances guide our lives along certain paths, often in a direction we would never have expected. I started teaching in 1969 in a Roman Catholic convent school in the leafy suburbs of South County Dublin. Coming from a business background, I had no interest whatever in trade unions but I joined the ASTI as all teachers in the school were members. I paid my subscription but did not attend meetings or take any active role.

In the spring of 1971 I got engaged and was promptly sacked by my school! I was horrified, as my future husband and I had just put a deposit on a house and obtained a mortgage, at 20% interest, based on both our salaries. However, I was a member of a trade union and was familiar with the slogan beloved of 1960s trade unionists: "One out, all out!" Once it was informed, I felt sure the ASTI would call on all the teachers in the country to down tools until I was reinstated.

How wrong I was! I was informed by my branch officers that this was what women had to accept. Schools did not have to continue your employment if you got married, even if you had a permanent position. I couldn't believe it and determined that once I found another teaching position, I would do everything in my power to fight this injustice. The pupil-teacher ratio was increased from 15:1 to 18:1 in 1971 and every school was over quota. I managed, however, against all expectations, to get a job in a small convent school in Malahide.

Community school representation

This school became a community school in 1976 and again our lives were thrown into chaos. All agreements with the JMB were now redundant and no others were put in place. There were no agreements on posts of responsibility and new staff members were pitted against those who had been in the school for many years. In one instance an A post was given to a nun without any interviews being held! Some teachers in my school and in some of the other newly formed community and comprehensive schools felt we would be better off joining the TUI, as the ASTI did not seem interested in our plight. I disagreed. By then, I had become more involved

in the ASTI, and requested that a special Advisory Committee be formed to focus on the problems arising in these new schools. This was done, the country was divided into areas and each member of the Advisory Committee had a certain number of C/C schools assigned to them. It was our task to phone the school steward of each school we represented every month, before the monthly meeting of the Advisory Committee, and bring any problems or worrying trends to the attention of Standing Committee. Over time, agreements were reached with the TUI and with the ACCS, as soon as it was established, on posts of responsibility and teacher representatives on boards of management, all of which was a new experience for the ASTI.

Maternity and adoptive leave

Another area in which I was involved was campaigning for maternity leave. Even when it was introduced, there was no adoptive maternity leave. This seemed horribly unfair to me and I got my branch to put forward a motion for Annual Convention. I was deeply touched by the warmth with which the ASTI supported the motion and eventually adoptive maternity leave became a reality. I could never have expected while involved in the campaign, that I would end up being the first person in the public service in Ireland to be granted adoptive maternity leave! I was elected Vice President in 2003, which I had not really believed possible, as I had never served on Standing Committee and all previous presidents had been members of Standing Committee. It was a great honour but it was a difficult time for the ASTI so I had to learn fast. The following year I was elected President. Representing teachers and their professionalism and commitment was the greatest honour that the union could ever bestow and I am deeply grateful for it. I will never forget the wonderful people I met during my year as President, the warmth and hospitality of branches, the new friends I made, and the loyalty and support I received.

I am deeply grateful for everything the ASTI has done for me and I wish it every success in the future.



Cork City Hall reception honours ASTI foundation

Cork City Council held a civic reception at the end of January to mark the foundation of the ASTI 100 years ago. The genesis of the ASTI can be traced back to Co. Cork; the founder members of the ASTI and the first ASTI President were teachers living and teaching in Cork. More than 80 members of the ASTI's Central Executive Council attended the reception.

The Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Brian Bermingham, paid tribute to the ASTI and to teachers. ASTI President Pat Hurley presented a silver plate to the Lord Mayor. "As we celebrate our 100th year, it is an honour for me and my ASTI colleagues to be received by the Lord Mayor of Cork in the county where it all began," said Mr Hurley.



At the Cork City Council reception in honour of the ASTI's foundation are: (sitting) Cllr Brian Bermingham, Lord Mayor of Cork; and, Pat Hurley, ASTI President. (Standing): John O'Donovan, Cork City Council Events Manager; Joe Moran, ASTI Vice President; John White, ASTI General Secretary; Diarmaid de Paor, ASTI Deputy General Secretary; and, Paul Moynihan, Cork City Council Corporate Affairs Manager.



Cllr John Kelleher and Pat Hurley mark the 100th anniversary of the ASTI. As well as being on Cork City Council and a former Lord Mayor, John is a former second-level teacher and was active in the ASTI for many years, serving as Chair and Secretary of the East Cork Branch and as an East Cork CEC representative.



Enjoying the civic reception in City Hall Cork are (from left): Jerry McCarthy, Carberry Branch; Marie Ni Chairba, Cork North Branch; and, Bernard Moynihan, ASTI Industrial Relations Officer.



From left: Micheál Martin, Minister for Foreign Affairs and former ASTI member; Cllr Brian Bermingham, Lord Mayor of Cork; Pat Hurley, ASTI President; and, John White, ASTI General Secretary.



From left: Garda Superintendent Charlie Barry; Jean Forristal, Roscrea Branch; Pat Hurley, ASTI President; Mary Lyndon, Roscrea Branch; and, John O'Donovan, Cork City Council Events Manager.



ASTI President Pat Hurley presents an inscribed silver plate to the Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Brian Bermingham.



The Lord Mayor of Cork presents a Cork Crystal vase to ASTI President Pat Hurley.



From left: Ann Piggott, Cork South and Standing Committee representative; and, Mary Lysaght, Tipperary and Standing Committee representative.



Three weeks in February

FURSA HENEGHAN, an emeritus member of the ASTI, recalls the strike of 1969.

In this auspicious centenary year of the ASTI my memory keeps flashing back 40 years to that seminal strike of 1969, which heralded major changes in educational management in voluntary secondary schools. The impecunious circumstance of three weeks without salary, in an era where money was scarce and credit virtually unknown without collateral, where snow fell heavily on the ground, is not a pleasant memory. I sincerely hope these conditions will never visit our younger generation but the result was a catalyst for change in educational management within a few years.

At that time secondary teachers constituted 23% of the teaching body and only half of those were ASTI members because of the large number of religious working in the voluntary secondary schools.

A time of change

For the first time in voluntary secondary schools, which were owned and run by religious orders, the concept of lay management was mooted. The Ryan Tribunal had established a common basic scale for all teachers and made provision for allowances for principals, vice principals and posts of responsibility. The Department of Education had urged that all posts of responsibility be given to lay staff as a recompense for a loss of 12.5% of standard salary due to the aforementioned scale. The common basic scale disadvantaged secondary teachers, who felt that the level of work and scholarship, qualifications and length of training they had attained was ignored in negotiations. Allowances for lay principals and vice principals were not going to benefit the majority of our members, as religious principals were the order of the day and the vocations crisis was not envisaged at this stage – hence the strike of 1969.

Negotiations

An offer as a result of conciliation meetings in January 1969 provided for a special functions allowance for all teachers ranging from £100 on the eighth point of the salary scale to £300 on the twelfth point, to replace posts of responsibility. This new allowance provision was a redistribution of the money that would otherwise be allocated to graded posts, principals and vice principals in the original Ryan scheme. This system would rule out

competition and ensure good staff morale together with equal promotional opportunities. However, the INTO contended that this offer was in breach of the common basic scale and the matter was referred back to Professor Ludden Ryan, who deemed it to be a breach.

The final settlement abolished the post of special functions, except for those holding same in a personal capacity. A and B posts were introduced based on a points rating relative to the pupils' ages. Seniority as a criterion for promotion was accepted, which served us well until recent legislative changes. In theory, holding a special functions post in a personal capacity entitled a member to move school and carry the allowance. In practice, however, the allowance was deducted from the post pool in the next school, which didn't enhance staff morale and restricted movement. The nucleus of middle management was established and lay vice-principals were appointed within a few years.

Taking a stand

For economic reasons, many members had to leave for England during the strike and secured positions as supply teachers. Despite the fact that few teachers had telephones, they managed to keep in touch with developments. This led to a tremendous camaraderie and collegiality, which stood the organisation in good stead into the future. The result of the strike ballot – 2,392 in favour and 424 against (J Coolahan) – was proof of the resolve and determination of members in a just cause. At that time secondary teachers constituted 23% of the teaching body and only half of those were ASTI members because of the large number of religious working in the voluntary secondary schools. This was a very courageous stand in these circumstances. It should be noted that the religious managers gave full backing to their staff, as they were interested in maintaining the independence of the system. On a lighter note, those who fled the country got 24 hours notice to return to their classrooms due to a sudden settlement. They were somewhat embarrassed having to leave English schools without notice, as retired members reminded me at the joyous occasion hosted by the President for RSTA members last December 17 in Thomas McDonagh House. In 1969, nobody could visualise the achievements that would be secured by the ASTI for lay teachers.

Mar fhocal scoir, every time it snows I am reminded of the three weeks in February 1969, and having completed a long career in teaching I feel proud to be a 1969 striker.



Focusing on the personal

A curriculum for Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) was approved by the Department of Education and Science in April 2000. ASTIR looks at developments since.

The rationale behind the curriculum, as detailed in the SPHE teacher guidelines, is that a young person who has a high degree of self-worth, a sense of security and a positive self image will be more predisposed to school life and the variety of learning opportunities it offers.

SPHE looks at the holistic development of the student in terms of personal development.

The SPHE curriculum is intended to provide students with an opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others, and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. The curriculum covers a number of specific topics but, according to Sharon McGrath, National Co-ordinator of the SPHE Support Service: "Underpinning the whole rationale is that we are concerned with promoting the resilience of young people and providing opportunities for mental health promotion, in addition to physical health promotion and, indeed, spiritual health in some aspects. We look at the holistic development of the student in terms of personal development. There is a whole range of issues that can be addressed in SPHE, but we don't just teach about issues in the classroom – we look first at fostering students' values and attitudes to help them to approach challenges with good decision-making skills, which we build up throughout the three years of the junior cycle. The SPHE class provides opportunities for reflection and discussion, promotes self-esteem and self-confidence, and enables the students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making".



Folúntais do Mhúinteoirí ar Chúrsaí Samhraidh
Gaeilge ar fud na Tíre

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05.07.2009 - 26.07.2009

02.08.2009 - 23.08.2009

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Curriculum

SPHE in schools

All schools are mandated to provide SPHE for first-, second- and third-year students. SPHE is pre-dated by Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), which is an integral part of the SPHE curriculum at junior cycle, but which is also mandatory for senior cycle students. This means that all schools should provide SPHE including RSE to Junior Cert and RSE to Leaving Cert. According to Sharon McGrath, many schools have understood the rationale for continuing to provide SPHE in senior cycle, though it is not mandatory at this stage.

The NCCA has developed a senior cycle curriculum for SPHE; however, there is no clear date for its roll out. "In the current climate there are a lot of competing demands for resources. We would be very hopeful that it would be rolled out in the near future but we don't have a date yet. The curriculum is ready, but there are clearly resource implications for its implementation – training and support would be essential," says Sharon McGrath.

Rather than a prescribed syllabus, schools select a SPHE programme from a menu of possibilities outlined in the teacher guidelines. The curriculum is spiral in nature, which means that each year builds on what has been done during the previous year. The same topic could be revisited throughout the three years, but in age-appropriate and different ways to build up the student's capacity.

SPHE is designed to be taught in an experiential and active way rather than by simply imparting knowledge from teacher to student. According to

Sharon McGrath: "If it is taught in this way by trained SPHE teachers, the likelihood of it being successful and highly regarded by the students is much higher than if it is delivered by somebody who doesn't have an understanding of the rationale of SPHE".

This term, the Support Service is offering a two-hour workshop or seminar for the whole staff of individual schools, looking at issues of student welfare, including aspects of child protection.

Training and whole school support

There is no coherent programme knitted into pre-service for SPHE teachers. SPHE can be taken as an elective in some colleges that offer teacher training, but it is not mandatory. The Support Service is a partnership between the Department of Education and Science, the HSE and the Department of Health and Children, and its remit is to provide in-service training to teachers who are in schools and who are asked by management to teach SPHE. The service offers a range of incremental in-service training events, each training event building on the last that the teacher has undertaken. The core training consists of introductory training about SPHE and its rationale and methodologies, and particular training in relationships and sexuality education. After that, a wide selection of particular topics is addressed in training days, including 'emotional health', 'anti-bullying', 'bereavement and loss', 'SPHE and guidance', 'substance use', 'nutrition' and 'physical health'. Additionally, the Support Service offers in-school support to whole staff or subgroups of staff. The Service also does a lot of work in schools around policy development, concentrating on anti-bullying, substance use, RSE policy, and other non-mandatory policies.

This term, the Support Service is offering a two-hour workshop or seminar for the whole staff of individual schools, looking at issues of student welfare, including aspects of child protection. From next term the service is also offering a staff welfare seminar to school staffs.

New teaching resources

The Support Service has recently developed a number of new resources for SPHE teachers around particular topics. In collaboration with the Health Service Executive and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency, the SPHE Support Service has created a new all-encompassing resource for relationships and sexuality teaching in senior cycle. This resource, called 'TRUST', will be highlighted and exhibited at ASTI Convention in April. It is only available on foot of training and will not be distributed directly to schools, but all schools will be invited to send teachers to the training, which is happening this term, and will be rolled out again in September.

In collaboration with the Mater Hospital in Dublin, the service has developed an emotional health support pack called 'Working things out through SPHE'. This aid for teachers teaching the emotional health module in SPHE is also available only after training. A cancer awareness pack has been developed in association with the Marie Keating Foundation for use in the physical health module of SPHE.

These resources are developed by the support service and Irish agencies with expertise in a particular field and aim to provide authentic resources specifically targeted at Irish adolescents in 2009.

MA in Visual Arts Education (NUI validation in process)

NCAD: Placing the arts at the centre of education

Teachers and educators from all sectors – Primary and Post-primary Education, Further and Higher Education, Community and Adult Education, the cultural sector and beyond – are invited to apply for this innovative new programme.

Commencing in Autumn 2009, this is a 90-credit, 2-year taught Masters programme featuring:

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- Collaborative work with other agencies, centres and colleges in arts-related work;
- Arts-based research methods, including a variety of options of presentation modes:
 - Use and exploration of digital media;
 - Innovative forms of assessment.
- Evening classes to facilitate work commitments (two evenings per week in year 1, one evening in year 2)

The programme will address such areas as innovation in education, digital media and visual arts, contemporary visual culture, site-based arts education, art and audience, and arts-led curriculum planning. In the second year, participants will carry out a practical project or a research thesis.

Applicants should have an honours primary degree (or equivalent) and appropriate professional experience. Shortlisting and interviews will apply.

Closing date for applications: 15 May 2009.

Application forms available from NCAD, 100 Thomas Street, Dublin 8 or download from www.ncad.ie

Further enquiries contact Professor Gary Granville, 01-6364300 or email granville@ncad.ie



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Sick leave

The ASTI Industrial Relations team answers your questions about sick leave.

What are my sick leave entitlements and obligations?

Department Circular Letter 0099/2008 sets out the conditions governing sick leave entitlements and obligations for teachers in all schools. Two further relevant documents, 'Medical Fitness to Teach' and 'Occupational Health Service, Standard Operating Procedures', are available at www.education.ie.

Notification of sick leave

Any teacher who is absent due to illness should notify their employer as early as possible on the first day of absence in accordance with school policy. The teacher should, where possible, indicate the likely duration of the absence.

Uncertified sick leave

Voluntary secondary, and community and comprehensive schools

The maximum number of uncertified sick leave days allowable in a school year is 30.

A medical certificate of illness is required if a teacher on Department salary is absent for more than four consecutive school days, e.g., a teacher who is absent only on a Thursday and Friday, and the following Monday and Tuesday, does not require a certificate.

VEC-managed schools/community colleges

The maximum number of uncertified sick leave days allowable in a school year is seven. A medical certificate of illness is required if a teacher on incremental salary is absent for more than three consecutive school days. If the college is the product of an amalgamation, the ASTI members who are transferring from a voluntary secondary school retain their voluntary secondary sick leave entitlements.

Note: In the case of all Class A PRSI contributors, regardless of sector (all teachers first employed since April 6, 1995), the MC1 Social Welfare Certificate must be submitted to the Department of Education and Science/VEC if absent for more than three days of sick leave for referral to the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Changes in arrangements to the supervision and substitution scheme announced in October 2008 have not changed the arrangements in relation to uncertified sick leave or requirements for the production of medical certificates.

Certified sick leave

A medical certificate of illness should refer to the entire period of an illness. To be acceptable, a medical certificate must: state the nature of the illness; cover a period of no more than one month; cover the full period of absence from the first day of absence from school or from the expiry date of the last medical certificate; and, be signed by a duly qualified medical practitioner.

Paid sick leave limit

A total of 365 days over a four-year period is the limit for which incremental salary will be paid to a permanently employed teacher in the event of illness.



Weekends and holidays will be included in the calculation of this period. Teachers employed on fixed-term contracts should note that the paid sick leave period is limited to 91 days annually and granted on a *pro rata* basis.

Sick leave and school closures/holidays

Where a teacher is absent on sick leave and has not returned to duty for a reasonable period before and after a period of school closure or holiday, the teacher will be deemed to be on sick leave for the whole duration. Exceptions are made where the teacher can prove their fitness to resume teaching prior to or during the period of school closure. See Circular Letter 0099/2008 for further details.

Occupational health strategy for teachers

An occupational health strategy has been put in place as a supportive resource for teachers. The occupational health strategy is comprised of the occupational health service for teachers and the Employee Assistance Service for teachers.

Occupational health service

Following an EU procurement process, Medmark Occupational Health has been contracted to provide the occupational health service for teachers. The general criteria for referring teachers to Medmark Occupational Health are:

- non-discretionary referrals: teachers who have been absent as a result of illness for 12 or more weeks cumulatively or continuously in a 12-month period must be referred to Medmark Occupational Health; and,
- discretionary referrals: teachers about whom the employer has concerns in relation to their medical fitness for work may be referred to Medmark Occupational Health.

The employer makes the decision to refer a teacher to Medmark. The employer must inform the teacher of a decision to refer and outline why this decision is being made. A copy of the referral form must be made available to the teacher.

Medmark will decide if the criteria for medical referral are met. If the medical referral is appropriate, Medmark will arrange an appointment for the teacher with an occupational health physician in one of its regional centres in Dublin, Limerick, Galway or Cork.

Frequently asked question

Ill-health retirement

A teacher who believes that she/he is permanently medically unfit for work has the option to apply for retirement on grounds of ill health. Teachers wishing to apply for retirement on grounds of ill health must complete a prescribed application form, RET.D.1, and submit it to their employer. They must also submit the form TMED1 to Medmark, along with comprehensive medical evidence from the teacher's treating physician, including all relevant clinical details, diagnosis, treatment and prognosis. Medmark will contact the teacher to arrange a medical assessment. Following this, Medmark will file a report and a recommendation will issue to the Department/VEC. The decision to approve or reject an application for ill-health retirement is made by the Department/VEC, following consideration of the recommendation from Medmark. The decision will issue directly to the teacher and is open to appeal.

The Employee Assistance Service for teachers

The purpose of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) for teachers is to provide teachers and their immediate family members with access to confidential counselling and to assist in coping with the effect of personal and work-related issues. The service, which is free and confidential, offers both telephone and face-to-face counselling.

The EAS is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, Tel: 1800 411 057, or Email: [eas@vhics.ie](mailto: eas@vhics.ie). For additional information on the EAS log on to www.vhi.ie/dep_edu_science/index.jsp.



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Stillorgan Branch

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Chairperson: | Sally Maguire |
| Vice Chairperson: | Crena Shevlin |
| Secretary: | Mary Boissel |
| Treasurer: | Rosabelle Crampton |
| Equality Officer: | Elizabeth Crummey |
| Organiser: | Laoise O'Boyle |
| Number of members: | 346 |

Branch meetings

Branch meetings are generally held once a month. They take place in the Montrose Hotel in Stillorgan at 8.00pm.

Although some formal business has to be done, meetings are kept as informal as possible so that all members can feel free to express their views and opinions. All issues relevant to teachers and teaching are discussed and all present are encouraged to participate. Tea and coffee is served at meetings and this allows members to meet teachers from other schools and share experiences.

In September each year we always have an informal event for new members. Last November we had a young teachers' evening, which was very successful. A good number of young teachers attended and discussed aspects of teaching and the future of education in Ireland. We also asked them to let us know some of the issues they would like us to address at future Branch meetings. These included supervision and substitution, conditions of employment, posts of responsibility, the Teaching Council, whole school evaluations, newcomer students, students with special educational needs, student discipline, redeployment, pensions, professional development and CIDs. We intend to cover these issues at meetings in the coming months.

Branch events

In December each year we host a retirement function for members of the Branch. Presentations are made to retired members to acknowledge their service to the ASTI. All members are invited to this event and it doubles as

Stillorgan Branch officers pictured at a recent retirement funtion with Mary Hanafin TD. Back row (from left): Rosabelle Crampton, Treasurer and CEC member; Mary Boissel, Secretary and CEC member; Liz Crummey, Equality Committee and CEC member; and, Laoise O'Boyle, Organiser. Front row (from left): Sally Maguire, Chairperson; Mary Hanafin, Minister for Social and Family Affairs and former Stillorgan Branch member; and, Crena Shevlin, Deputy Chairperson.



a Christmas party. It is usually very well attended and members from all schools in the Branch get to meet one another. In October, after the Branch AGM, we host a dinner for the school stewards in the Branch to show our appreciation for the work they do during the year.

Centenary

The Stillorgan Branch is planning to mark the ASTI's centenary year in a number of ways. Our Secretary, Mary Boissel, has initiated the Stillorgan Archive Project. This involves compiling information about teaching through the years. Retired teachers have been interviewed and old copybooks, reports, etc., have been gathered. Handwriting has been recorded and voices will also be recorded. Our Christmas retirement function this year will be a special centenary event. We also hope to host a centenary event with a focus on younger members in May.

Branch history

Both the Stillorgan Branch and the Dublin South County Branch were hauled kicking and screaming into this world at a CEC meeting in the Gresham Hotel in 1980, having broken away from the Dún Laoghaire Branch, which had grown much too big and unwieldy. We now have 11 schools in the Branch.

Formation of Non-Permanent Teachers Committee

At one Stillorgan Branch meeting in the late 1990s there was a long discussion on non-permanent teachers, which followed on from many

similar discussions on the subject at previous meetings. At one point one of our non-permanent teachers, Rosabelle Crampton, declared that she was fed up with talking about their plight all the time and that it was time for action! Helen Bhreathnach, one of our CEC members, suggested calling for a Special Convention. With great gusto, the required number of signatures (actually well in excess of the required number!) were collected and at a Special Convention in Jury's Hotel in Ballsbridge in 2000, the ASTI Non-Permanent Teachers Committee was formed to represent teachers working in fixed-term and part-time positions and to advise on key issues affecting such teachers.

Rosabelle eventually got a permanent job and is now the Branch Treasurer. She is also a member of the CEC and is running for the Equality Committee at Convention this year.

Prominent members

Two Honorary Life Members of the ASTI are members of the Stillorgan Branch: Éamonn Lowry and Joe McDonagh.

The Branch has a number of political connections. Mary Hanafin, Minister for Social and Family Affairs and former Minister for Education and Science, taught in Sion Hill, and always attends our Christmas retirement function. Also, the late Tony Gregory TD taught in Coláiste Eoin.

Noticeboard



Astronomy competition

2009 marks the 400th anniversary of the first use of an astronomical telescope by Galileo. As part of the International Year of Astronomy, a global celebration of astronomy and its contribution to society and culture, Transition Year students will be asked to take part in scientific research projects involving Faulkes telescopes, which can be remotely operated. On the basis of their results, to be presented at the Galway Science and Technology Festival in October 2009, the best group and their teacher will be invited to visit the Chilean observatories of the European Southern Observatory. Further information can be found at www.astronomy2009.ie.

Writers' Week

Listowel Writers' Week runs from May 27 to 31 and will include an array of literary workshops and competitions. Workshops ranging from popular fiction to freelance journalism will be directed by well-known Irish writers. The event incorporates 16 writing competitions, including a number of youth categories. For more information, visit www.writersweek.ie.

European study visits

Study visits provide education decision-makers and specialists with an opportunity to spend up to one week in another European country, learning about practices and approaches in education. Applications are invited for study visits taking place from September 2009 to June 2010. The deadline for receipt of applications is April 9, 2009. A catalogue of study visits taking place in this period and application forms are available online at www.studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu. Successful applicants will receive a grant allowance towards the cost of travel and subsistence.

For further information and details of eligibility, Email: studyvisits@leargas.ie, or visit: www.leargas.ie/studyvisits.

Voicecare seminar

A voicecare seminar will be held in the Dublin West Education Centre on Saturday April 25 between 10.00am and 2.00pm. Facilitators Seamus Brennan and John Daly will focus on breathing, relaxation, posture, voice problems, pitch and resonance. Contact Dublin West Education Centre, Tel: 01-452 8000, or John Daly, Tel: 086-863 1689 for more details.

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Get Real

'Get Real' is an interactive film series, supported by practical educational materials, that examines how the internet is transforming the experience of adolescent socialisation. The 'Get Real' programme uses web-based technology to engage students aged 15-18 in exploring themes such as online decorum, cyber-bullying, anonymity, disclosure and consequences. The programme consists of a three-part drama series, which schools can receive on DVD along with resource material for teachers. If your school is interested in participating in the programme, contact Orla Dunne, Tel: 01-878 6108, or Email: info@teamtheatre.ie. Please note that there is a cost involved.

Teachers' musical production

The Teachers' Musical Society will perform Broadway musical *Crazy for You* at the O'Reilly Theatre, Belvedere College, Dublin, from April 21 to 25. For more information, Email: teachers.ms@gmail.com.

Bilingual Forum of Ireland

The Bilingual Forum of Ireland was recently set up by a group of researchers, teachers and speech and language therapists interested in sharing their knowledge among communities all over Ireland. The group offers a free resource for families and educators to develop awareness of bilingual issues. The group also organises workshops on bilingualism for parents, and teacher training on bilingual education and multiculturalism. For more information, Email: bilingualforumireland@gmail.com, or visit www.bilingualforumireland.com.



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For more, contact Dr Áine Furlong,
Waterford Institute of Technology
Telephone: 051 302067 Email: afurlong@wit.ie



www.wit.ie

Conference for doctoral researchers in education

An inaugural all-Ireland conference for doctoral researchers, 'Doing your Doctoral Studies in Education: Questions, Challenges and Opportunities', will be held at University College Dublin in May. The keynote address, 'The Challenge of Educational Research: Changing Times; Changing Issues?', will be given by Prof. Peter Mortimore. For more information, Email: doctoralconf09@gmail.com.

Toraíocht programme

The Toraíocht programme, offered jointly by Leadership Development for Schools and NUI Maynooth, is a programme of professional development for teachers interested in developing their leadership skills. The course leads to a postgraduate diploma in educational leadership. It aims to enhance their current work and to support preparation for future senior leadership and management positions.

Further information is available by contacting Linda Hogan, Tel: 065-684 5505, or the NUIM Education Office, Tel: 01-708 3656, or by visiting www.lids21.ie or www.nuim.ie.

The Vatican Pimpernel

A book by Brian Fleming, Principal of Collinstown Community College in Dublin, has recently been published. *The Vatican Pimpernel – The Wartime Exploits of Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty* tells the story of the 'Oskar Schindler' of Ireland who saved over 6,500 lives during the German occupation of Rome in the Second World War. The book is available in all good bookshops or online from www.collinspress.ie.

Maynooth reunion

The Maynooth Alumni Association is holding an alumni reunion ball on June 6, 2009, in the Pugin Hall, Maynooth. Contact Ciara, Tel: 01-708 6492 with any queries, or book tickets online at <http://alumni.nuim.ie/events/>.

Language Label

A European award for languages – the Language Label – recognises creative and inventive ways to improve the quality of language teaching and learning. Schools are invited to apply. The closing date for application is March 31, 2009. For more information, Email: languages@leargas.ie, or visit www.leargas.ie.



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Post-Graduate Diploma in Education Intercultural Education

Applications are invited immediately for this modular course on teaching and living in a multicultural Ireland. Accredited by Trinity College Dublin this programme commences in **May 2009**.

Course content will include:

- School diversity, inclusion and intercultural education
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- Religious diversity and intercultural education
- Practice-based research project

Closing date for applications: **Friday, April 10th 2009**

Contact: Moya Uí Mhaonaile Tel: (01) 8057775

Further details from: inservice@mie.ie
or refer to: www.mie.ie/cpd



A teacher's work

The PE teacher

John Michael Porter teaches PE and English at CBS Secondary School, New Ross, Co. Wexford. He is the ASTI Subject Convenor for PE and previously served as President of the PEAI. He is a qualified soccer coach and was coach and assistant manager to the Irish Schools Boys U-18 soccer team. He coaches school teams as well as local soccer and GAA clubs.

Why did you decide to become a PE teacher?

Like many Leaving Cert students I wasn't initially clear about my career path, but once I entered Thomond College I was committed to becoming a PE teacher. Twenty years later I have no regrets and most of my college mates are also still involved in education. The combination of PE and English allows a mixture of instructional strategies and teacher-student interaction that is both challenging and rewarding. I believe in the value of PE and will actively promote PE issues.

On a nationwide level, I feel that PE teachers still face constant battles to get adequate time allocation and appropriate resources for the subject.

I joined CBS Secondary School in 1988 and was the first PE teacher in the school so I had a blank canvas in developing a PE programme. The initial programmes were heavily games-oriented, influenced by the strong Gaelic games tradition in the school and the popularity of soccer in the community. Change can be a slow process but I was soon able to offer a programme encapsulating a greater breadth of activities. The growth of student numbers and the transition from a single-sex boys' school to a co-educational school changed the shape of the school, while the appointment of an additional PE teacher, Karen Murphy, has greatly influenced our current PE programme, as innovation and experimentation have been fostered through our collaboration.

What would a typical working week be like for you?

Diverse! I was recently appointed Deputy Principal and that has brought additional management responsibilities. In relation to PE, all the classes are double periods and the programme this term focuses on gymnastics, adventure activities, invasion games and badminton with various years. We hire a local hall as we don't have a hall on campus. This lack of on-site facilities has increased our involvement in the local community and the fact that we are innovative in utilising facilities is laudable but, as with many other schools throughout the country who 'somehow manage', the Government is let off the hook in relation to the provision of proper facilities for schools and communities. By the nature of their knowledge,



PE teachers are often expected to become involved in co-curricular activities. This expectation is unwarranted but like many PE teachers I became so involved in activities that it almost seemed a part of the job description. I made a decision to take time out from all activities for one school year. While this was initially tough, it allowed time and space to evaluate practices within the school and my involvement therein. I would recommend this time out to all, as after this period of reflection, other teachers had become more involved and I was able to be more selective in my involvement. I still take soccer, athletics, and lunchtime games, and I have developed an after school club called OWLS (Outstanding Women's Leisure Society) to promote greater female participation.

As a PE teacher, I fear being refused permission to provide curricular PE experiences such as adventure activity events and dance workshops, and being refused permission to enter events such as the Active School awards.

Have the budget cutbacks had an effect on your work?

The budget cutbacks will seriously curtail activities in our school. As a PE teacher, I fear being refused permission to provide curricular PE experiences such as adventure activity events and dance workshops, and being refused permission to enter events such as the Active School awards. Curricular requirements will take precedence in our school and this will impact on co-curricular activities. I believe that the full impact of the budget will not be felt until March or April and I fear that many activities that lose out may never be re-introduced to schools.

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

I have had great support from my Principal and colleagues and that has helped me face up to many challenges. On a nationwide level, I feel that PE teachers still face constant battles to get adequate time allocation and appropriate resources for the subject. I would like to acknowledge the support I have received; I have been lucky in the time allocations available. Many PE teachers get battle weary and give up the cause or move away

from teaching PE. It is a great pity that such expertise is lost. Another cause for concern is the use of non-qualified personnel for PE classes. I believe that this demeans the subject, may cause safety concerns, and lends credence to the misconception that PE is a 'throw-in-the-ball' or 'run loads of laps' subject.

How do you hope PE will develop in the future?

I hope that the introduction of the JCPE syllabus will continue to have a major positive impact on the provision of PE at junior cycle level. Much work has been done at NCCA level, under the stewardship of John Halbert, on a senior cycle syllabus and a Leaving Certificate syllabus. I hope that the reform of senior cycle education will take place as promised and that new avenues for PE will be central to new senior cycle proposals. The advent of new PE undergraduate courses in DCU and UCC and the route via IT Tralee, accompanied by an updated UL course, have heralded an era of change at undergraduate provision level. I hope that this change will result in undergraduates who are highly qualified, highly motivated and highly innovative, and who will be given the opportunities within schools to further develop PE. The need for continuing professional development in PE is great and is best achieved through the sharing of good practice. The best PE resources are those that have been designed by practising PE teachers who are aware of situational, cultural and implementation issues. PE teachers should take opportunities to become involved in initiatives and should never be afraid to offer their opinions, experiences and suggestions.

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Breaking News

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Crossword

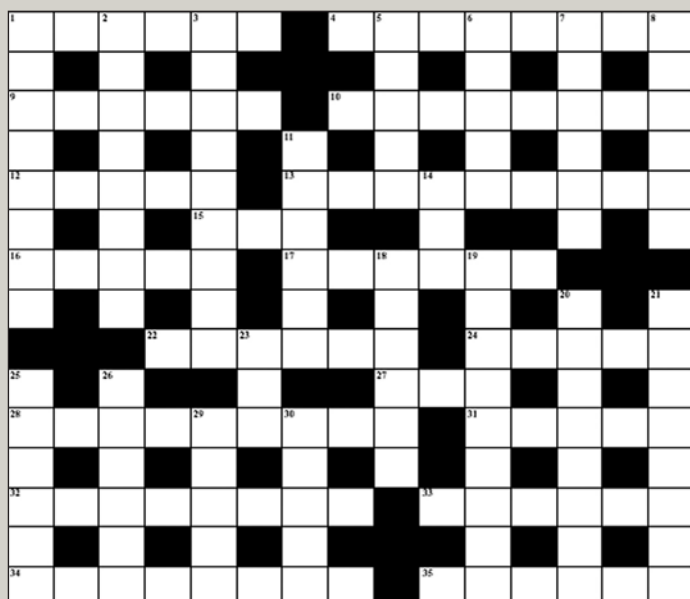
ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 0902

€200 prize for the first fully correct answer
drawn from the entries.

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

Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: Astir Crossword No. 0902, Think Media,
The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, April 17, 2009.

CLUES ACROSS:

- 1 Could be a coterie or faction (6)
- 4 Matt's pet makes the effort (8)
- 9 It's Mum who's at the top (6)
- 10 Dr Lecter was one (8)
- 12 A fly to dig me (5)
- 13 A time-honoured practice (9)
- 15 Tasked with improving safety on our roads (1.1.1.)
- 16 See 20 down
- 17 Tim breaks out in a distinctive quality of singing (6)
- 22 Yes, all roads lead down these narrow streets (6)
- 24 Depart (5)
- 27 This piece of equality legislation was enacted in the year 2000 (1.1.1)
- 28 See 11 down
- 31 With tact I imply by silence (5)
- 32 A liar must show unselfish concern (8)
- 33 "And many a word at random spoken, May or wound a heart that's broken" (Walter Scott) (6)
- 34 These sweet dishes could bring their own stresses (8)
- 35 Eros's consort in Greek mythology or Cupid's in Roman mythology (6)

CLUES DOWN:

- 1 Irish patriot hanged in Pentonville Prison in London in 1916 (8)
- 2 Mom's diet is indecent and improper (8)
- 3 "Music is the language of mankind" (Longfellow) (9)
- 5 Tara and I might wear this (5)
- 6 Even NUI has a feeling of weariness (5)
- 7 A pub licence for the community in general (6)
- 8 "When the eagles are, the parrots begin to jabber" (Winston Churchill) (6)
- 11 Et 28 across: Built to stay free in the US (6,2,7)
- 14 Confer knighthood on the capital's native! (3)
- 18 Saunters informally (6)
- 19 Orientals could be your connections (9)
- 20 Et 16 across: They snort cocaine! (8,5)
- 21 Tease the one who cultivates an unusually high sensitivity to beauty (8)
- 23 This side is sheltered from the wind in Cork (3)
- 25 His plays include *Blithe Spirit* Et *Private Lives* (6)
- 26 Steals the roofing (6)
- 29 Springsteen, Oldfield or Wigan manager (5)
- 30 Put into a stable, terse position again (5)

Solution to ASTIR crossword
No. 0901

Across

8. Gazpacho
9. Condon
10. Sierra
11. Meetings
12. Chilli
13. Nominate
15. Cash
17. Journal
19. Iguanas
22. Tool
24. Tennyson
27. Adrift
29. De Valera
30. Cicero
31. Attest
32. Donation

Down

1. Garish
2. Sparkler
3. Sciatica
4. Colman's
5. Scream
6. Ensign
7. Golgotha
14. Ohio
16. Alto
18. Operetta
20. Glancing
21. Apricots
23. Onwards
25. Nearer
26. Sleuth
28. Fermoy

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 0901:

Christina Gormally, St. Louis Community School, Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo.



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