

ASTIR

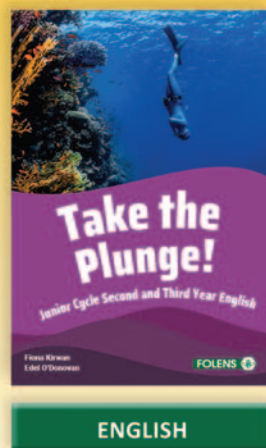
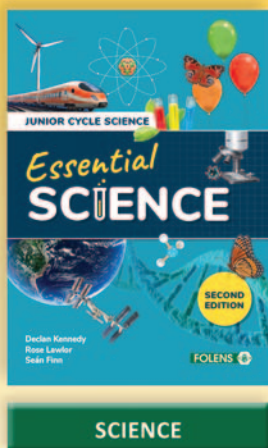
Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland

ASTI RECEIVES FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT IN MEMBERSHIP CASE

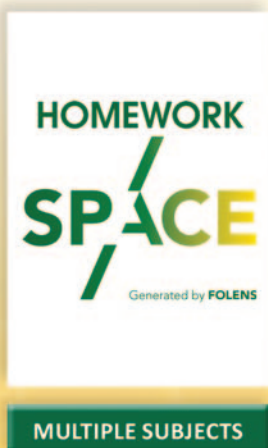


Our NEW Post Primary Programmes for 2021

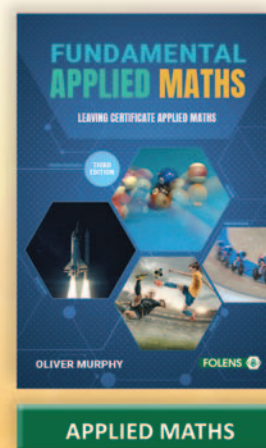
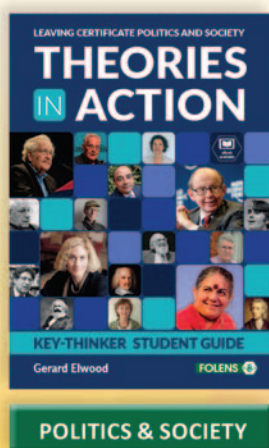
Junior Cycle



JC Digital



Leaving Certificate



Check out the books and Digital Resources on **Folens.ie**

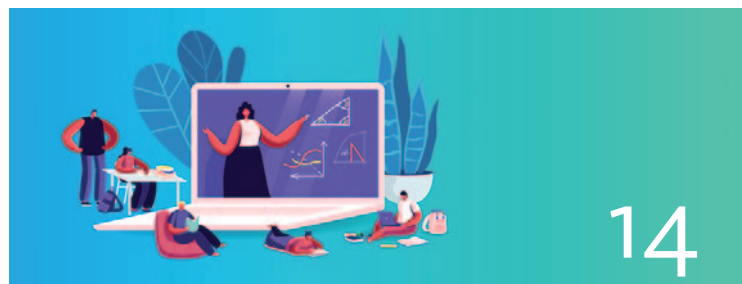
Contact your local Folens Rep to book a meeting or video call

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www.asti.ie

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The ASTIR Editorial Board is interested in receiving feedback on ASTIR.

Members can email astirfeedback@asti.ie or text 087 934 9956.

Protecting health and standards

I have absorbed many glorious sunsets and have been mesmerised by myriads of changing colours splashing and seeping across rosy blue and purple skies. The sinking sun dipping over wild and liberated seas, with reflections on shimmering waves, rewards enormously. Images which pervade my memories are the flaming reds, yellows and oranges sinking over sandy beaches on the Isle of Man. My mind summons a sun setting, over and over, with vivid merging colours and stretched shadows over Peel Castle, as the Mourne Mountains look over the ocean.

Recent video footage has shown life in all its triumph on the Isle of Man. People mingle, as they do in New Zealand. On the island of Ireland, we do not share such comforts. Although more complex politically, the simple luxuries of life should not have eluded us. We weave in and out of lockdowns and have waited for numbers to diminish to levels where schools opened on a limited basis. Leaving Cert students prepare for the beginning of the end of their time at school. The ASTI sought a traditional exam with much reduced content; this would have provided fairness, impartiality and standardisation. Instead, many students now prepare for two processes, which may double stress rather than reduce anxiety. Some politicians joined with other voices and demanded immediate announcements involving clarity without considering the consequences of another calculated grades system full of flaws. This process should have been a contingency measure only.

The union executive, in early January, took the decision to issue a directive to protect the health of members. Teachers are devoted to delivering high standards of education to students remotely, despite the additional demands involved. It is a year since schools closed for the first time. The earth has completed its orbit around the sun, and we have found ourselves in bleak disrupted circumstances again. Progress has been made with science, yet a substantial increase in supply as well as speed in the implementation of vaccines is necessary. Only then will there be more confidence in the return to school.

The proposed Student and Parent Charter Bill has excluded teachers and if enacted will require schools to create charters for students and parents. Such legislation is concerning for teachers in relation to school performance, grievances and other issues.

As Convention approaches, it will be an online event which takes place on April 6-7. We do wish that you will join us and engage in debate over the two days. Let's hope that in 2022 we can meet again in person and enjoy the company of friends at a more conventional real-life event.

I conclude with the words of Dr Ronan Glynn, Deputy CMO: "I also want to thank all teachers, principals and school staff who have worked so hard to ensure measures have been put in place to limit the risk of spread of Covid-19 in schools. It has been this kind of work, done quietly and by the majority, which has underpinned our national response to Covid-19".



Ann Piggott

ASTI President

Second-level teachers' voice

The ballot on Building Momentum – A New Public Service Agreement 2021-2022 was resoundingly rejected by ASTI members. However, as the Public Services Committee of the ICTU has endorsed the Agreement, notwithstanding the rejection of the proposals by the ASTI, the aggregate vote in favour by ICTU affiliates means that ASTI members are encompassed by its terms. From a pay perspective, the agreement provides for the following:

- a general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% or €500, whichever is greater, on October 1, 2021
- the equivalent of a 1% increase in annualised basic salaries on February 1, 2022 to be used as a Sectoral Bargaining Fund in accordance with chapter 2 of the Agreement, and
- a general round increase in annualised basic salary for all public servants of 1% or €500, whichever is greater, on October 1, 2022. Basic pensionable pay is to be taken to mean basic pay inclusive of allowances in the nature of pay, which are fixed periodic pensionable allowances.

Discussions will now begin on the allocation of the Sectoral Bargaining Fund. A fund equivalent to 1% of basic pay will be allocated to a fund where sector-based pay claims and outstanding adjudications and awards could be resolved within the process. In the alternative, a sectoral bargaining unit such as teachers can elect for the funds involved to be used as a sectoral pay round, whereby each member would receive a 1% pay rise. The ASTI would have to pursue this matter by consensus with the TUI and INTO.

Highlighting key concerns

The ASTI was to the forefront of ensuring that schools did not reopen when it was unsafe to do so. The phased return to school is now in train. There is considerable and understandable caution accompanying the reopening among members. We insisted that arrangements be put in place for the duration of the phasing, including adjustments to leave for those in the high-risk health category, those over 60 years of age, and pregnant teachers, together with the supervision and substitution scheme suspension. We will be monitoring all aspects as the phasing progresses and will continue to promptly raise any concerns that arise.

The Minister for Education has confirmed that the Leaving Cert examinations will be held in June with related components also proceeding, subject to public health advice. An accredited grades process administered by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) will also be available to students. The Minister has also announced that the Junior Cycle examinations will not be run in 2021.



Kieran Christie

ASTI General Secretary

Moulding the future

Kate O'Keefe was the recipient of the ASTI Outstanding Performance in Initial Teacher Education 2020 Award from The National College of Art and Design. A native of Celbridge, Co. Kildare, Kate collaborated with Maynooth University's Department of Microbiology for her final-year project 'Moulding the Future', which focused on the sustainable use of bacteria. As an educator, Kate finds applied

materials to be particularly accessible and inclusive, not just in the school setting, but also as part of YMCA youth outreach programmes she has facilitated during her college years. "What I find rewarding about teaching art," says Kate, "is its ability to engage and potentially transform people's lives, both within and beyond the classroom."



Above: ASTI Award winner Kate O'Keefe. Right: Kate's final-year project at NCAD: 'Moulding the Future'.

Pilot voluntary redeployment scheme to continue in 2021

The pilot voluntary redeployment scheme established in 2013 is to continue in 2021. The scheme will operate in counties Galway, Roscommon and Wicklow for redeployments from September 2021. The scheme will also include eligible teachers from any part of the country outside Dublin who wish to be redeployed to Dublin. The scheme allows:

- permanent/CID teachers who are employed in schools in counties Galway, Roscommon and Wicklow to express an interest in being redeployed to another post-primary school anywhere in the country, and
- permanent/CID teachers anywhere outside Dublin to express an interest in being redeployed to a post-primary school in Dublin.

If you apply for voluntary redeployment and a suitable vacancy exists in a school in your preferred area, you may be offered a redeployment to that vacancy. However, you will only be redeployed if a suitable teacher can be redeployed to your school to replace you.

Your school must indicate its willingness to release you and to accept a replacement teacher on redeployment. Principals should declare on the form the preferred subject options that the school requires as a replacement for you, if you are redeployed. These subjects do not have to be your subjects; this gives the school an opportunity to address a curriculum mismatch within the school.

For information on redeployment see
www.asti.ie.

Update your email and access new benefits

A new members' area of the ASTI website will launch in 2021. Members will be able to register for an ASTI MyUnion web account and access additional benefits via the website, such as direct contact with their Head Office contacts/elected representatives and a sick leave calculator. Once registered, members can update their contact details at any time, and can opt to receive a range of ASTI publications by email rather than hard copy. To register for an account, your email address must match the one we have for you on our members' database. If you do not currently receive regular emails from ASTI Head Office, this may be because we do not have your email address, or because the one we have is no longer in use. Update your email address in time for the launch of ASTI MyUnion by emailing updateinfo@asti.ie.

Got a query? Contact the ASTI

You can contact ASTI Head Office at any time through the ASTI website – www.asti.ie/contact-us/ – or by emailing any of the following departments:

- leave and Teaching Council queries – leavequeries@asti.ie
- accounts and medical benefits – accounts@asti.ie
- membership/recruitment – membership@asti.ie
- substitute placement service – substitute@asti.ie
- **ASTIR** magazine – astir@asti.ie.

Each school is allocated an industrial relations official, who is based in Head Office, to represent and advise ASTI members in that school. Check www.asti.ie/contact-us/ to find out which official is responsible for your school. General queries can be emailed to info@asti.ie.

New ASTI guidelines on IT

A new ASTI publication, *ASTI Guidelines on the use of Information Technology by teachers in a Covid-19 context*, is available on the ASTI website. The ASTI is aware that members have major concerns regarding the use of information technology in the current climate. This publication offers advice to members on their areas of concern, including classroom teaching, the law, and potential scenarios they may encounter due to the pandemic. Download the guidelines at www.asti.ie/news-campaigns/latest-news/asti-guidelines-on-the-use-of-information-technology-by/.

Members' FAQs

The ASTI website's FAQs section is regularly updated to reflect the current concerns of members. Recent FAQs cover all aspects of the Leaving Cert 2021 and the re-opening of schools.

Visit www.asti.ie.

Employee Assistance Service – well-being series and digital gym

Spectrum.Life, the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) provider, has launched a digital well-being series and digital gym for all school staff. The digital well-being series covers topics including managing finances, self-care, and mental health awareness. The digital gym provides access to daily high-intensity interval training (HIIT), yoga, mindfulness, Pilates and more – users can access recordings of these classes or join them live. Teachers can access the Spectrum.Life well-being portal as follows:

- sign up at <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login>, and
- to register for the first time, use organisation code YLVIIU17.

Information on the EAS is also available on the Department's website at www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/Information/Occupational-Health-Strategy/.

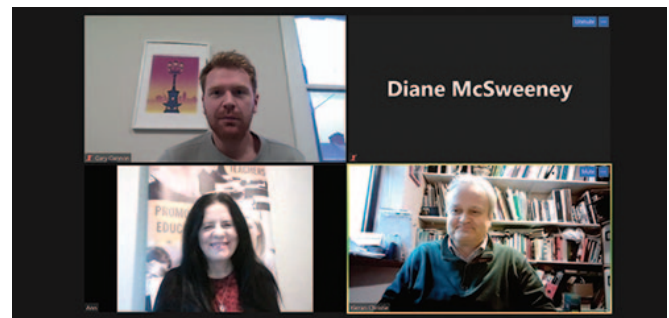
Guidance on use of social media and electronic communication

On February 9, 2021 – Global Safer Internet Day – the Teaching Council launched its 'Guidance for Registered Teachers about the use of Social Media and Electronic Communications'. This Guidance seeks to support teachers in continuing to make the best use of electronic communication and social media tools. The social media guidance document may also assist schools when developing their individual social media policy, but should not replace or act as a social media policy for schools.

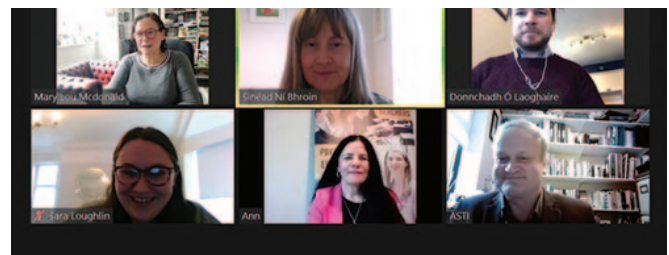
The guidelines are available on the Teaching Council website – www.teachingcouncil.ie.

ASTI political lobbying

Throughout the pandemic, the ASTI has continued to engage with elected politicians regarding the key concerns of ASTI members. These concerns include school safety, class sizes, IT resources for students and teachers to facilitate continuity of learning, and unequal pay for post-2010 entrants to teaching.



At a meeting between representatives of the ASTI and the Social Democrats (clockwise from top left): Gary Gannon TD, Diane McSweeney (Parliamentary Assistant), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), and Ann Piggott (ASTI President).



Pictured at a meeting between representatives of the ASTI and Sinn Féin (clockwise from top left): Mary Lou McDonald TD, Sinéad Ní Bhroin (Parliamentary Advisor), Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire TD, Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Ann Piggott (ASTI President), and Sara Loughlin (Parliamentary Assistant).

Teaching Council

The Teaching Council would like to notify teachers who have a renewal date of March 28 for their registration. Members are advised to check email folders for this notice. The Teaching Council has provided an online facility for teachers to renew their registration using their Personal Identification Number (PIN).

More information on renewal can be found at www.teachingcouncil.ie.

Teacher Fee Refund Scheme

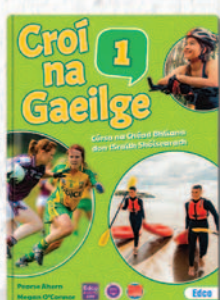
The Teacher Fee Refund Scheme provides funding for teachers towards the cost of professional development courses that are relevant and of benefit to schools, and that are subject to certification/award by an accreditation authority recognised by the Department of Education. The Department of Education has published Circular 0010/2021. This Circular contains details on this Scheme and outlines how teachers may apply. Applications will only be considered for courses completed during the period September 1, 2019, to August 31, 2020. The closing date for applications is Friday, March 31, 2021.

EDCO 2021 NEW PUBLICATIONS

JUNIOR CYCLE



Irish Exam Skills



JC Irish



JC Spanish



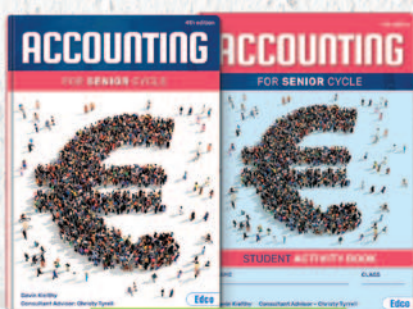
JC Religion

New Irish Titles



JC SPHE

LEAVING CERTIFICATE



Accounting



English



French Oral & Aural



Music

Register here to receive Edco's Post Primary Publications Webinar Dates:
www.edco.ie/postprimarywebinar2021

Principals' pandemic workload



Pictured at a recent meeting between ASTI and National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) representatives are (clockwise from top left): Ann Piggott (ASTI President), Michael Cregan (NAPD President), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Diarmaid de Paor (ASTI Deputy General Secretary), Rachel O'Connor (NAPD Vice President), and John O'Donovan (ASTI Principals and Deputy Principals Committee chair).

Throughout the pandemic, the ASTI has continued to emphasise the increased workload and stress on ASTI members, including principals and deputy principals. Principals and deputy principals have been working under enormous pressure to ensure that schools comply with Covid safety measures and that students' education continues.

ASTI medal recipient



Sandra Dunne, MIC Thurles, on receipt of her award as the first recipient of the ASTI Medal for Excellence in Education and School Placement. MIC Thurles saw its first cohort of post-primary teachers graduate this year and is delighted with the support offered by the ASTI in recognising excellence across their six teacher preparation programmes.



Pictured at the recent count of the ballot on the public service agreement 'Building Momentum' are: Ann Piggott (ASTI President) and Sean Murray (auditor).



WORLDWIDE GLOBAL SCHOOLS

Irish Aid's national programme for Global Citizenship Education

WorldWide Global Schools (WWGS) offer grant funding to assist schools integrate Global Citizenship Education (GCE) into their school community.

How much can our school apply for?

Starter School Grant – Up to €600
For schools new to GCE and/or WWGS

Established School Grant – Up to €1,000
For schools previously engaged in GCE and/or WWGS

What can you use the grant for?

- Teacher planning time
- Student action projects
- Whole school events on Global Justice themes
- Relevant trips and workshops
- Teaching and learning materials related to GCE and much more..

APPLICATION OPENS: 12th April 2021
DEADLINE TO APPLY: 14th May 2021



There are a myriad of global justice themes you can explore with your students:



REGISTER ONLINE!

www.worldwiseschools.ie/grants/



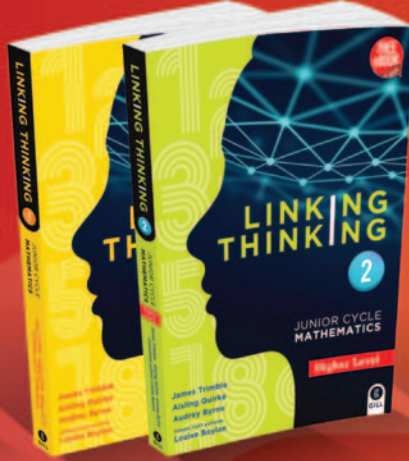
GILL EDUCATION

NEW TITLES COMING 2021

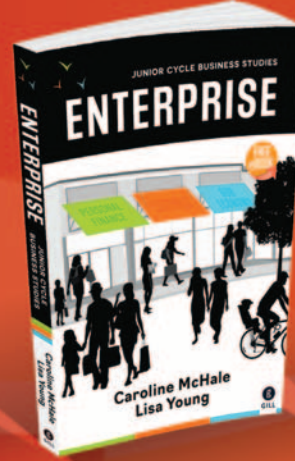
NEW FOR JUNIOR CYCLE



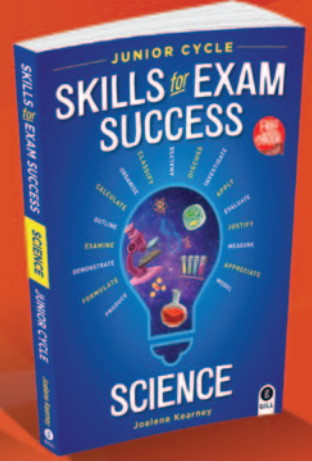
ENGLISH



MATHS

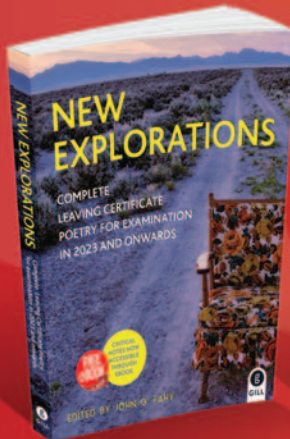


BUSINESS STUDIES

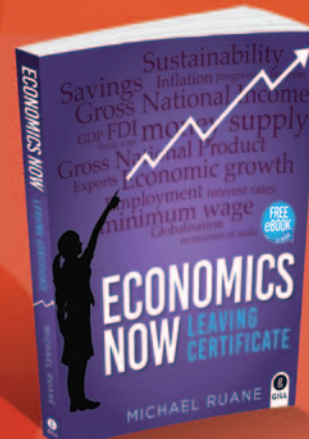


SCIENCE

NEW FOR LEAVING CERTIFICATE



ENGLISH



ECONOMICS

For information on any of our 2021 titles, please contact your local sales representative:
www.gilleducation.ie/sales-reps-secondary

NEW FOR POST-PRIMARY IRISH



IRISH

UPPING THE ANTE ON SCHOOL SAFETY



During the Christmas 2020 period, the ASTI expressed concern about the new UK Covid-19 variant and the rapidly rising Covid cases in Ireland. The ASTI demanded that a review of existing safety arrangements in schools be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

Unfortunately, this did not happen and on January 7 – amid record numbers of Covid cases – the ASTI advised members to teach remotely. The ASTI continued to engage with the Department of Education and pressed for additional mitigation measures for schools and teachers.

On February 10, the ASTI stated that the Department of Education's Framework for the Phased Re-opening of Schools was acceptable for special education classes from February 22, but much more was required before further re-opening. The ASTI continued to raise the need for additional supports with the Department of Education.

On February 24, the Government announced a further phase of the re-opening of schools, including the return of Leaving Cert students from March 1. The announcement was followed by details of a number of additional supports. The ASTI has stated that it will continue to monitor school safety in the coming weeks, with the key objective of protecting the health and safety of teachers, students and their families. Additional supports for phased re-opening of schools:

- temporary arrangements for pregnant teachers, teachers in the high-risk categories, and teachers over 60 to work remotely if appropriate
- temporary changes to leave schemes such as parental leave
- extension of Covid-19 Diagnosis Special Leave – up to 28 days (special leave with pay beyond 28 days may be extended subject to medical certification and other criteria)
- suspension of supervision and substitution scheme (school to employ substitute teachers to cover classroom absences)
- provision for childcare places for children of teachers working in schools
- updated guidance on ventilation in schools, and
- public messaging campaign regarding the need to protect schools.

ASTI expresses concern over accredited grades

On February 5, the Minister for Education Norma Foley TD announced a new phase of planning for the 2021 State Exams. Confidential, bilateral discussions with stakeholders, including the ASTI, began immediately.

The ASTI's objective was to work with the Department of Education to find appropriate ways to enable students to progress in their lives. As intensive discussions continued, ASTI representatives became increasingly concerned about a number of issues, including:

- the lack of visible planning in relation to the Leaving Cert 2021 second component exams, and
- the lack of clarity regarding teachers ranking their students. A serious loss of trust occurred in 2020 when, despite assurances, student rankings were not subject to data requests, but were immediately available on students' portals.

The ASTI withdrew from the talks and subsequently re-entered the process following a meeting between ASTI representatives and the Minister for Education.

On February 17, the Government announced its plan for the 2021 Leaving Cert exams and accredited grades. The ASTI expressed its bitter disappointment that accredited grades are not underpinned in any way by externally validated elements such as coursework, projects, etc. Accredited grades will prove a very challenging proposition for all concerned given the lack of credible data. The ASTI gained the following:

- the removal of a requirement for teachers to place their students in rank order merit in their class
- statement that second components – coursework, project work, orals, aurals – would proceed
- adjustment of the 2021 Leaving Cert written exams
- no mixing of estimations gleaned from accredited grades process for established Leaving Cert
- a full indemnity for teachers and school leaders as achieved by the ASTI in the 2020 calculated grades process, and
- protections against canvassing of teachers, as achieved by the ASTI in the 2020 calculated grades process.

Junior Cert 2021

In light of the decision to cancel the Junior Certificate examinations, the ASTI is seeking that an appropriate acknowledgement and conclusion is brought to the work of Junior Cycle students.

ASTI MEMBERSHIP INCREASING

The ASTI is the only union working exclusively for second-level teachers.

Membership of the ASTI increased by 6% in 2020, to a total of 18,452 members. This is the third year in a row that ASTI membership has increased. Most of the 1,041 new members who joined the ASTI in 2020 are classroom teachers, many of whom are on fixed-term contracts. There has also been an increase in the number of student and Emeritus members of the ASTI.

Benefits of ASTI membership

There are many benefits to being a member of the only union to exclusively represent second-level teachers. The ASTI stands up for members' working conditions and professional integrity, including taking strike action to advance equal pay for post-2010 entrants to teaching. We also achieved two-year CIDs for members. Other benefits of ASTI membership include:

Breakdown of growing ASTI membership categories

- Associate membership (pro-rata and non-pro rata): +586 (+22%)
- Full members: +316 (+2.8%)
- CID non-full members: +46 (+7.2%)
- Students: +14 (+15%)
- Emeritus members: +116 (6.6%)

- access to professional advice, support and legal representation as needed
- a range of financial offers
- an opportunity to have your voice heard through surveys, ballots and our representative network
- the latest news about your profession through ASTI web, social media, publications, emails and texts
- training and seminars on a variety of topics including school leadership, board of management membership and preparing for retirement, and
- membership of the only union working exclusively for second-level teachers.

For more information about ASTI membership, see www.asti.ie.



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TUI PAY OUT €280,000 TO THE ASTI

An unseemly event in the trade union world has ended with justice for the ASTI and its members.



In February 2021, the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) made a payment of €280,000 to the ASTI to bring to an end one of the most wretched events in Irish trade union history. It draws a line under what has to be the most unjustifiable actions ever taken by the TUI.

In June 2017, the ASTI submitted a complaint to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) regarding losses of membership. We contended that, under ICTU rules, the TUI was prohibited from recruiting any ASTI members while the ASTI was in dispute with our employers.

We lodged the complaint to defend the most basic trade union principle that during disputes, there must be a barrier for those who might accommodate workers in abandoning their union and moving to another. It was felt that such action on the part of the TUI undermined the most basic of tenets of the trade union movement.

Disputes Committee

An ICTU Disputes Committee was established to investigate our complaint. The Committee reported to the ICTU Executive Council in April 2018 and the report was adopted. It found that the TUI had been in breach of paragraph 46 of the Constitution of the ICTU. The ICTU Disputes Committee made no finding against the ASTI.

The key elements of paragraph 46 provide as follows: "For the purpose of developing and maintaining co-operative and friendly relations between affiliated organisations the following provisions shall be observed by affiliated organisations in respect of transfer of members:

(b) No member or ex-member of another union should be accepted until that union has been consulted."

The paragraph provides procedures to be followed by unions in accepting members by way of transfer from another union and sets out the circumstances in which such transfers should take place.

Crucially, these provisions are designed to ensure that trade unions act appropriately and in solidarity when a colleague union is engaged in an industrial dispute. The TUI showed an astonishing lack of vigilance in respect of this important principle.

Particularly at issue was the fact that the provisions of the ICTU Constitution require that when a union receives an application for membership from a person who is, or was a member of another union, they are required to consult with the other union before consideration is given to admitting them into membership. The TUI failed to meet their obligations in this regard. The ASTI received no such communication. It must also be remembered that the ASTI was involved in a trade union dispute throughout the period.

It was established that the transfer of 1,059 members was involved.

ASTI Standing Committee considered the Disputes Committee report in April 2018 and it was decided that the ASTI would not appeal. However, the TUI did not accept the findings and appealed.

A further Disputes Committee was set up and undertook its work over the summer of 2018.

This second ICTU Disputes Committee did not uphold the TUI's appeal. The TUI's acceptance into membership of current/former ASTI members did not adhere to the requirements of the Congress Constitution. Subsequent to this, the TUI accepted the findings.

Not surprisingly, the affair attracted some interesting headlines at the time in the national newspapers. For example, *The Irish Times* ran an article headlined 'TUI may face hefty financial settlement over 'poaching' claims' in May 2018. The *Irish Examiner* ran an article entitled 'TUI broke rules in accepting ASTI members' in September 2018.

Restitution

What seemed like interminable discussions between the parties followed, in order to seek to advance the terms of the Disputes Committee report. As part of that process, the TUI published a letter to all of its members to advise them of a finding of the Disputes Committee in the following terms: "that the TUI write to members and advise them that members have been admitted into the membership of the TUI in breach of the rules of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and that they can apply to re-join the ASTI".

Bizarrely, the TUI also advised their members in an article in *TUI News* as follows:

“The finding of the ICTU Disputes Committee relates to an inadvertent breach by TUI of the ICTU rules; a breach that has since been remedied”. (*TUI News*, March 2019.)

It must be noted that neither the original ICTU Disputes Committee, nor the subsequent one which dealt with the TUI appeal, stated that the breach was “inadvertent”.

Following this communication to TUI members, a period of time elapsed and further discussions took place regarding implementation of the other aspects of the Disputes Committee report. In particular, the original Disputes Committee required the TUI to make a financial settlement with the ASTI, which reflected the loss of membership subscription involved. It was remitted to the General Secretary of the ICTU, Ms Patricia King, to assist in determining the structure of the settlement necessary. Discussions broke down and eventually in November 2019, the Executive Council of the ICTU issued a recommendation regarding the matter.



The recommendation was that the TUI should pay the ASTI €279,798.75. The payment by the TUI of €280,000 to the ASTI, in settlement of what has been dubbed in the media as a ‘poaching’ dispute amongst teacher unions, brings an end to a damaging affair in terms of the advancement of the interests of teachers. It has to be hoped that such unacceptable behaviour will never be repeated.

The ASTI is of the view that it remains important to maintain positive and constructive relations with the TUI. Protecting and advancing the interests of teachers and of the education system is of paramount importance.

#HelloMIC



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- M Ed in Leadership of Wellbeing in Education
- M Oid san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta
- MA in Education and the Arts (META)
- MA in STEM Education
- Graduate Diploma / M Ed in Adult and Further Education
- Graduate Diploma / M Ed in Information and Communication Technologies in Primary Education
- Graduate Diploma / M Ed in Special Education Needs
- Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Middle Leadership and Mentoring in Primary and Post-Primary Settings
- An Teastas Iarchéime i dTeagasc Ábharbhunaithe (TTA) san Iarbhunscolaíocht Lán-Ghaeilge agus Ghaeltachta
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LESSONS LEARNED

New research from Maynooth University sheds light on the impact of the pandemic on teachers.



A new study from Maynooth University has found that while teachers adapted extremely well to remote teaching, the challenges of maintaining work–life balance, and negative media reporting on teachers, have taken a toll on teacher mental health and well-being.

The study, entitled ‘Lessons Learned: The experiences of teachers in Ireland during the 2020 pandemic’, presents data from a survey of 404 teachers, 53% of whom were second-level teachers, on the impact of the first lockdown and the move to remote learning, as well as their experiences when schools reopened in September 2020.

The first lockdown

The study found that despite teachers and schools getting such short notice of the first lockdown, they invested considerable personal and professional energy into establishing distance learning, including upskilling in the use of technology, and supporting students during this transition. Teachers reported increased collaboration and sharing of resources, but also increased time spent moderating these. Many teachers pointed to particular difficulties with practical subjects such as construction studies and home economics.

Re-opening

Teachers were very happy to return to school in September, but reported significant changes to the teaching and learning dynamic. The use of technology is now more embedded in practice, and teachers reported increased confidence and competence in its use. However, they also said that curriculum time is being lost on additional Covid-19-related responsibilities such as policing mask wearing, cleaning regimes, and additional record keeping. Significantly, they also reported a change in classroom dynamics, with many stating that students are not as talkative in class, and that facilitating collaborative learning is far more difficult.

Stress

Unsurprisingly, 67% of teachers reported an increase in stress compared to the same time the previous year, and six out of ten reported a deterioration in their well-being. Factors contributing to teacher stress included the impact of remote teaching on work–life balance, and negative portrayals of teachers in the media. They also worried about their students, especially those who did not have the technology, broadband or support to engage meaningfully with distance learning.

Psychological growth

Interestingly, factors that did not impact on teachers’ stress included their self-belief in having the skills to do their job well. The survey used a metric

of five domains of psychological growth (relating to others, new possibilities, personal strength, spiritual growth and appreciation for life), and four out of five participants said that they experienced growth in at least one of these domains. Four out of ten felt more confident in face-to-face teaching, and one-third said they would work more closely with parents post Covid-19. Parents have taken a more active role in their children’s education and this is welcomed by teachers.

Recommendations

This research is part of a growing evidence base that has arisen since the start of the pandemic, and its results point to a number of issues that will impact on teaching and learning post-Covid-19. Among the study’s recommendations were:

- enhanced funding for psychological services for teachers and planning for targeted supports for teacher well-being
- enhanced funding to address the digital divide, and
- further research on the impact of the pandemic on education and school communities.

Teachers spoke of the real impact of Covid-19 on their lives and work, including this quote from a second-level teacher:

“I am physically and emotionally drained. I have 21 years’ post-primary teaching experience. I love(d) teaching. I don’t think I can take the lack of support and media bashing much longer. When the schools closed in March, I very quickly switched to online classes. I was lucky that my school used MS Teams and I was IT literate. As a parent of a Leaving Cert student, I fully understood and empathised with my LCHL maths class. I had encouraged these students to work collaboratively and stressed the importance of not being in competition with each other. Our safe space was demolished the day the Department decided that teachers would assign a ranking to these students. I felt further betrayed when the Department subsequently shared the rankings with the students. Throughout the closure, I worked long days, setting and assigning work, teaching online and contacting parents and students in my year head group”.

The full report from is available to download from <http://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/13914/>.

CONVENTION 2021

The pandemic means that Convention 2021 is once again a virtual affair, but no less important for teachers and education.



Each Easter, approximately 500 ASTI members gather at ASTI Annual Convention to determine the ASTI's policy priorities for the coming year. This year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic Annual Convention will be held remotely.

On April 6 and 7, delegates will use the Zoom platform to debate motions that decide the union's policy for the coming year and watch speeches from the President, General Secretary and others.

Key issues

Changes to Senior Cycle will be one of the key issues of debate at Convention 2021, with a number of motions relating to Senior Cycle reform on the agenda for Tuesday, April 6. Other important issues that will be discussed at Convention 2021 include class size, special educational needs and issues relating to new entrants to teaching. Other motions on teachers' working conditions, including pensions, posts of responsibility, voluntary re-deployment, and supervision and substitution will also be deliberated at Convention. The full list of motions that will be debated is available in the Convention section of the ASTI website and in **Nuacht 2 – Convention Special**, which has been posted to all members

How to follow what's happening at Convention 2021

The ASTI President's Convention address will be shown live on the ASTI website, at 4.25pm on Tuesday, April 6. We will also be posting updates on our Facebook and Twitter platforms (Facebook: www.facebook.com/astiteachers/ and Twitter: @astionion). Delegates are encouraged to use the hashtag #ASTI2021 when tweeting about Convention.

How is a remote Convention conducted?

Delegates who have been elected by their branch to represent them at Convention have been sent information about how to register for Convention 2021. Once their registration has been approved, they will

ASTI Steering Committee plays an important role in running Annual Convention. This includes considering all motions and amendments from ASTI branches for the Convention agenda. The committee is elected by Convention each year. Pictured at a recent meeting of Steering Committee are (from top left): Ann Piggott (President), Gemma Tuffy (Media and Communications Official), Mary Lyndon (Steering Committee member), Kieran Christie (General Secretary), Máire G. Ní Chiarba (Steering Committee member), Eamon Dennehy (Vice President), Niall Duddy (Steering Committee member), Susie Hall (Steering Committee member), Diarmaid de Paor (Deputy General Secretary), and John Byrne (Steering Committee member).

receive a webinar link to Annual Convention 2021 using the Zoom platform. Voting will be conducted electronically for all motions using the poll function. Those who wish to speak to a motion can use the Q&A function to indicate that they wish to speak and will be unmuted when it is their turn to speak.

The election of Vice President normally takes place at convention; however, this year it will be conducted by postal ballot. Ballot papers will be issued to those entitled to vote the week beginning April 12. Committee elections, which are usually conducted at Convention, will be conducted electronically. A link to vote on these elections will be sent to all those entitled to vote the week beginning April 12.

For more information on Convention 2021 see:
www.asti.ie

FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY

Plans for Leaving Cert 2021 and the need to end pay inequality were just two issues addressed by the ASTI in recent media coverage.

“You can take it that all of our members and all of the students want to get back to school. Nobody is particularly enamoured of the situation we find ourselves in at this point in time, although I think we are picking up that the remote teaching and learning – far from ideal though it is – [is] considerably better this time around than it was last spring. That said, we want to get back. I was listening to the news earlier on [this evening] and it’s great to see that the indicators are positive from NPHE and hopefully that can be achieved in the very near future.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary, *Prime Time*, RTÉ 1, January 29

“We remain absolutely committed to finding a solution here. Devising a process whereby, in the context of concerns about stress, the solution being proposed involves students simultaneously preparing for not one but two Leaving Certs – that’s going to add to the stress. We want a more sensible approach than this...We entered the talks with the idea of exploring a parallel option but we would argue that the parallel option should surely have appropriate assessment events underpinning it in order for it to be credible. What people are being asked to do this year, on the basis of the data available, is to guesstimate no more than estimate the marks for students, and we do not think that is appropriate or acceptable.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary, *Six One News*, RTÉ 1, February 11

“Our members are sending the same message we’ve been sending for the past ten years – we want to end pay inequality. Our research has shown that teachers in the first five years of their career would be down €29,000, and over 25 years they will miss out on €86,000, compared to their colleagues on the pre-2010 pay scale.”

Ann Piggott, ASTI President, *Six One News*, RTÉ 1, February 10

“Our union met last night for over four hours and we agreed that our members will co-operate with the return of special education classes on February 22. We obviously want to make sure that strict measures are in place, that everybody in the school is safe. We’re also glad these students will be the only students in school, which means they can spread out and use other rooms if required to ensure their safety and the safety of our members.”

Ann Piggott, ASTI President, *Newstalk Breakfast*, Newstalk, February 11

“The reason our members rejected Building Momentum has to do with the equal pay issue. As you know we’ve been fighting for this over the past ten years and still nothing is different and I would expect that is the main reason our members voted no...The length of the agreement ... two years is a long time for people on low pay and really the point has to be made that these teachers have been on lower pay for a long time and the issue is still nowhere near finished.”

Ann Piggott, ASTI President, *Drivetime*, RTÉ Radio 1, February 10

“Our preference is for a Leaving Cert exam to go ahead. We obviously understand that modification will need to be made to the exam papers, to make up for time that has been missed. We would like exam papers that will be doable, that don’t add stress for students, but expect that they would have plenty of choice on an exam paper if it were offered.”

Ann Piggott, ASTI President, *Virgin Media News at 5.30*, Virgin Media, February 1





“We are pleased that the Leaving Cert established has been preserved, because in all of the debate it was forgotten that there are students out there who are determined to do a proper Leaving Cert. Last week, we had a particular debate in which we were centrally involved, and we preserved the Leaving Cert. The Department of Education were looking at running no second components – coursework, project work, orals, and aural. They’re back, and they’re happening and that’s good. Secondly, we’re pleased that there’s going to be no cross-pollination between the processes, because we thought that that would bring the credibility of both processes very much into question in terms of mixing a bit of this and a bit of that from one to the other.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary, *Newstalk Breakfast*, Newstalk, February 18

“In the short term, [remote teaching] is a gap filler, it can do the job in the short term. The longer this goes on, it’s not really effective. It’s not the same as classroom teaching (...) I have emails from parents who say their broadband has crashed. I think if NPHEP tells us that the community is safe, then we can go back. If they tell us that the community is not safe but schools can go back – there’s a bit of a contradiction there.”

Andrew Phelan, ASTI Standing Committee representative, *Prime Time*, RTÉ 1, January 29

“We welcome the Taoiseach’s indication during the week and again yesterday that community transmission needs to be reduced in order to have an orderly return to schools, because community transmission is the key to building the level of confidence that is necessary among teachers, students, and parents to ensure that it is safe. I would point out that there was some controversy going on about the return since the 11th of January, but it emerged that it wasn’t just teachers that were concerned. There were surveys among parents, teachers, and students that show that the entirety of the community were unhappy at that time.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary, *This Week*, RTÉ Radio 1, January 24

To view more ASTI media coverage, visit
www.asti.ie/news-campaigns/media-centre/media-coverage/.

FROM DAWN TO DUSK

The recent lockdown has seen teachers busier than ever before; with many juggling online classes, home schooling their own children, parenting and everything else, it's hard to find a spare minute.



Caroline Burke, Carrick-on-Shannon Community School, Co. Leitrim

Caroline's school is following the normal timetable at home as far as possible, but remote teaching is naturally slower than in school. Managing workload is a challenge, as free periods that she would have used to do preparation and corrections in school are unavailable at home: "When you're at home, with nobody minding your children, you're very conscious that during those free periods, you have to go out and check on your children and cater to their needs, so we don't have that time to invest in our classes, which basically means your work spills over until the children are in bed and you're up at night correcting and preparing for the next day. While our school has provided an amazing service to our students, with all live classes and access to online supports, my own children have paid a significant price for that, minding themselves for a huge portion of the week. There's a lot of guilt in that". Remote instruction takes a huge amount of time. Whereas in class, Caroline can walk around and spot something, give the student quick feedback and move on, everything in remote teaching needs to be done in writing, which takes more time. It is also hard to know if students are engaging with the work: "While you can ask questions online, it's amazing how much the teacher can tell from looking at the student and by wandering around the classroom having a look at the work. The communication is just not as good online". Caroline thinks there should be a reduction in meetings and that all CPD should be cancelled for the time being. While teachers are working remotely, the focus should just be on teaching: "We get good support from our management team, but our workload has remained the same. We're still doing parent-teacher meeting reports... You're facing into that after teaching all day online or meetings in the evening".

The work is harder she says and some of the media coverage is disheartening. Caroline can't wait to get back to school, as there is no better environment for teaching and learning: "You watch the news and you hear 'Why won't teachers go back to school?' or 'Why are teachers refusing to go back to school?' That's just so disheartening. We're like every other working parent, everyone else who's working from home. We're working very hard, doing our best to support all the students in our care, and there's a lot of negative publicity, which I think other workers don't have to contend with". From the Department support wise, she says: "I don't really need much more than acknowledgement and appreciation that we work very, very hard".



Caroline Burke.

Mairéad Nic Siosta, St Tiernan's Community School, Balally, Dublin



Mairéad and her two sons, Cónán and Culann.

Mairéad is an Irish and History teacher and is also the Programme Co-ordinator in the school for LCA, LCVP and TY. Her duties when working from home involve not just teaching, but trying to keep students engaged as well, she says: "We're trying to make sure that the TYs don't get forgotten about, that the LCAs stay in touch ... I'm trying to co-ordinate the programmes, plus teach my classes. I also have two little kids as well".

Mairéad is a lone parent. She does have a live-in au pair, but she has English classes from 9.00am to 12.00pm. Another issue is that her au pair is Spanish and her children go to a Gaelscoil, so it is difficult for her to help them with their work, says Mairéad: "I feel like I have two primary school classes to teach and to understand, plus all my other classes to teach, plus all the work that goes with the API position of Programme Co-ordinator because I'm in charge of LCA, TY and LCVP. I'm also trying to teach a practical achievement task to LCA, which they didn't cancel and which has been very hard, because the engagement from LCA has been very low".

Mairéad says managing everything she has to do is a logistical nightmare: "I'm being pulled in a million directions and I'm finding it hard to sleep because I've so much to do and I'm exhausted. I'm trying to split myself in so many ways and I've a lot to be in charge of".

Lockdown also forced a big change on her youngest son, who started the year in playschool, but because childcare was an issue, Mairéad had to move him into junior infants because she needed somewhere within walking distance.

Mairéad believes there needs to be more realisation of what teachers have time for during lockdown: "They keep sending us links saying go do these webinars at this time, but that's no good to someone like me. I do have an au pair but she finishes in the evening and I always put the kids to bed. I'm exhausted after that. And I clean the house and I do all that stuff myself, so I can't do these webinars that are on at night time ... I know a lot of people are in the same position but I can't teach two kids a full day of school work, plus teach all of my students a full day of school work and give them all feedback, and put my kids to bed, and get enough sleep, and have time to shower. There's only so much time in a day. It's too much".

Seán Fox, St Kevin's College, Finglas, Dublin



Seán Fox and his three children (from left) Aedamhair, Suainibhe and Fiadh.

Seán is a History and English teacher. He has three young children at home and his wife is a nurse. He says that the expectation on him is to follow the curriculum and the normal timetable as much as possible: "We're told to treat the virtual school day as if it was a normal school day. That has its advantages and disadvantages".

This requires flexibility from the teacher and the student, and is based on the technology available to both. Because his wife is on the front line in the fight against Covid, a lot of the parenting duties fall to him: "My wife is a nurse, so she's seen the reality of Covid on the ground. During lockdown, the two of us would have very different schedules. In terms of her, it's affecting her ability to have time with her kids, because she's been working so much, whether because of outbreaks or nursing shortages due to staff isolation. When I'm at home then, I spend a lot more time with the kids, so it's finding a balance to juggling work and juggling home schooling".

Seán says a normal day for him is non-stop from morning to night, managing his own work, his children's home schooling and general parenting: "Even though it is busy and you're struggling an awful lot, in terms of what my wife has seen, I think the cost of that is necessary in the present situation. To be honest with you, I'm more grateful that we here in the house are healthy and we're able to have a safe, comfortable environment during this time".

Seán says the biggest challenge with remote teaching is managing your time: "It's a constant stream of emails and Google Classroom notifications from students all day. I'm meeting deadlines for my own work, my kids' work needs to be done with my help and supervision, and therefore, the day has to be planned accordingly".

There is a lot of preparation required for classes. Seán often has to prepare slides and pre-recorded videos for classes the night before and upload them for the next day, while also correcting students' work and sending them feedback. Usually, the only time available for him to do this is after his own children go to bed.

There could have been better preparation for the likelihood of going into another lockdown and a period of remote teaching, he thinks: "Even though this issue about preparation for such an eventuality had been raised to the Department by the ASTI, there was still very little planning. It's like they didn't learn much from the last time we went straight into a lockdown".

THE SINGLE PUBLIC SERVICE PENSION SCHEME

Knowing about your pension scheme is important at every stage of your career, says ASTI Executive Officer: Development & Organisation DESMOND O'TOOLE.



There are a number of pension schemes that apply to second-level teachers depending on when you started teaching. However, all teachers who started teaching after January 1, 2013, or who returned to teaching after that date having previously left the profession, are enrolled in the Single Public Service Pension Scheme that applies across the Irish public service. Most members of this Pension Scheme are within their first decade of teaching and you may not yet be thinking about your pension. However, knowing about your pension scheme is important at every stage of your career, because decisions you make now can have a significant effect on the value of your pension benefits when you come to retire. This article explains the key features of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme and some of the more important issues to look out for.

The Single Public Service Pension Scheme is a defined benefits scheme. This means that scheme members are not dependent for their pension benefits on the performance of anonymous pension fund managers, but have guaranteed benefits on retirement.

Defined benefits

The Single Public Service Pension Scheme is a defined benefits scheme. This means that scheme members are not dependent for their pension benefits on the performance of anonymous pension fund managers, but have guaranteed benefits on retirement. However, there are significantly different

terms in this scheme compared to previous teacher-only pension schemes, which have a real effect on the value of the pension benefits that a teacher can expect to receive on retirement.

As a member of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme you make two separate contributions to your pension every time you receive your salary. You can see these two deductions on your payslip. These regular payments are called 'referable amounts', with one going to build your retirement pension and the other to build your retirement lump sum. Every year the value of accrued referable amounts held in the Scheme is uprated by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Over the course of your career these amounts accumulate and fund the defined pension benefits that the Scheme delivers to you on retirement. These benefits are co-ordinated with the State Contributory Pension, which is paid in addition to the retirement benefits delivered by your pension scheme. **Figure 1** describes how benefits are built up in the Single Public Service Pension Scheme.

Annual updates

The Department of Education will soon start to provide annual statements of pension benefits to members of the Scheme. These statements provide a record of how your occupational pension is growing over the years. You can also check the projected value of your pension benefits online at any time using the Scheme Estimator Tool, which is available on singlepensionscheme.gov.ie/for-members/scheme-information/, where you can also find further detailed information on your pension scheme.

Enhanced benefits

You can enhance the value of your pension benefits by purchasing additional referable amounts on an annual cycle. You will need to be a member of the Scheme for two years in order to do this, and have at least nine years left to retirement. A teacher should apply to the Department of



FIGURE 1: Benefits in the Single Public Service Pension Scheme.

The ASTI is often asked to provide explanatory letters to banks and other mortgage providers about the Spouses and Children’s Scheme and we are happy to do that if asked.

Education for a quote and, if accepted, the payments commence and continue for one full year. At the end of that year the additional referable amounts are banked in the Scheme. You can repeat this cycle for up to 20 separate years in total. The value of these additional referable amounts ranks on a par with standard referable amounts when it comes to calculating retirement benefits, including the Spouses and Children’s Scheme, and their value is also updated by the rate of inflation each year.

Survivors’ benefits

The Single Public Service Pension Scheme also provides pension benefits for your surviving spouse or civil partner and qualifying children should you die in service or in retirement. The cost of survivors’ benefits is incorporated into the contribution you make to the Pension Scheme every time you are paid your salary. There are two benefits that may be payable should you die while in teaching service, and providing you have been a member of the Scheme for at least two years. A death gratuity of up to twice your pensionable salary earned in the previous year (expressed on a full-time basis) is payable to your estate on production of probate or letters of administration. Thereafter, a survivor’s pension is payable to your spouse/civil partner. The value of this pension is set at one-

half of the pension that you would have earned had you retired on medical grounds at the date of death. This pension is payable for the rest of your surviving spouse/civil partner’s life and will continue to be paid should they remarry. Separate arrangements apply for teachers who die in service but who have less than 24 months’ service. As a key financial asset, survivors’ benefits are also subject to court orders made on divorce or judicial separation.

Survivors’ pensions are also payable to your dependent children until their 16th birthday, or until their 22nd birthday if they remain in full-time education. The value of the pension paid for a child is set at one-third of the surviving spouse/civil partner’s pension, up to three children. If there are more than three surviving children, the sum of these pensions is set at an equal amount to the spouse/civil partner’s pension distributed equally among the surviving children. A children’s pension is also payable to an adult dependent child, without age limit, who is permanently incapacitated, providing the infirmity existed from birth or arose while the child was eligible for benefit.

A teacher who dies in retirement will have already received their pension gratuity when they retired. Survivors’ benefits, therefore, are limited to the pension paid to a surviving spouse/civil partner, and any qualifying children. The ASTI is often asked to provide explanatory letters to banks and other mortgage providers about the Spouses and Children’s Scheme and we are happy to do that if asked.

Valuable asset

An occupational pension is a very valuable asset and it is worth taking time to become familiar with it no matter where you are in your teaching career. More information on the Scheme is available on the ASTI website. The Pensions Team at the ASTI can also help with any query you may have about your teachers’ pension arrangements.

AN CHAINT SAN AER ... LEIS AN BHFÁMAIRE FABHRACH

Smaointe ón gcéad dianghlasáil, le VERNON Ó BUACHALLA.



Graifítí ar fhalla a chuir ag machnamh mé le déanaí, é ar fhál cloiche i bPáirc an Phobail gar do lár Chathair Phort Láirge. Is annamh a théim ann na laethanta seo, ach bhí uair a' chloig le sparáil agam, bhí an uain go breá agus an kindle lánluchtaithe. An fhaiche seo mar scámhóg ghlas ag muintir na cathrach agus í an-oiriúnach le haghaidh bhabhta léitheoireachta. Is cuimhin liom an áit a bheith ciúin fadó ach í i bhfad níos gnóthaí na laethanta seo i bhfianaise na paindéime.

"Life is .." a d'fhéadas a dhéanamh amach sular sháigh beirt bhan iad fhéin idir mise agus sprioc mo shuime. Díreach ina ndiaidh tháinig scuaine fhada daltaí meánscoile, idir bhuachaillí agus chailíní, iad gléasta in éide scoile, ag déanamh a slí ar an gcosán i dtreo an gheata.

"Life is short ..." Focal eile ar fáil dom toisc an pheannaireacht a bheith doiléir agus na daltaí ag caitheamh scátha ar aschur liteartha dhuine éigin anaithnid. Rith sé liom go raibh sos á thógaint ag rang éigin ó sclábhaíocht an lae toisc ardiúmar a bheith orthu. Sos ó scaradh sóisialta, sos ó mhascanna a chaitheamh, sos ón righneas is dual do shaol scolairí an lae inniu.

Agus bhí dea-spin ar na déagóirí, iad gealgháireach agus cabach mar is nós le déagóirí a bheith. Simplíocht na siúlóide mar leigheas ar strus, gan le déanamh ach cos a chur i bhfeac, an chos eile a shá chun tosaigh agus away leat. Deis éalaithe ó chúraimí ranga ar feadh scathaimh, a bhuíochas leis an spaisteoireacht.

Thugas faoi ndeara, áfach, go raibh dornán nach beag acu nach raibh ró-mhaith ar na cosa, raingléirí chun deiridh ar an "peloton" toisc deacrachtaí siúlóide a bheith acu. Deagóirí, rang idirbhliana b'fhéidir, agus é rí-shoiléir nach raibh taithí acu ar an tsiúlóid? Cuma na míshláinte ar chuid acu, pusach, amhail is nár theastaigh uathu bheith sa pháirc an lá gréine seo.

Thábhacht na haclaíochta

Cuirtear an-bhéim na laethanta seo ar thábhacht na haclaíochta, raidhse spórt ar fáil do dhaoine óga. Ach ní oireann sé seo don uile dhuine. Is cosúil go bhfuil leisce ar chéadchodán réasúnta mór daoine óga a bheith gníomhach, an chuise a chur ag bualadh ar bhuile tapa. Níl sé seo cool, de réir dealraimh, go háirithe i measc na gcailíní.

Seans go dtuigeann Roz Purcell é seo. Buaiteoir Miss Universe Ireland 2010 í,

Gluais téarmaí

fál cloiche: stone wall
uain: weather
lánluchtaithe: fully charged
scátha: shadows
aschur: output
anaithnid: anonymous
righneas: rigidity
dea-spin: good humour
cabach: chatty
spaisteoireacht: walking
raingléirí: laggards
céadchodán: percentage
tionchóir: influencer
ceannbhán: bog cotton
siopa ocastóra: huckster shop
calra: calorie
geábh: trip
dúluachar: bad weather

blagálaí, tionchóir agus scríbhneoir ar chúrsaí cócaireachta a bhfuil cónaí uirthi i gContae Thiobrad Árann. An-shuim aici sa raimbleáil. Grúpa curtha le chéile aici - The Hike Life - chun dlús a chur leis an spórt seo. Ina blag siúd, luann sí turas a thug sí ar Loch Chom Seangán, ar an mbóthar idir Charraig na Siúire agus Dún Garbhán. Áitín iargúlta é seo, an chuach le cloisteáil san earrach ann, sionnach múinte ann ar thóir bhlúiríní bia, ceannbhán ag fás go rábach i Mí an Mheithimh. Is beag duine a théadh ann, fíú muintir na háite.

Ach féach anois na sluaite ag tarraingt ar an áit, an carrchlós ag cur thar moill, línte dúbailte buí ar dhá thaobh an bhóthair, siopa caife ins an áit a mbíodh siopa ocastóra tréigthe. É sa bhfaisean anois, gan náire nó leis ar bhéithe óga a gcuid jeggings geala a bheith le feiceáil ar shleasa an chnoic.

Seacht gcéad calra le cailleadh, a mhic, de réir an fitbit ar chaol mo láimhe! Agus é seo go léir toisc go ndeir Purcell go bhfuil an áit draíochta seo cool and the gang agus go bhfuil no probs (mar a deir sí fein) geábh a thabhairt air. Féarple di, mo ghraidhn í!

Anois, dá roinnfí a tuairimí siúd ar dhaltaí na tíre i dtaobh an craic is féidir a bhaint as cos a chur roimh chos eile...

So, sa pháirc arís:



"Life is short, but wide."


Seans go bhfuil brí an ráitis seo tógtha ar bord ag Purcell níos fearr ná duine ar bith eile a mbeadh tionchar acu ar mhicléinn. Ábhar machnaimh le haghaidh dúluachair na bliana, a cháirde.

FREE CROSS-CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION RESOURCES!

Explore the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focusing on SDG 16, with your students using activities, games, photos and videos.

These cross-curricular resources examine how people and families in South Sudan show resilience to survive in the most difficult situations and times.



Log onto trocaire.org/our-work/educate/peaceandjustice/ for more resources and information about our **Game Changers Competition** for young people who want to change the world, and believe games are a way to do this!

WHAT DO SCHOOL STEWARDS DO?

Schools are asked to nominate an ASTI school steward by May 1 each year. *ASTIR* speaks to three school stewards about their experience of the role and what advice they would give to prospective school stewards.

The ASTI represents 18,500 teachers and the school steward is essential in ensuring each member's voice is heard and that any concerns about their working conditions are attended to. The role of school steward is extremely important within the ASTI, as they are often the point of contact between a teacher and their union. Some of the key duties of the role include the distribution of ASTI publications, holding school union meetings and helping members with queries about their terms and conditions.

Seamus Keane is school steward in Ardgillan Community College in Dublin, and he says that a key part of his role is helping new teachers and keeping them informed: "My school is a new school, so a lot of my time as school steward is spent dealing with new teachers and their queries about contracts and CIDs.

"Another big part of the role is keeping members aware of the changes that are happening all the time in education, for example the school self-evaluation process, and holding meetings to make sure that all feel involved in decisions being made. My role is to make sure that members get to vote and build consensus around changes to their working conditions".

Sharing the load

For Deirdre Craven and Sinead Buggy in Killina Presentation Secondary School in Offaly, the fact that they work together as a school union committee means that the workload is much more manageable, says Deirdre: "It's helpful to have someone to talk to about the role, to discuss what needs to be done and what issues are coming up in the school. It's especially helpful when running ballots, as there's a lot of work in running a school-based ballot".

One part of the role that new school stewards sometimes find daunting is representing staff to school management when issues arise, says Seamus: "It is always hard to have to challenge management. This is a huge challenge in the role of school steward and you can be seen as something of a thorn in management's side".

This is another area where Deirdre and Sinead have found it helpful to work together, explains Sinead: "When there are two of us, it doesn't feel as personal when we're going to management. Also, often it would be the principal and deputy principal we're speaking to, so even psychologically it is good to have two on each side".

Despite the potential challenges of the role, it can also be very rewarding. For Seamus, his role of school steward gives him a sense of solidarity with his fellow teachers: "I like the fact that being school steward allows me to explain to members that they can have a huge input into changes to their working conditions. We're lucky as teachers to have that. As school steward, I can create a forum for discussion on issues affecting staff and we can all share our views and reach consensus".

Deirdre and Sinead enjoy that the role allows them provide support to newly

qualified teachers, says Sinead: "In our school, we rotate the role of school steward by seniority. This means that by the time you are school steward, most of the more senior members of staff will have held the role previously. This means that for young teachers joining the school, there's a really good support network available to them. They can get a really good first experience of the ASTI and understand how helpful the union can be to them at all stages of their career".

Representing the school

Another significant task for the school steward is to represent their school at branch meetings. Seamus, Deirdre and Sinead all agree that any school steward should attend their branch's meetings.

Sinead says: "Branch meetings are really helpful, because you know what topics are likely to come up in the next few weeks. When you start getting questions from members, you already have an idea of the issue and have the answers because it was discussed at the branch meeting".

Deirdre also sees the benefits in these meetings: "It's good to hear at branch meetings that the same issues are coming up in other schools as in your own, that you're not alone. It's great as well to be able to ask questions at a branch meeting and we've found that our Standing Committee representative will find out the answer to our specific question for us and contact us with the answer very quickly, which is great".

Seamus agrees that asking questions and representing members at branch level is important: "By attending it means your school is represented at that level, for example in electing CEC representatives and asking questions that Standing Committee representatives can bring to Standing Committee meetings for you. That's the great thing about the ASTI, it's a very representative organisation".

As well as their branch officers and Standing Committee representatives, there is support for school stewards from ASTI Head Office, explains Seamus: "I'd tell any new school steward to go to the school steward training that the ASTI offers every year. I'd also advise them to get to know the industrial relations official that represents their area, and occasionally check in with their official for updates".

Deirdre advises: "Attend any training available to you and seek out support available to you".

Finally, Sinead says: "We've been really happy with how quickly we've received replies from our queries to our industrial relations official in Head Office. He's been really good in providing information that has helped us when speaking to management".

For more information about the role of school steward visit:
www.asti.ie/about-asti/structure/school-stewards/.

Duties and responsibilities of school stewards

The duties of the school steward:

- (a) Each ASTI school staff group shall elect a School Steward to be their official union representative.
- (b) The election shall take place on or before 1st May each year and the newly elected School Steward shall, as soon as possible, notify ASTI Head Office of his/her election.
- (c) The School Steward shall be the official representative of the ASTI in the school. He/she shall be responsible to the Association for the conduct of the affairs of the Association within the school.
- (d) The School Steward shall endeavour to ensure that all eligible teachers employed in the school become and remain members of the Association.
- (e) The School Steward should arrange the distribution to members of ASTI literature and information.
- (f) The School Steward shall forward to Head Office information on ASTI membership in the school if requested by the General Secretary.
- (g) The School Steward shall act in consultation with and on behalf of the ASTI members in the School.
- (h) The School Steward shall convene at least one school ASTI meeting per term.
- (i) On receipt of an agenda and a request for a meeting signed by at least half of the ASTI members in the school, the School Steward shall convene a meeting of ASTI members.
- (j) Necessary expenses of the School Steward may be reimbursed by the local ASTI Branch.
- (k) The School Steward may if he/she sees fit arrange for the election of a School Union Committee, this committee to consist of three members including the School Steward. The School Steward may delegate some duties to the other members of the School Union Committee. Where deemed appropriate by the school steward this committee may act on behalf of the ASTI staff.
- (l) The School Steward has responsibility for distributing ASTI ballot documentation to members, ensuring that the electoral register is correctly signed and returning the completed ballots to ASTI Head Office.

ASTI Rules and Constitution, June 2019

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THE COUNTRY NEEDS TO BE GRATEFUL TO OUR TEACHERS

As restrictions continue, RSTA members have become creative at staying in touch.

The early months of 2021 have created an unprecedented challenge to the old, the young, and the vulnerable, with the more transmissible strains of Covid-19 spreading exponentially. The devastating results have led to prolonged restrictions in the interest of personal safety and public health.

The country needs to be grateful to our teachers who have adjusted to online teaching, with its attendant problems. They aim to maintain contact with their students and ensure that the curriculum is followed while schools are closed. However, the determination of all concerned is to re-open the schools as soon and as safely as possible. The importance of schooling and teachers' work as part of a young person's development has reached an increased appreciation.

The vaccine

The RSTA, like everybody else, eagerly awaits the vaccine roll-out and wishes to have it prioritised for teachers as part of the State's frontline services. It will be a lifeline to help the country maintain its well-being, and provide reassurance to all school staff. It cannot come quickly enough.

Branch activities

The days are lengthening, and the present spike will, hopefully, continue to reduce. Nonetheless, the long-term effects of this deadly pandemic will linger for



RSTA visit to neighbour John Moloney by Pádraic O'Doherty.

months and years ahead. Most RSTA members will tread cautiously as the restrictions ease. Plans for branch activities will proceed slowly. It is, in fact, now a year since branch activities ceased altogether. Individual branches have, however, been creative in maintaining contact with their membership. The larger branches send texts or bulletins on a regular basis. The Midland branch WhatsApp group is open to all members who wish to participate and there is an assurance of a daily smile from the messages that are forwarded.

Membership and pension

There has been a constant increase in new members, who are all very welcome. Membership renewal was excellent and appreciated this year in particular. The membership size strengthens the voice of our Alliance members when pension and salary matters are discussed. RSTA solidarity with ASTI officials is assured as they negotiate the implementation of the new pay deal, Building Momentum 2020-2022. This two-year public service agreement has endorsed the continuation of parity until 2022 when the deal ends. We gratefully acknowledge ASTI's consistent reinforcement of pension parity as part of its policy agenda in all negotiations.

Fanaigí slán sábháilte.

RSTA membership application/renewal

Name:

Address:

Home phone:

Mobile:

Email:

RSTA branch:

Annual subscription: €24
Annual renewal date: September 1

Payment options: Bank standing order (recommended by RSTA) or cheque (payable to RSTA)
Return to: Mrs Muriel McNicholas, Cordarragh, Kiltimagh, Claremorris, Co. Mayo.
Contact: murielmcnicholas@gmail.com or 085-118 1330

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

Standing order set-up form

Please complete in **BLOCK CAPITALS** using black or blue pen.

To: The Manager (Bank name and full address)

I hereby authorise and request you to DEBIT my account:

Account name/s:

IBAN BIC

And to credit the account of:

RETIRED SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

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

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

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

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

Member name and RSTA branch

Signature: Date: ___/___/20___

BREASTFEEDING BREAKS

If you are returning to work after maternity leave, you may be wondering what arrangements can be made in relation to breastfeeding.



I am returning to work after maternity leave and I am still breastfeeding my baby. Am I entitled to breaks to breastfeed or to express milk?

Since 1994, breastfeeding mothers have had a statutory entitlement to take breaks in order to breastfeed in the workplace, or to express milk. However, this entitlement ends when the child is 26 weeks old – in other words, when maternity leave is over. In 2018, the ASTI successfully negotiated an extension to this leave in discussions with the Department of Education at the Teachers Conciliation Council. The provisions of the new agreement are outlined in Circular Letter 0060/2018. The Circular outlines the extension of provision for breastfeeding breaks from “within a 26-week period” to “within a 104-week period” after the birth of the child.

When do I need to let my school know that I will need provision for breastfeeding breaks when I return to school?

A teacher who wishes to avail of this provision must give notice, in writing, to her employer (school or ETB) at least four weeks prior to her return to school. She should include a copy of the child’s birth certificate with this written notice.

How much time per day am I entitled to for breastfeeding?

Teachers are entitled to one hour per day for breastfeeding or lactation without loss of pay. The teacher may take these breaks as one hour, two half hours, or three 20-minute breaks. She should agree the pattern of breaks with her employer and both sides should be reasonable in coming to an

arrangement. Part-time teachers are entitled to breastfeeding breaks on a pro-rata basis. For example, a job-sharing teacher (on half hours) is entitled to breaks coming to 30 minutes per day.

If I am no longer breastfeeding, do I need to let my school know?

When a teacher ceases to breastfeed, she should notify her employer in writing as soon as possible.

I require cover for one of my classes due to breastfeeding. Is this possible?

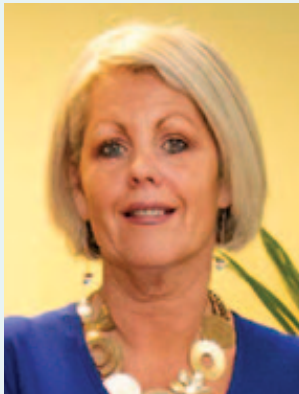
Cover for teachers, where necessary, should be covered through the Supervision and Substitution Scheme.

This extended breastfeeding scheme has been in operation now for over two school years and, despite warnings that it would be impossible for schools to function while implementing the scheme, it seems to be working quite well. Naturally, the scheme will have a different look in the current pandemic. Nevertheless, the ASTI would like to hear from teachers about their experiences with the scheme – good and bad. Please let us know if you have found it easy to reach a sensible arrangement with your school, or if there have been difficulties. Is your school supportive, or have they put obstacles in your way? If you would like to let us know what your experience has been, please email dcullen@asti.ie.

JANE CRAIG ELLIOTT



Jane pictured with Bernadine O'Sullivan (ASTI Past President) and then ASTI President, Pat Hurley at the 2009 ASTI Centenary Dinner in the Mansion House, Dublin.



It was with heavy hearts that we learned of the passing of our dear friend and colleague, Jane Craig Elliott, after a brief illness.

Jane, a long serving and highly respected teacher in St Patrick's College, Cavan, was the stalwart of our local ASTI branch. She was a champion for teachers and gave so much of her own time to their cause.

Jane held many roles in the union over the years. For us in Cavan Branch, she was our chairwoman and mentor. At

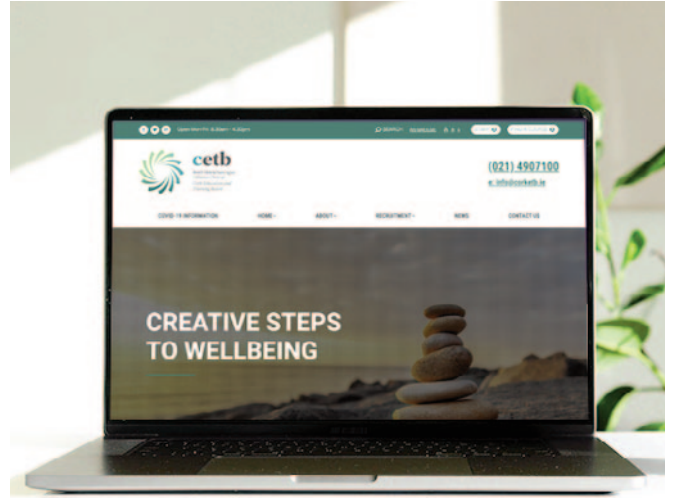
national level she sat on Standing Committee, attended CEC and was a member of the Sickness and Benefit Committee. Jane's past roles were on the Pensions Sub Committee, Education Committee and as ASTI Subject Representative for Religion. None of these jobs were undertaken for personal gain or recognition. Jane had an innate sense of justice and a belief that if she led, others would follow.

Jane was a woman whose impeccable style and glamour belied her risible spirit. She enjoyed socialising, conversation and debate. She was a fierce and supportive friend and could be depended upon for discretion and wisdom. There are many of us at national and local level who will miss her greatly.

She was a wife and a mother, and those of us who knew her well understood the great love and affection she had for her family. To Simon, Katie and Jack we extend our heartfelt condolences. Your wife and mother spoke often, and highly, of you all. We cannot fathom the grief you feel. We are keeping you in our thoughts and prayers.

Cavan Branch
Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam.

CREATIVE STEPS TO WELLBEING



Cork Education and Training Board (ETB) has launched its new online programme, Creative Steps to Wellbeing. Creative Steps to Wellbeing is a selection of videos devised and compiled by Cork ETB to help us all during the pandemic. Topics covered include creative mindfulness, healthy home cooking, finding balance, creativity for calm, and music for the soul.

Videos can be viewed at
www.corketb.ie/creative-steps-to-well-being/.

SALAM IRELAND – RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS WANTED

The Study of Adolescent Lives after Migration (SALaM) Ireland would like to hear from anyone who works with young migrants (aged 13-18 years), including Arabic-speaking groups. They are also interested in speaking to community and religious organisations who have strong links with Arabic-speaking families within their own communities.

SALaM Ireland is being led by Maynooth University in partnership with Washington University in St. Louis (USA) and Qatar Foundation International (QFI). The study will explore the mental health and psychosocial well-being of adolescent students (aged 13-18 years) from conflict-affected countries, including, in particular, those from Arabic-speaking countries. The research questions of the study are:

- what are the supports available to students in schools and within the wider community?; and,
- what kinds of supports are needed to help students as they adjust to life in their new host country?

If you are interested in becoming involved please contact Yvonne Leckey, Project Manager, at Yvonne.Leckey@mu.ie or on 087-698 1922.
 For further information, please see www.cmhcr.eu/salam and www.qfi.org/opportunities/salama-study.

EI LAUNCHES A CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION CAMPAIGN



Education International (EI) is launching a flagship campaign calling for governments to urgently prioritise the provision of quality climate change education for all. The campaign will be launched on April 21 ahead of the Leaders' Climate Summit hosted by the US on Earth Day (April 22). Educators will call for ambitious climate change education commitments to be made by world leaders, with the campaign running until the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in November. Stay tuned for more information from EI in order to take part in upcoming consultations on EI's policy demands. The campaign launch event on April 21, Teach for the Planet: the Global Education Summit, will feature prominent activists from every continent, compelling live panels, interactive features and powerful stories about educators and unions making a difference around the globe. From science education in the face of fake news, to why we need transformative climate education now, the event will inform, inspire, and compel to action.

Because teachers are crucial for the provision of universal quality climate change education, EI has teamed up with UNESCO to find out directly from teachers about their preparedness to teach climate change education (as well as education on sustainable consumption and production, human rights including gender equality, and cultural diversity and tolerance). The results of the survey will help EI to place the teacher perspective at the centre of the conversation about climate change education and will be an important part of EI's campaign.

Complete the survey here: <https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90310926/EI-UNESCO-teacher-survey>.

GOAL GLOBAL CITIZEN'S JOURNEY

GOAL has launched The Global Citizen's Journey, a resource for Global Citizenship Education, suitable for 14-18 year olds.

The Global Citizen's Journey is a downloadable booklet of activities designed to be facilitated both on and offline. It has been developed and tested by the participants in the GOAL Global Youth Programme, a programme that brought young people together from across Ireland and Africa for six months. The resource has many activities that develop critical thinking skills for exploring the realities and complexities of our interconnected world and recognising the imperative for active solidarity at local and global levels.

Register to take part through the link at: www.goalglobal.ie/youth.

DECADE OF CENTENARIES – MACHNAMH 100

Ireland is currently marking a 'Decade of Centenaries', commemorating some of the pivotal events of the 1912-1922 period, such as the 1916 Easter Rising, the War of Independence, the Treaty negotiations, the Civil War, and Partition. The next event in the programme of commemorations is the hosting by President Higgins of the second of his high-level seminars on the commemorations themselves, called 'Machnamh 100'.

The third seminar in this series will take place in May 2021 and is called 'Recovering Imagined Futures'. It will explore hope, class and gender in the Irish independence struggle and its historiography under the following headings:

- Labour, land and longing
- Freedom is personal – women, participation and purpose, and
- Concluding reflections: as the parliament of Northern Ireland meets (June 1921) and the military truce (July 1921) opens the way for settlement talks between Britain and Dáil representatives, what possible futures beckon?

The principal address at this seminar will be given by Dr Margaret O'Callaghan (Queen's University Belfast), and respondents will be Dr Caitríona Clear (NUI Galway), Prof. Linda Connolly (NUI Maynooth), Ms Catríona Crowe, archivist, and Dr John Cunningham (NUI Galway). The seminar will be broadcast on the RTÉ Player and teachers are welcome to register for the seminar or to livestream it to classes.

For more details and to register for the seminar visit www.president.ie/en/news/article/machnamh-100-president-of-irelands-centenary-reflections.

ARTIST INTERVIEW SERIES FOR SCHOOLS

The Dock Arts Centre in Carrick-on-Shannon and The Lab Gallery in Dublin have worked together to produce a free online resource for teachers and arts educators in secondary schools.

In a series of short video interviews, 11 contemporary Irish artists who are both established and emerging in their careers reveal their reasons for making art. They describe the methods they use to make their work, but most importantly, reveal what it means to them to be an artist and how they transform their desire to create and communicate into the work they produce.

The artists are: Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Eve O'Callaghan, Jamie Cross, Ellen Duffy, Kate Murphy, Atoosa Pour Hosseini, Gemma Browne, Ann Maria Healy, Austin Ivers, Louise Manifold and Jackie McKenna.

The video series is a starting point to mediate conversations with young people about their own creativity, ideas and inspirations, the videos may also be used as an inspiration for teachers and educators to devise workshop and other practical activities for their classes.

For further information go to: www.thedock.ie/learning-projects/speaking-of-which.

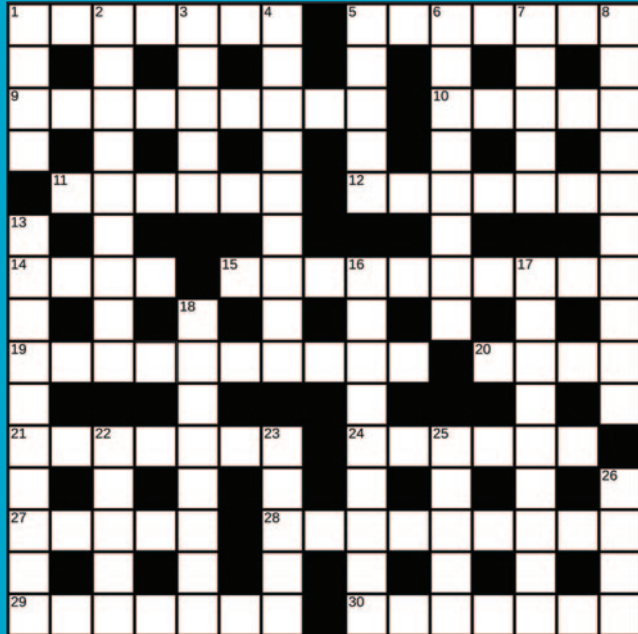


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ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 2102

The winner will receive €250 in One4All vouchers.

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



Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: ASTIR Crossword No. 2102,
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, April 9, 2021.

LEIDEANNA TRASNA

1. Uirlis an sceimhlitheora, go minic (7)
5. Sláintíúil (7)
9. Ar féidir a chur I gcrích gan stró (9)
10. Píosáí scríbhneoireachta I gcostais tithíochta (5)
11. An t-oileán is mó sa tSeapáin (6)
12. Licéar Iodálach (7)
14. Baldwin, aisteoir Meiriceánach (4)
15. Breacadh an lae (10)
19. Toradh ar iniúchadh oifigiúil (10)
20. Leaba thanaí (4)
21. Rógair, bligeard (7)
24. Béic ó thase réadúil? (6)
27. Leabhar le J.B. Keane: Dan Pheaidí (5)
28. Páirt de ghuthán nó duine a thógann seilbh ar ghnó (9)
29. Bád seoil a luaitear le Conamara (7)
30. Baile san Eilbhéis ina mbíonn féile scannán gach Lúnasa (7)

LEIDEANNA SÍOS

1. Buailtear le chéile iad mar chomhartha ómóis (4)
2. An réaltra is gaire do Bhealach na Bó Finne (9)
3. Bíonn an ghaoth seo tais, de réir an tseanfhocail (5)
4. Toulouse príomhchathair an réigiúin seo (9)
5. Saineolaí Éireannach ar phóstaí (5)
6. Brónach, uafásach, ainnis (8)
7. Sean (5)
8. Ag baint le tír fé leith (10)
13. Ar an bpointe, ar an toirt (10)
16. Gníomhaíocht a fheictear ar an 12 Iúil (9)
17. Bíonn an ceoltóir seo páirteach i 16 síos (9)
18. Little Bo Peep, mar shampla (8)
22. Leithinis in aice leis an Meánmhuir (5)
23. Galar meisciúil? (5)
25. Rí a scrios an portach seo? (5)
26. Scannán ó 2012 le Ben Affleck mar stiúrthóir agus príomhaisteoir (4)

Solution to ASTIR Crossword No. 2101

Across	Down
1. Head over heels	2. Enrolment
10. Liner	3. DOS
11. Serbo-Croat	4. Vertebra
13. Idyllic	5. Roost
15. Extremely	6. Earnest
16. Halve	7. Lease
17. Acrobat	8. Sleight of hand
19. Foo	9. Encyclical
20. Oscitate	12. <i>Eye of the Tiger</i>
21. Elephant	14. Charter
24. HAL	18. Bolster
25. Current	19. Franchiser
26. Recce	22. Parasitic
27. <i>Nashville</i>	23. Feverish
30. Rossini	25. Caveman
31. Clementine	28. Salsa
33. There	29. Linen
34. Pain in the neck	32. Eon

Did you miss?

ASTI membership is growing 11

Pensions advice 20

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 2101: John O'Flynn, Salesian Secondary College, Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick. Limerick South Branch.



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Details at: <https://www.tcd.ie/Education/programmes/masters/>

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Details at: <https://www.tcd.ie/Education/programmes/pme/>

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Details at: <https://www.tcd.ie/Education/programmes/doctoral/d-ed/>

Ph.D.

Students select an area of enquiry and work under the supervision of designated supervisors to demonstrate a range of high-level learning outcomes and skills. Students can develop knowledge and skills in research methods, communication, leadership, innovation and career management. Programme involves completion of taught modules and a thesis.

Details at: <https://www.tcd.ie/Education/programmes/doctoral/structured-phd/>

Application dates vary by programme. Check website for details.

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Water damage*



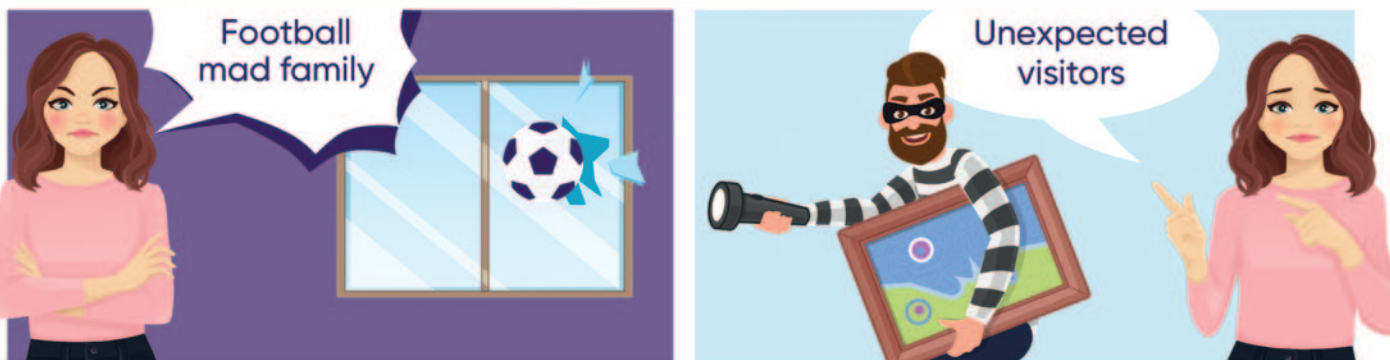
Overheated

Unfavourable weather



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