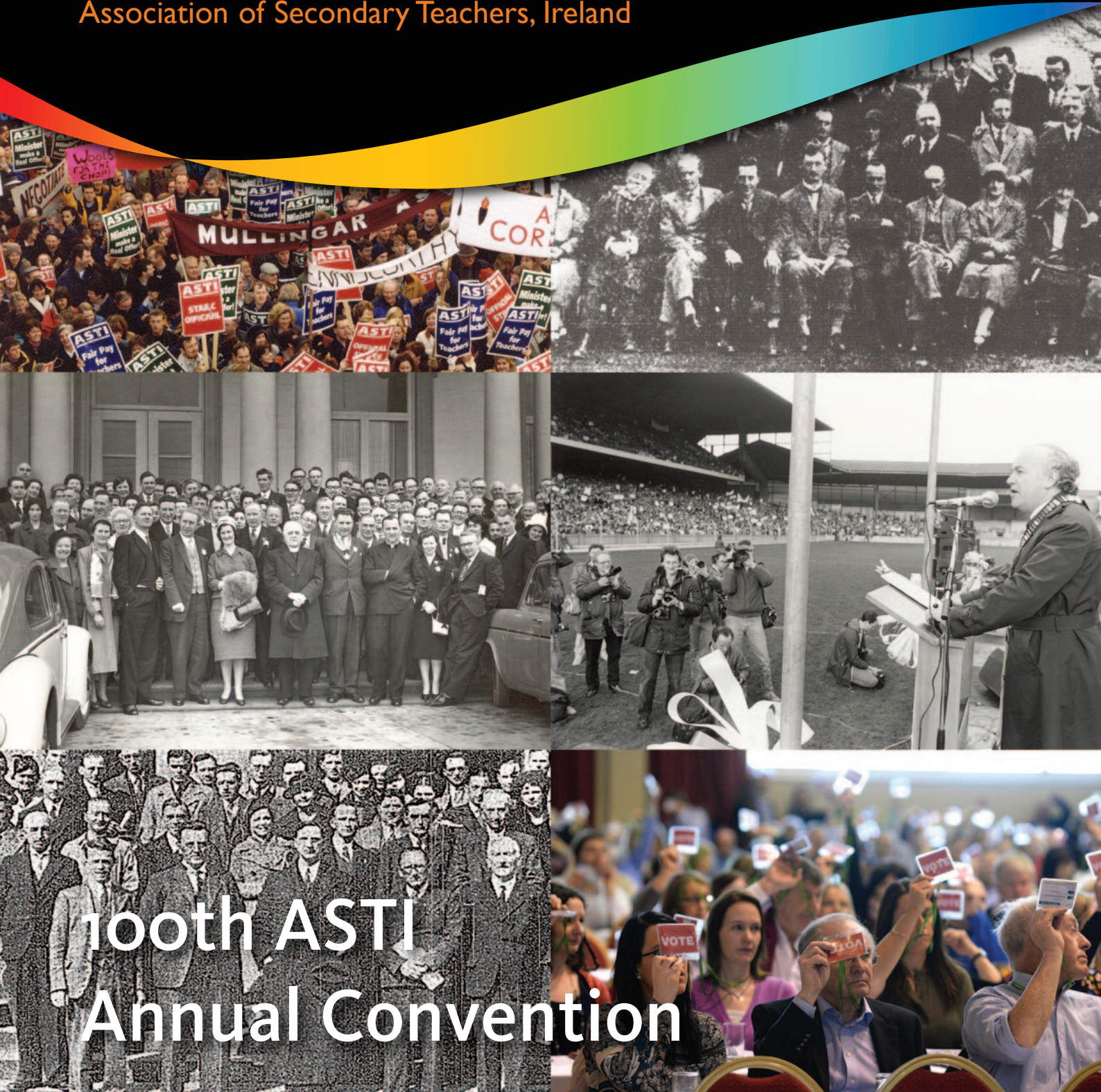


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Framework for Junior Cycle –
ASTI survey results

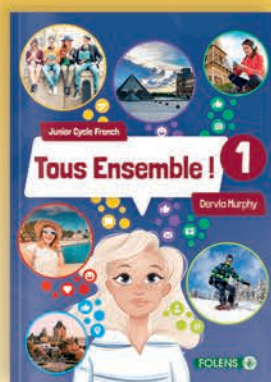
Are Zoom branch meetings
here to stay?

The Thomas MacDonagh
Museum

Our NEW Post Primary Programmes for 2022

Junior Cycle

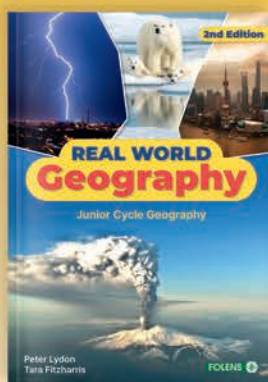
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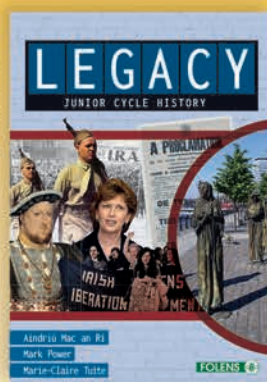
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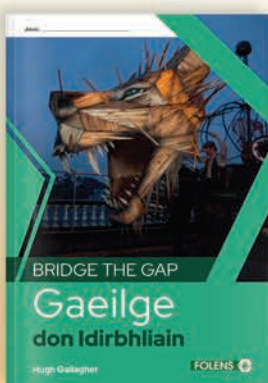
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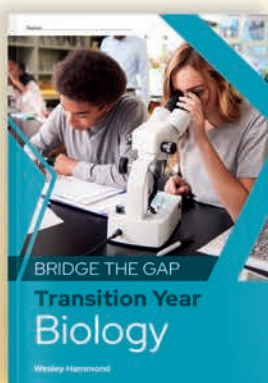
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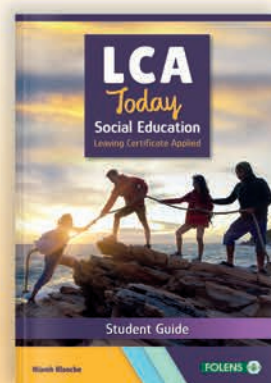
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Editorial: Ann-Marie Hardiman, Paul O'Grady and Colm Quinn
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Advertising: Paul O'Grady

ASTI
Thomas MacDonagh House,
Winetavern Street,
Dublin 8,
Do8 PgV6
Tel: 01-604 0160 Fax: 01-897 2760
astir@asti.ie

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Time to re-ignite pre-pandemic campaigns

As we emerge from pandemic restrictions I look forward to the first in-person ASTI Convention in two years. It is also the 100th ASTI Annual Convention, a timely reminder of our proud history fighting for decent working conditions and improvements in education opportunities for young people. Through thick and thin we have always been stronger together.

The ASTI played a pivotal role in advancing the challenges faced by teachers and schools during the darkest days of the pandemic. Our successes included: vastly improved Covid mitigation measures in schools; indemnity for teachers in relation to calculated grades; the resumption of the written Leaving Cert exams; and, the creation of public awareness of longstanding safety issues in schools such as substandard buildings, air quality and overcrowding.

The pandemic is by no means over. As I write, case numbers are again on the increase. While vaccination is proving to be robust, people are still getting sick, many vulnerable people remain concerned, and schools, teachers and students continue to experience disruption. In 2020 the ASTI (as part of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Health and Safety Committee) insisted that Lead Worker Representatives (LWRs) be required in the Government protocol for the safe return to work. LWRs played a crucial role in representing teaching staff, and monitoring and reporting safety concerns, as schools re-opened. A significant number of LWRs attended ASTI training and brought new knowledge and expertise on workplace safety back to their schools.

The Health and Safety Authority has found that where workers get involved in their health and safety, workplace safety is improved. As pandemic measures are eased, the ASTI intends to keep a strong focus on health and safety in schools. Clean air (to name just one concern) is not just a pandemic issue. In fact, the Workplace Ventilation Bill is working its way through the Oireachtas and we hope it will soon be enacted. School Health and Safety Representatives, plus teachers who served as Covid-19 LWRs, are invited to attend an online seminar at the end of this month. See www.asti.ie for details.

More than 500 of us will meet in Cork in just a few weeks' time. This provides a perfect opportunity to reignite our key pre-pandemic campaigns. Unequal pay, the worsening of terms and conditions, and under-investment in our schools have not gone away. A recent global report has found that teacher workload increased during school lockdowns and did not reduce when schools re-opened. This is very concerning for a career that is already known for stress and burnout.

Finally, we cannot go back to pre-pandemic levels of staff. At the very least, the additional funding and staffing allocated to schools during the pandemic must become permanent.

If you are not attending Convention this year, please watch out online and in the media for the voice of the classroom teacher.



Eamon Dennehy

ASTI President

ASTI rises to humanitarian challenges

ASTI Standing Committee recently approved payment of a €10,000 donation to the Red Cross, to provide humanitarian support for victims of the conflict in Ukraine. This is the latest on a long list of such donations over many years from the Development Aid Fund operated under the ASTI Rules and Constitution. The fund is used to support charities and NGOs operating in circumstances that include war, natural disasters and developing countries. Donations have provided assistance to Palestinian victims of the conflict in Gaza, victims of wars in Syria and Yemen, victims of tsunami or earthquake, etc. A particular focus for the use of the annual budget prioritises those organisations that are supporting children, education and teachers.

The Development Aid Fund is also used to support the work of Global Schoolroom on a multi-annual basis. Many ASTI members have participated in Global Schoolroom programmes that provide the opportunity for Irish teachers to contribute to teacher education in India, Ghana and elsewhere.

It is clear that the war in Ukraine will present challenges for the Irish school system on a scale that we have never seen before. The possibility of tens of thousands of refugee children requiring education in our schools in the coming period is very real. The ASTI is participating in a stakeholder group that has been convened to plan for such a scenario. The impacts on an already heavily oversubscribed and underfunded system will be immense. Addressing language barriers, the need for education welfare services, critical incidents and wider supports that will need to be customised; these are just a few of the many resources that will be necessary to ensure that the comprehensive response that everyone in the education system would hope we can achieve will happen. Whatever other failings might emerge, it will not be for the absence of goodwill that school communities will be found wanting.

Building Momentum Agreement

The rapid growth of inflation has substantially undermined the living standards of all workers, including teachers. It must be urgently addressed. Following advocacy by the ASTI, the ICTU Public Services Committee recently resolved to seek to activate the review clause in the Building Momentum Agreement, which was designed to deal with changed circumstances that challenge the underlying assumptions on which the Agreement was based. It is unacceptable at a time when we are being told that the economy is performing extraordinarily well, notwithstanding the negative effects of the pandemic, that workers' living standards are being eroded. In addition, delays by Government departments in compiling and providing full and accurate information to the ASTI have led to the Sectoral Bargaining element of the Agreement not being concluded at the time of writing. This has added to the financial pain that members are enduring and must be addressed.



Kieran Christie

ASTI General Secretary

Children's Rights Alliance Report Card 2022

The lessons learned from the pandemic to help improve the lives of children and young people must be a key focus for Government in 2022, according to the Children's Rights Alliance in its Report Card 2022. The Report Card grades the Government on its progress towards keeping the promises to children and young people made in the Programme for Government commitments.

The Report Card series began in 2009 and documents Ireland's treatment – both good and bad – of its children. An independent panel of experts, chaired by former Supreme Court Judge Catherine McGuinness, grades the Government's performance.

Two 'E' grades were awarded – the lowest in Report Card 2022. The first of these is given for the increase in the number of children and their families experiencing homelessness. There were nearly 300 more children and young people in emergency accommodation at the end of the 2021 compared to the beginning of that year. In December 2021, there were 1,077 families and 2,451 children experiencing homelessness; by the end of 2021, almost one in four children living in emergency accommodation in Dublin had been there for more than two years.

The second 'E' grade was awarded for mental health, particularly for the continued practice of admitting children to adult psychiatric units. The report focuses on the Government commitment to end the admission of children into adult psychiatric facilities. While the numbers admitted to such units in 2021 fell, there is a growing number

of children and young people waiting for a first appointment with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Furthermore, the inclusion of the admission of children into adult inpatient facilities in the General Scheme of the Mental Health (Amendment) Bill 2021 puts this on a statutory footing and is a retrograde step according to the Children's Rights Alliance.

There were some improvements, with a 'B' grade awarded on the commitment to create new pathways for long-term undocumented people and their children. There were three 'B-' grades for work to end the Direct Provision system, for reform of the childcare system, and for the long-awaited guidelines on reduced timetables. Meanwhile, the highest grade was awarded for the commencement of the Harassment and Harmful Communications Act – an 'A' grade. However, online safety secured a 'C-', as the draft legislation was only published in January 2022.

A slew of 'D' grades was attained in five out of the 16 areas. This shows a lack of progress in establishing a new Childcare Agency, failure to continue the free school books pilot, and for not yet completing the evaluation of the Traveller and Roma education inclusion pilot. Other unfulfilled promises include a clear lack of progress on introducing a Public Health Obesity Act or developing an updated National Youth Homelessness Strategy.

To read the full report, visit:
<https://www.childrensrights.ie/content/report-card-2022>

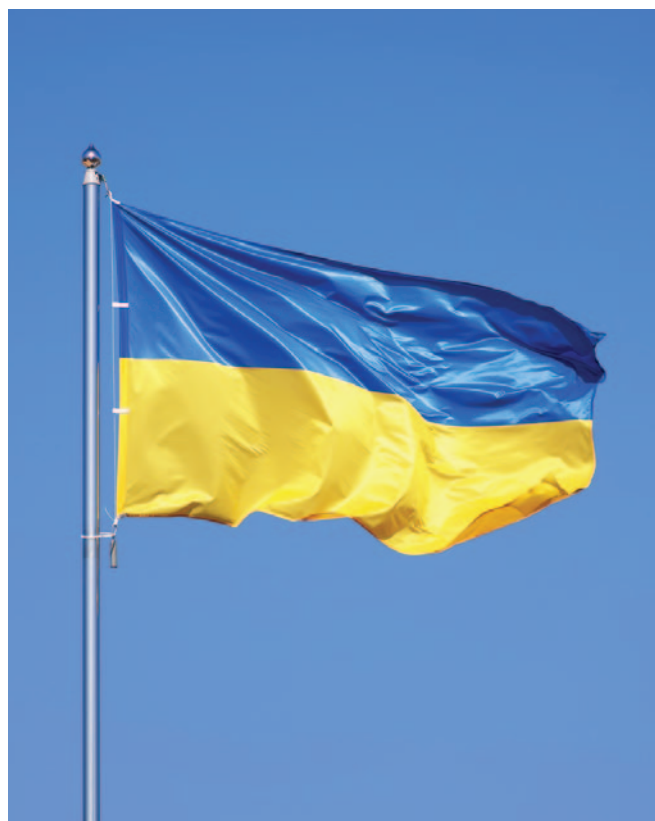
ASTI donation to Ukraine Appeal

The ASTI has made a €10,000 donation to the Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal. ASTI Standing Committee approved the payment to provide humanitarian support to those affected by the conflict in Ukraine.

Red Cross teams are on the ground in Ukraine and will continue their work to repair vital infrastructure, support health facilities, and help families with life-saving food and hygiene items. The ASTI's donation, made on behalf of its members, will help those affected get food, medicine, shelter and water and help those displaced by the conflict.

This payment will be made from the ASTI Development Aid Fund, which supports a number of charities and NGOs. A percentage of the subscription rates paid by members is allocated to the Development Aid Fund each year. The Development Aid budget is in the region of €50,000 per annum.

For more information on the Irish Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal see <https://donate.redcross.ie/>



New publication to mark ASTI's 100th Annual Convention

ASTI Annual Convention 2022 will not only be the first in-person Convention in three years, it will also be the ASTI's 100th Annual Convention. The ASTI will mark this historic occasion by publishing a short history of ASTI Conventions, with a focus on key political moments and leading ASTI Presidents, written by labour historian Dr John Cunningham. In *Unlikely Radicals*, his acclaimed history of the

ASTI, released in 2009 to mark the centenary of the ASTI's foundation, Dr Cunningham noted the marked importance of Annual Convention at all levels of the union: "Its prominence on branch agendas shows that members believed that Convention provided them with a real opportunity to have their views on conditions and on educational matters reflected in ASTI policy".

The new publication will be made available to all Convention delegates and to the wider membership. Dr Cunningham will also deliver an address to Convention on Tuesday afternoon, in which he will highlight some momentous Conventions and decisions.

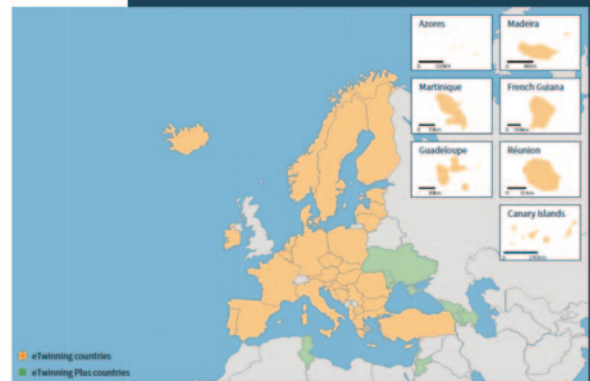
Seeking feedback on breastfeeding breaks

In 2019, the ASTI secured agreement on the provision of breastfeeding breaks for teachers, the arrangements for which are outlined in Department of Education Circular 54/2019. The ASTI is interested in establishing how these arrangements are working for teachers. If you are availing of these provisions, we would like to hear from you. Are they working well or have there been problems? If so, what is the nature of these problems? You can let us know by emailing Danielle Cullen at DCullen@asti.ie



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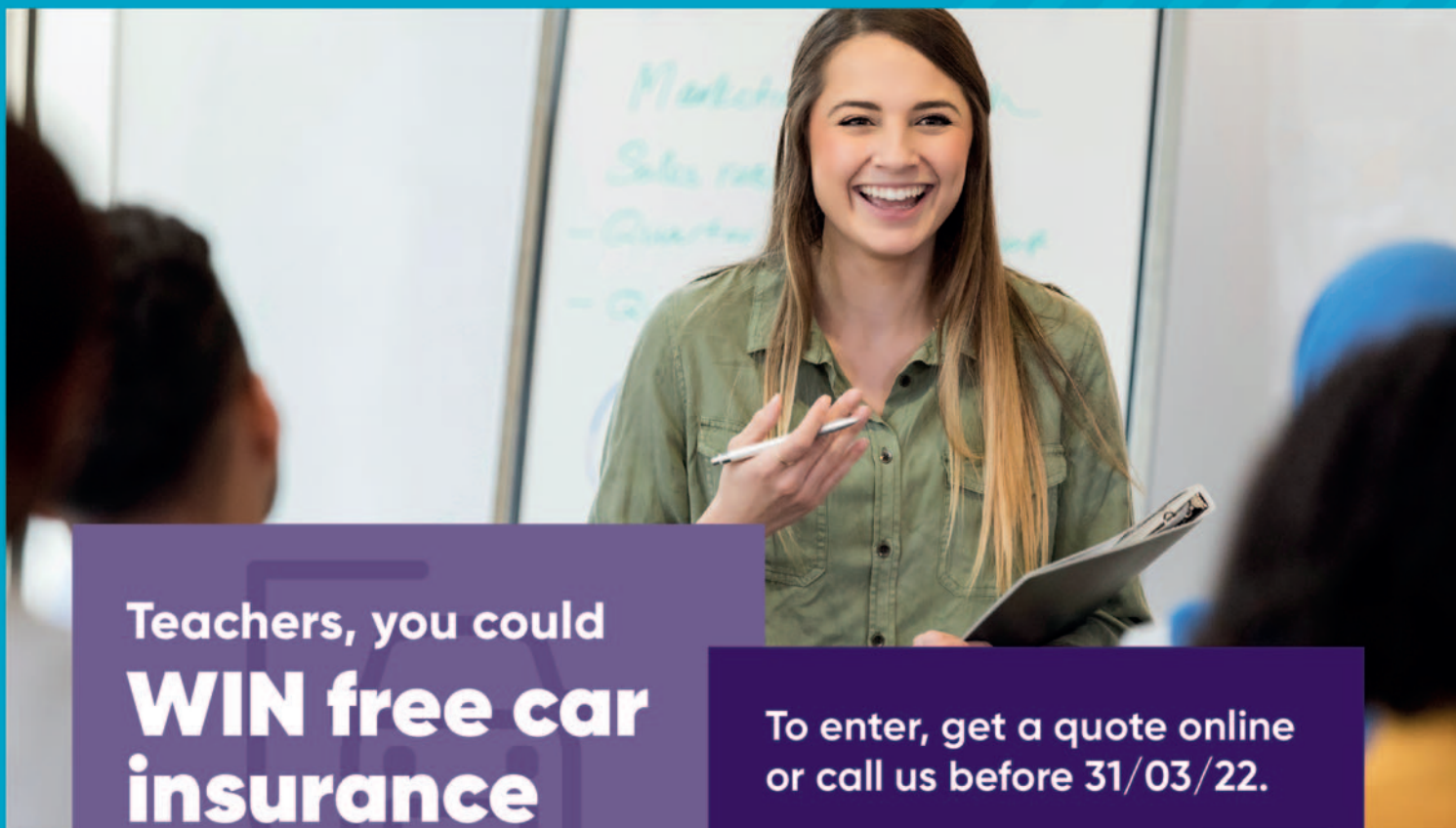


eTwinning is a free online platform linking a community of almost one million teachers across Europe. It supports primary and post-primary schools to find partners and work on joint projects in any curricular area, using Information and Communication Technology. The latest Digital Strategy for Schools Action Plan names eTwinning as a key platform "to showcase school projects and to foster collaboration between schools" for Irish teachers.

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17972 ASTI AD FEB 02-22

ASTI submission on STEM Implementation Plan

In January, the ASTI made a submission to the Department of Education as part of the consultation on the new Implementation Plan 2022-2026, to implement the STEM Education Policy Statement.

The ASTI had previously engaged in the consultation process for the development of STEM education policy. In the most recent submission, the ASTI provided some overall observations on education policy implementation, and on specific actions under the four pillars identified in the consultation process.

The need for sustained investment and collaboration with the teaching profession in order to implement STEM education policy was a key point made in the submission. It emphasised the importance of teachers in the change process, as the professionals who are charged with delivering on national policy goals and objectives, and stated that teachers' unique experiences and expertise must hold weight in the policy process. The need for additional investment in schools, and in the teaching profession, was also highlighted in the submission.

The submission also identified several key issues that are impacting on teachers' response to curriculum change, demands for innovation and upskilling. These include workload, work intensification, lack of professional time, unequal pay, poorly resourced and overcrowded schools, and lack of attention in education policy to teachers' well-being.

To read the full submission, visit: <https://www.asti.ie/news-campaigns/research/>

New public holiday from 2022

Following representations by the ASTI, the Department of Education has clarified arrangements for the new public holiday for 2022 onwards. A public holiday is to be held on March 18, 2022, in recognition of the efforts of the general public and Ireland's frontline workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, and in remembrance of people who lost their lives due to the pandemic.

In addition, the Government has also decided that there will be a new annual public holiday from 2023 in celebration of Imbolc/St Brigid's day, which will be the first Monday in every February, except where the first day of February happens to fall on a Friday, in which case that day will be a public holiday. The first such public holiday will be Monday, February 6, 2023. The school year will reduce from 183 to 182 days for primary schools and 167 to 166 days for post-primary schools. This will take effect for the current school year 2021/22. This additional bank holiday will not impact on the standardised breaks set out in circular 0005/2020.

See Circular 0008/2022 New Public Holiday from 2022 for more information.

Pink and Blue Power update



Pictured at the launch of the 2022 Pink and Blue Power programme were (from left): Miriam Duggan (ASTI Vice President), Eamon Dennehy (ASTI President), and Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary).

This year, almost 5,000 eligible* members of the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme will have the opportunity to book an assessment as part of the potentially lifesaving 'Pink and Blue Power' breast and prostate health assessment and education programme.

Leinster invites sent

Invites for the first phase of the programme were sent by Cornmarket** to members across Leinster at the end of February. The deadline to book was March 15, 2022.

Munster, Connacht and Ulster

Invites to Munster, Connacht and Ulster will be posted at the end of March 2022.

Book early

The programme offers an appointment for a once-off clinical breast or prostate assessment. If further investigation is required (e.g., mammogram, ultrasound, MRI, biopsy), a referral to a participating private hospital will be arranged. If you get an invite, we strongly encourage you to attend before the booking deadline.

Once the programme reaches clinical capacity, no new appointments will be made available, so keep an eye out for your invite and book early to avoid disappointment.

One in seven men are diagnosed with prostate cancer, and one in nine women with breast cancer, in Ireland.*** Awareness and early detection save lives.

For more information, visit: cornmarket.ie/pink-blue-power

*Female members aged 30 to 49 and male members aged 40 to 65 when invites are issued.

**Cornmarket facilitates the programme on behalf of the Scheme underwriter.

***Breast Cancer Ireland and the Irish Cancer Society, 2022.

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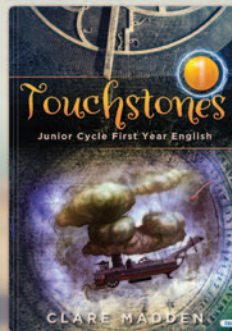
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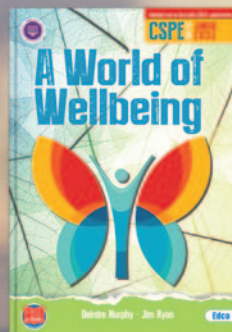
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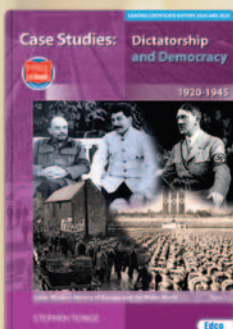


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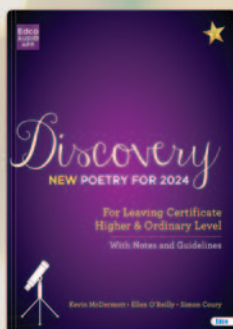


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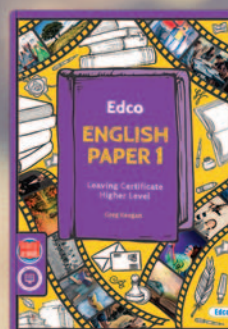
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GENDER, VIOLENCE AND WORK

Violence against women and breaking the gender bias were among the themes for International Women's Day 2022.



ICTU General Secretary Patricia King addressing the National Women's Council of Ireland rally on March 5. (Photo: Shauneen Armstrong.)



At the National Women's Council of Ireland rally #NoWomanLeftBehind in March, ASTI activist Jason Poole spoke about domestic violence and his sister Jennifer Poole, whose life was taken last year.

A recent EU-wide survey found that one in three women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at least once since the age of 15, and half have been sexually harassed. In Ireland, domestic violence has increased since 2020.*

The ASTI attended the National Women's Council rally #NoWomanLeftBehind held outside Dáil Éireann on March 5. The key demands of the rally were:

- a zero-tolerance culture to end men's violence against women
- representation for all women in all their diversity in all spaces where decisions are made affecting women's lives
- access to quality public services, including childcare, housing, and a decent income on which all women can live, and
- a healthcare system that has women at its centre – including access to abortion, ownership of the National Maternity Hospital, and free contraception.

Representing the trade union movement, Patricia King, General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) told the rally that for every €1 earned by a man, a woman earns 86 cent. Women's access to work and income is frustrated due to a disproportionate burden of caring responsibilities and because of the lack of affordable childcare in Ireland. Women are grossly underrepresented in nearly all spheres of influence, and Ms King said: "Women account for just under 23% of Oireachtas members and just under 24% at local authority level. When we look at our business community, 87% of our chief executive officers are male".



Pictured at the National Women's Council of Ireland rally were: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), and Eamon Dennehy (ASTI President).

The rally was also addressed by ASTI member Jason Poole, who spoke about domestic violence and his late sister Jennifer Poole, whose life was taken in 2021. Jason said that 244 women have been murdered in Ireland since 1996. He called for stronger legislation to address women's safety.

The ASTI also marked International Women's Day on March 8. A social media awareness campaign asked schools holding events on the day to post a message or photo on social media with the hashtag #BreakTheBias.

Gender-based violence and the workplace: webinar

The ICTU held a webinar on March 7 on domestic abuse, sexual harassment and the workplace. Marieke Koning from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) spoke about ILO Convention 190, which calls on employers to address discrimination and violence against women and their impact on women as employees. Mandy La Combre and Eileen Gorman from the Irish Financial Services Union (FSU) spoke about how they worked with Danske Bank to introduce a domestic abuse policy in the company.

Further information:

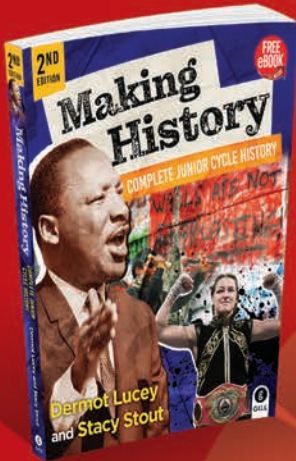
Watch the ICTU's International Women's Day webinar at: <https://www.ictu.ie/blog/international-womens-day-webinar>

The International Labour Organisation Convention 190 on gender-based violence and work is available from: <https://www.ituc-csi.org/GBV>

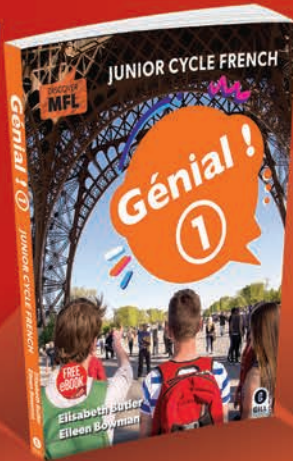
*Source: 'Gender-based Violence in Ireland'. Available from: <https://publicpolicy.ie/papers/gender-based-violence-in-ireland/>

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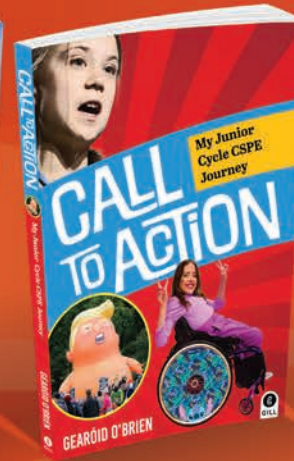
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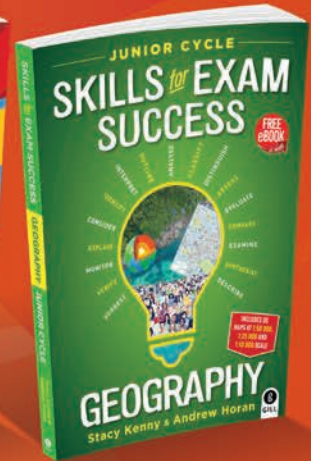
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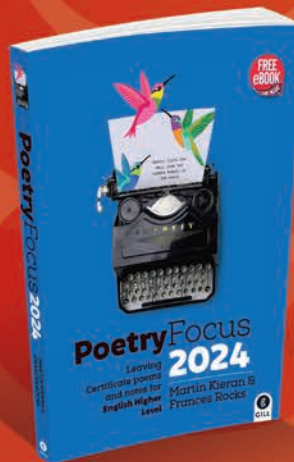


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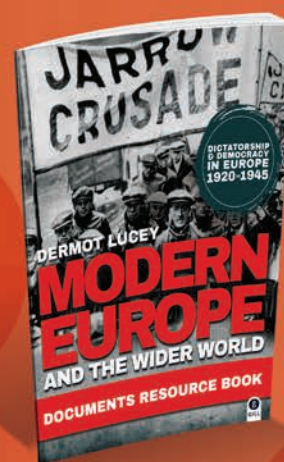
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ENGLISH



HISTORY

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JUNIOR CYCLE SPECIFICATIONS DO NOT SUPPORT PROGRESSION TO SENIOR CYCLE

An ASTI survey reveals that most teachers do not believe that the Framework for Junior Cycle supports progression to Senior Cycle.

The majority of ASTI members who responded to a survey on the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle do not believe subject specifications support progression to Senior Cycle.

The survey found that 78% of respondents disagreed with the statement “Subject specifications support progression to Senior Cycle curriculum” (**Figure 1**). A further 9% said that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Only 13% of respondents agreed with the statement.

Just over one-third of respondents said that the Junior Cycle subject specifications contain an appropriate balance between knowledge and skills. This compares with 40% of respondents who did not believe the balance between knowledge and skills is achieved. A further 25% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

In addition to lack of depth of content knowledge, the introduction of common level papers for non-core subjects, and the new grading model, are widely regarded as having negative implications, according to verbatim comments submitted by teachers as part of the survey. Just over one-third of those who took the survey agreed that specifications provide opportunities for students with special educational needs and for exceptionally able students to engage with the subject, while less than half (48%) believed that specifications provide opportunities to engage for lower-achieving students. Only 21% of teachers agree that the banding of marks for each grade descriptor is appropriate, compared to 53% who disagreed.

CBAs in the classroom

While 59% of teachers who responded said they felt confident in their ability to assess students’ work in classroom-based assessments (CBAs), 80% felt that preparation for CBAs takes up excessive teaching time in their classrooms (**Figure 2**). Just over half (55%) of respondents agreed that participation in Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings supports teacher collaboration in their subject area; 21% disagreed, while 23% neither agreed nor disagreed (**Figure 3**).

Resources

The findings indicate that teachers and schools require significantly increased resources and support for implementing the Framework for Junior Cycle. Only 30% of respondents agreed that the 22 hours of professional time was adequate; 46% disagreed and 24% neither agreed nor disagreed.



More than half (51%) did not believe that the support provided by Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) is adequate; 25% believed it was adequate and 24% neither agreed nor disagreed. However, the most important impediment teachers identified was class size. Large class size adds to workload, constrains the use of active learning methodologies, and presents challenges in terms of differentiating the content so that all students can understand and make progress in the subject area (**Figure 4**).

This research underlines the need for a comprehensive independent review and evaluation of the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle.

ASTI motion on JC Framework

In May 2021, CEC adopted the following motion:

Motion 7

That the ASTI conduct a survey of its members on their experience of implementing the Framework for Junior Cycle and that this survey be developed by a sub-committee of CEC and its findings utilised in enabling the ASTI in planning its response to proposed changes at Senior Cycle level.

The following CEC members were elected to the sub-committee: John Conneely (Clare Branch, proposer of motion and Chair of sub-committee), Pauline Nagle (Clare Branch), Deirdre Mac Donald (Wexford Tony Boland Branch), Seamus Keane (Fingal Branch), and Ciaran Kavanagh (Dublin North East Branch). The sub-committee met on four occasions to conduct its work. Assistant General Secretary/Education & Research Officer Moira Leydon provided the professional support for the work of the sub-committee.

To view additional pie charts, visit <https://www.asti.ie/news-campaigns/research/>

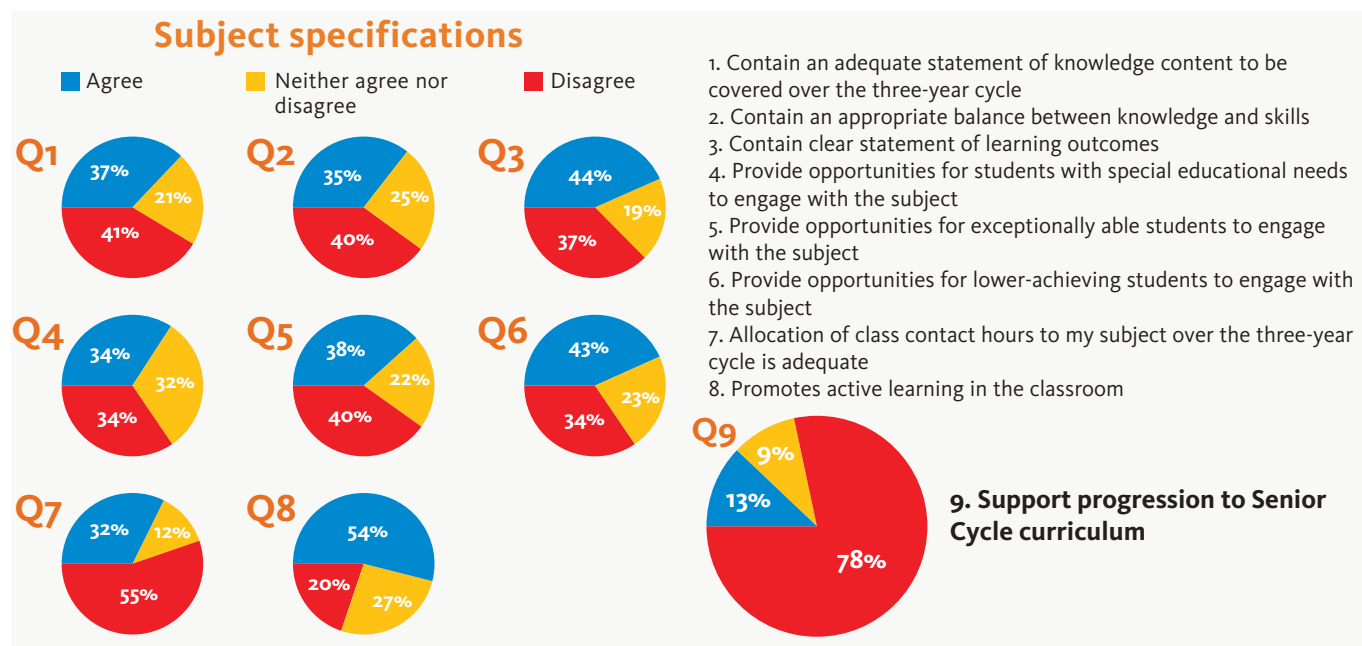


FIGURE 1: Teachers' views on subject specifications for Junior Cycle.

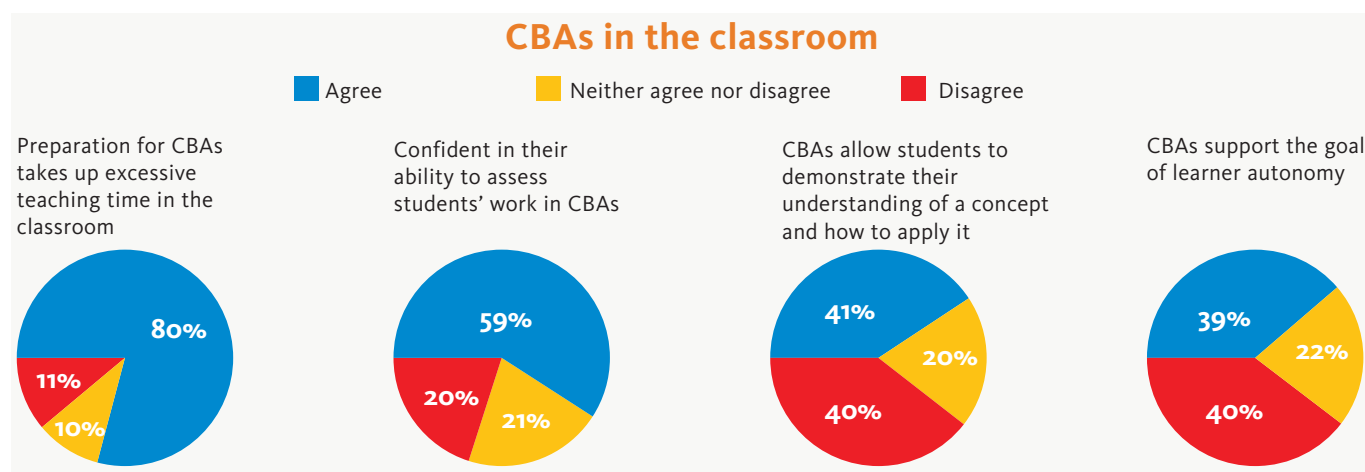


FIGURE 2: Teachers' views on CBAs in the classroom.

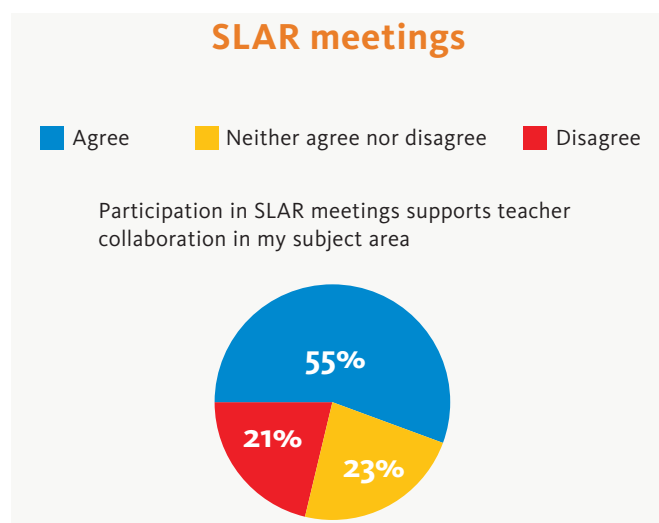


FIGURE 3: SLAR meetings.

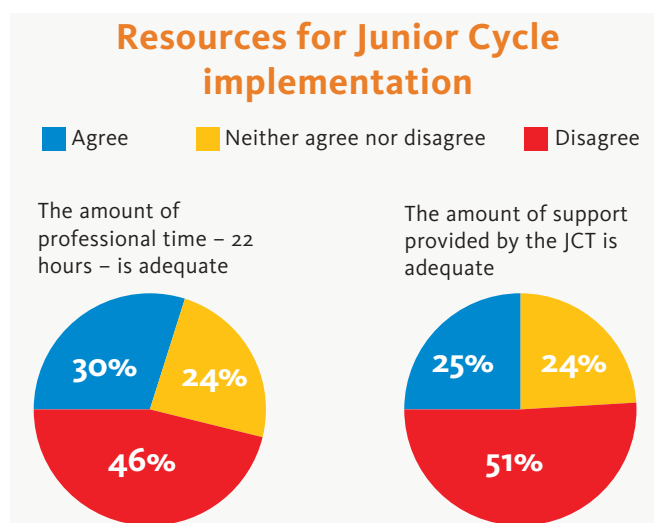


FIGURE 4: Resources for Junior Cycle.



THE STATUS OF TEACHERS – AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

New research has highlighted the profound impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on teachers.

The Covid-19 pandemic had an extreme impact on the working conditions of teachers, according to research by Prof. Greg Thompson for Education International.

The Global Report on the Status of Teachers 2021 is based on a review of the research on teacher status and the findings of a 2020 survey of teacher unions.

Increased workload

Key insights from the pandemic include increased teacher workload during school lockdowns. The report states that this increased workload did not reduce when schools re-opened, signalling a worrying trend for an occupation already associated with high workload, stress and burnout.

Teacher unions are most concerned about teacher workload, teachers' health and well-being, lack of investment in education, and educational inequalities, according to the research.

When asked if teacher workload is manageable, 55% of respondents disagreed. When asked about the impact that policies designed to 'hold teachers to account' were having on workload, over 66% of respondents felt that these were contributing to workload pressures for educational professionals.

Key findings of the research include:

- the majority of teacher unions perceived that the media portrayal of teachers is not positive
- there is ongoing concern regarding a move towards precarious employment for teaching as a profession
- the majority of unions worry about the generational renewal of teachers, as they do not feel that teaching is viewed as an attractive career by young people, that attrition remains too high because of work-related

issues, and that this impacts on the hiring of unqualified teachers

- a concern is that negotiated, collective agreements are reported to have been unilaterally modified or cancelled over the last three years
- the majority of unions report that teachers' working conditions have declined over the last three years, and
- the data suggests that increased workload has a particular impact on the decline in conditions.

The author notes that: "The status of teachers remains a site for struggle for unions as they must work to protect hard-won concessions while also responding to new challenges as governments remain committed to narrow reform agendas".

Positives

While the majority of those surveyed believed that media narratives about teachers are damaging for the status of the profession, many respondents reported a more positive representation of teachers during the pandemic. This was often due to teachers' rapid transition to online teaching and learning (where schools closed) and the recognition of teachers as essential workers (where schools remained open).

In addition, respondents believed that parents' experience of managing online learning at home may have created more awareness of the skills, expertise and energy required to provide learning opportunities.

Gender disparity

An ongoing issue for education systems worldwide concerns the presence of a glass ceiling when it comes to promotion for female education workers (Figure 1).

About the report

The Global Report on the Status of Teachers 2021 commissioned by Education International contains the findings of research carried out by Prof. Greg Thompson, Associate Professor of Education Research at the Queensland University of Technology. According to Prof. Thompson: "There is a common adage in thinking about education promoted by the OECD that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. It is time to recalculate this equation: the quality of an

education system cannot exceed the extent to which it supports, sustains and invests in the status of its teachers".

Education International is a global federation of teacher unions (including the ASTI), which represents over 32 million teachers and education support personnel in 178 countries and territories.

Read the report at: <https://www.ei-ie.org/en/item/25403:the-global-report-on-the-status-of-teachers-2021>

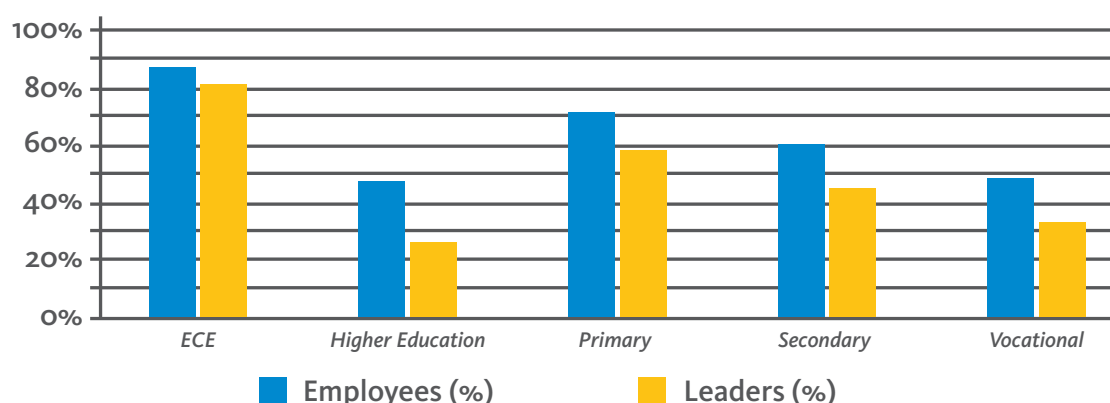


FIGURE 1: Female employees vs female leaders.

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ASTI RESEARCH

The ASTI regularly carries out research to inform its policies and submissions.

The ASTI research department regularly carries out research about matters relating to education and to teachers' working conditions. Research methods used by the ASTI include regular online surveys of members, which are carried out in house, as well as commissioned projects carried out by external researchers and research agencies.

Findings and insights from ASTI research are used to drive campaigns and guide policy decisions. For example, survey data features in ASTI submissions to Government departments, Oireachtas committees, and is used in trade union negotiations. ASTI research is also used extensively in media interviews and other communications.

The Education and Research department is led by Moira Leydon, Assistant General Secretary, who acts as Education and Research Officer and monitors progress in the education area. She is assisted in her work by Administrative Officer Eileen O'Rourke.

Some recent research published by the ASTI includes:

January 2022: Teachers' experience of the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle

This mixed-methods questionnaire was issued to all members for whom the ASTI has an email address – 13,000 in total. A total of 2,981 members responded, representing a high response rate of almost 23%. This survey resulted from a motion passed at the May 2021 meeting of the Central Executive Council, which asked that “the ASTI conduct a survey of its members on their experience of implementing the Framework for Junior Cycle and that this survey be developed by a sub-committee of CEC and its findings utilised in enabling the ASTI in planning its response to proposed changes at Senior Cycle level”. To read more about this survey, see page 12 of this edition of *ASTIR*.

January 2022: Accountability and Regulation in Education: A Better Way – Research review for the ASTI by Dr Caitríona Fitzgerald

In the context of the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019, the ASTI commissioned Dr Caitríona Fitzgerald to carry out a ‘Review of Charter-type Models of Regulation and Accountability’ to locate the charter-type model of school accountability and regulation in a wider conceptual context. The ASTI has submitted two written submissions on the draft legislation, and has given an in-person presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills. This research will further inform the ASTI's representation on the matter. To read more about the report, see page 16 of the January 2022 edition of *ASTIR*.

June 2021: Suirbhé ASTI Dréachtsonraíochtaí na hArdteistiméireachta – Teanga 1 agus Teanga 2

This online survey of teachers of Irish asked for their views on the draft specifications for Leaving Certificate Irish Language 1 and Irish Language 2. Over 300 teachers responded to the survey. These responses helped to inform ASTI representations to the National Council for Curriculum and



Assessment (NCCA) regarding the draft specifications.

May 2021: ASTI survey on remote teaching

Over 3,000 ASTI members responded to this online questionnaire, asking members about their experiences of remote teaching in the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic. This allowed the ASTI to understand the difficulties faced by teachers in adapting to the sudden introduction of remote teaching in March 2020.

March 2021: ASTI survey – Rebuilding our School Communities: Teachers' Priorities

An independent research agency, Red C, was commissioned by the ASTI to carry out this online questionnaire to gather data on teachers' priorities for building resilient school communities in the post-pandemic period. Topics included how best to support the work of classroom teachers, student and teacher well-being, ICT integration, effective school leadership, and the physical environment.

March 2021: Survey results re: examinations 2021

This online questionnaire asked members for their views on the 'hybrid' approach to Leaving Certificate 2021, in which students could choose to sit exams or receive accredited grades. Nearly 5,000 members responded to this survey.

January 2021: Survey of members on reopening of schools

This online survey asked members about the reopening of schools in January 2021. Over 4,000 members responded, giving the ASTI important information about their concerns around returning to school given the Covid-19 pandemic.

To read ASTI research and surveys, visit
<https://www.asti.ie/news-campaigns/research/>



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Louis O'Flaherty, ASTI President, welcomes a 20,000-strong crowd of teachers to Croke Park on December 5, 1985. The mass rally made its way from Croke Park to Government Buildings. (Photo by Derek Spiers.)



Delegates voting at ASTI Convention 2017, Killarney.

100TH ASTI ANNUAL CONVENTION

The 2022 ASTI Annual Convention will be the 100th Convention in the union's history.

This Easter, the ASTI will host its 100th Annual Convention. The first Annual Convention was held in 1923, 14 years after the union was established.

The ASTI was founded in 1909 when a group of teachers at St Colman's College, Fermoy, decided to form an association for secondary teachers, similar to the INTO (established in 1868). The aim was to pursue secondary teachers' concerns in a unified and organised manner. Among the key drivers were teachers PJ Kennedy, Thomas MacDonagh, Michael O'Shea, and Cormac Ó Cadhlaigh.

Within two years of its formal establishment the ASTI was acknowledged as an influential organisation in Irish life. An editorial in the *Daily Independent* commented: "Only quite recently have the secondary teachers organised themselves and formulated a programme, but they have already abundant evidence that the power of combination, which has serviced the national teachers so well, will not have less virtue when wielded by them". The ASTI had its first Annual General Meeting in 1910. Its final AGM was held in January 1923, at which it was decided that an Annual Delegate Convention would take place each Easter, which would be responsible for directing ASTI policy.

First ASTI Annual Convention

Extract from: *The ASTI and Post-Primary Education in Ireland 1909-1984* by John Coolahan

The ASTI Annual General Meeting on January 5, 1923, adopted new rules

for the ASTI, proposed by the Dublin Branch. These were to have significant long-term effects.

Among the most important was the abolition of annual general meetings and their replacement by annual delegation conventions, to be held at Easter. The expenses of branch delegates would be borne by the branches. Convention programmes were to be issued to branches and delegates at least three weeks before Easter. The first such Convention took place at Easter 1923. The CEC was now set at 11 members. Branches would nominate candidates; these names would be circulated by the General Secretary with voting papers and the voting would take place by proportional representation. Scrutineers were appointed in advance and the ballot papers were to be counted in Head Office, well in advance of the Convention. The CEC itself would choose its officers at its first meeting. The new CEC would come into office on the last day of the Convention and hold the first of its minimum of five meetings within a week. Branch organisers with defined functions were to be established at branch level.

A key feature of the Convention framework was, in the words of the General Secretary, "to bring together for directive and deliberative purposes a body of members which could claim to represent the individual functional units and to reflect their views, especially on the fundamental questions of principle and policy". Expressing satisfaction with the first Convention, the Secretary proved prophetic in his comment: "Our unhesitating conclusion is that the Convention of ASTI has come to stay".

History nuggets

- The four stated aims of the ASTI in 1909 were to secure:
 - a system of secondary teacher registration
 - an adequate salary scale
 - reasonable security of tenure, and
 - a pension scheme.
- The initial ASTI annual subscription fee was 10 shillings and this rose to 21 shillings in 1919 and to 50 shillings in 1920.
- A Ladies Branch was established in November 1911. The branch was active until 1920 when it was absorbed into the general restructuring of the ASTI. Author John Coolahan stated: “A notable feature of the early years of the ASTI had been the important role played by women. This tended to decrease some years after their absorption as ordinary members”.
- ASTI members took strike action for the first time in 1920. Post-war cost of living increases caused further hardship for Ireland’s already low-paid secondary teachers. Emigration to England where teachers’ salaries were far more attractive had resulted in a shortage of teachers. Strike action included a general strike and additional strike days in Cork and Limerick. The outcome of the strike was a salary increase of £75, just £5 short of the ASTI’s pay claim for an £80 increase.
- The first female President was Miss A. J. Mulligan, who held office in 1926.
- The Convention of 1926 was held in Cork – the first Convention to be held outside Dublin. Also, for the first time, the Convention programme was not confined to ASTI business and included public sessions at which invited speakers delivered lectures on educational themes.
- The first ASTI Diary was published in 1936.



The 1938 Annual Convention in University College Dublin. Front row (from left): Liam Glynn, ((briefly) General Secretary), T.P. Waller (Vice-president), An Taoiseach Éamon de Valera (then Chancellor of the National University of Ireland), F. Kennedy (ASTI President), Dr D.J. Coffey (President of UCD), and Prof. P. Larkin. Reproduced from the Irish Independent, April 21, 1938.



Delegates gather in Bray for ASTI Convention 1960.



Delegates at Annual Convention 1926, which was held in University College Cork. This was the first Annual Convention to be held outside Dublin, and the first at which invited speakers delivered addresses on education. Photo includes the then President T.P. Waller, and T.J. Burke, General Secretary (sixth and seventh from the left in the front row).



ARE ZOOM BRANCH MEETINGS HERE TO STAY?

ASTIR spoke to branch chairs from across the country to see how Zoom branch meetings worked during the pandemic, and how they see the future of branch meetings.



**Helen O'Reilly, Stillorgan
Branch Chair**

Helen says that there are two main advantages to Zoom branch meetings: "The first is that maybe it's easier for people who have childcare or family commitments to attend. They can take part if they're at home. The second is that there's no travel time to branch meetings anymore. I have saved time. For other members, if they want to attend the branch meeting but it

clashes with something else, if there's no travel time, they might be more likely to attend, or it might be easier for them to attend".

Everything has upsides and downsides, and there are drawbacks to Zoom meetings as well. One is the lack of human connection, says Helen: "If you attend in-person branch meetings regularly, you get friendly with your regular attendees and you do miss catching up with people. Secondly, it's not as easy maybe in a virtual branch meeting to have as much discussion around items on the agenda. If someone has something to say, it's more challenging to unmute yourself and try and find the moment to interject, whereas in person, we rely on the non-verbal cues or it's easier to interject. As chairperson, it can be challenging to feel that everybody has been heard or had an opportunity to say something".

Discussions have been ongoing in Helen's branch over how meetings will be held in the future, and they want to provide an option for people to

attend online: "We're hopeful that we can keep the virtual option for people who maybe have family or childcare commitments, so that they could join the branch meetings virtually. In terms of how we're going to work that out logistically, we'll have to deal with that when it becomes a reality. We'll have to check that our venue has good Wi-Fi. I suppose you'd also need someone to monitor the screen and the waiting room for the Zoom call, and someone to manage the in-person attendees as well. There are probably further difficulties with people interjecting or giving their opinion on agenda items on Zoom if there are other people in the room. That will take a balance to get right, but I think it's something that's worth exploring".

On whether she thinks meetings will ever go back to being just in person, Helen says: "No, I don't think so because if we can open up opportunities in our union for people to be heard, there are only ever benefits associated with that".



**Joan Carr, Limerick North
Branch Chair**

Joan says that in the context of lockdowns, Zoom meetings were safer: "It wasn't safe to be in school, so it certainly wasn't safe for us to be meeting anywhere else. We would have always met in hotels and they weren't open. To stick with the Government health guidelines, we had

to do Zoom meetings, but in other ways, I imagine it was easier for people who had to travel. After a long day at work, sometimes it was easier to go into your kitchen and onto the laptop”.

However, Joan believes the social interaction aspect of meetings is needed, and that Zoom is much more formal: “We were distant from one another, so there wasn’t the same social interaction and the same liveliness in the meetings that you normally would have had. Some people were on screen and then some people weren’t because I suppose they were more comfortable not to have their camera on”.

At times, Joan says it felt like you were talking to a blank screen and that can be a bit daunting if you’re the chairperson or the secretary and you don’t really see the people that you’re speaking to.

There is no socialising before Zoom meetings, she says: “No chatting about your own personal lives, and the supports that we would usually give one another about teaching and about the stresses of teaching. Those weren’t available because we were more distant and that’s a disadvantage of any kind of online interaction”.

Joan would like to see in-person meetings resume, but believes online ones have a part to play as well: “Initially, when we first started with the Zoom meetings, I thought we could do this more frequently and there really wasn’t much wrong with it, but as the time went on and people became more aware of the lack of real discussion and real support, or real engagement on issues, myself and the secretary started to think that actually, while some meetings could certainly be conducted through Zoom and we might have a number of meetings a year through Zoom, we still do probably need to meet up occasionally. I would say going forward that we would definitely use Zoom, because it’s easier and cheaper for the branch, but I think ultimately we need the real engagement, the real social interaction, and the support that face-to-face meetings give as well”.

Keeping the rules over a Zoom meeting works well, says Joan: “We follow the Zoom protocols. People put up their hand or turn on the camera if they want to ask a question ... I couldn’t say there was anything difficult about running the meetings online”.

Seamus Mullen, Carrick-on-Shannon Branch Chair

Seamus says Zoom meetings have improved teachers’ tech skills: “People having to do it for the meetings to take place definitely improved their tech savviness. All of us would have benefitted from a technology point of view, no more than the whole world, but we as teachers would have definitely increased our skills”.

One big advantage for Seamus is the reduction in travel time: “I’m the chairperson in the Carrick-on-Shannon Branch. I work in Ballinamore but I live in Monaghan. It makes it very easy for me travel wise. I do save a lot of time”.

Efficiency is another advantage. Seamus notes in a recent Zoom meeting that they got through a large programme in about two hours: “In-person meetings can be more dynamic; with Zoom you stick to the point. There’s less time for people to go off and talk about different things, even though there’s nothing wrong with that. Zoom meetings tend to be more business-like”.

Seamus believes that Zoom meetings have been transformative: “They broke the cycle of having to meet people in person. It showed that if it’s just for the sake of the meeting, we didn’t actually need to be in the same room as each other. From that point of view, they were transformative”.

While there were a few teething problems at the start, Seamus notes that a recent Zoom branch meeting worked seamlessly: “Occasionally, Wi-Fi connection can be in and out for different people... but other than that we’ve been able to conduct our meetings as well as if they were in person”.

For someone who’s just become a school steward and only attends Zoom meetings, they don’t see anybody and Seamus thinks they don’t get as much out of it as if they went to in-person meetings.

Seamus thinks that once branches are meeting in some form, that is a good thing: “I think the important thing is that you’re making contact with people, that all the school stewards are represented”.

Seamus says in the future if someone can’t attend an in-person meeting, but they want to listen in or raise an issue, that the facility should be there for them to do so. He doesn’t think Zoom is too formal for branch meetings. The protocols were explained at the start and by and large people stuck to those: “At the start I think our meetings were very formal, but as people have become more used to it, I think they grew more at ease with it... Rarely is it disorderly and overall I think the slightly greater formality about it has improved the efficiency of getting the work done”.



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HISTORY AND COMMUNITY



The Thomas MacDonagh Museum in Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary.

The Thomas MacDonagh Museum in Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary, commemorates the ASTI founder and signatory of the 1916 Proclamation.

The evolution of the Thomas MacDonagh Museum is firmly rooted in the local community of Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary. The Cloughjordan Honours Thomas MacDonagh event has been held for many years over the May Bank Holiday weekend, supported by the MacDonagh family, who have remained very involved with the village and its commemoration of MacDonagh, the poet, teacher and ASTI founder, Gaelic scholar and, ultimately, revolutionary leader.

The idea of a museum was first mooted almost 20 years ago, when discussions began among the local heritage and community development groups about the possibility of a permanent commemorative site centred on the MacDonagh family home in Cloughjordan. Like many other projects, plans were delayed by the recession, but funding was eventually sourced from the North Tipperary Leader Partnership (now the North Tipperary Development Company), along with extensive fundraising from the local community. Tori McMorran, a director and trustee of the Museum, with responsibility for the collections as well as facilitating exhibitions and research, says that the “Cloughjordan diaspora” has also been extremely generous: “We got a Leader grant, and everything else came from the community, and the diaspora. We received huge support from them and it really was community driven”.

After the purchase of the house, building commenced on an extension to accommodate the museum and heritage centre in 2012. The building now consists of the original house, a foyer and art gallery, and premises for North Tipperary Library. The Museum was officially opened by then Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Jimmy Deenihan TD on May 3, 2013, the anniversary of MacDonagh’s execution.

Development of the collection

In the beginning, the museum’s collection had a folk history focus, and featured a recreation of a parlour and kitchen as they would have looked in MacDonagh’s time. Pride of place went to the piano that belonged to

MacDonagh’s mother Mary Louise, but Tori says that items have come from all over the world: “One of the most impressive things is how people are so willing to hand over items into our care. I feel a huge responsibility that they’re family heirlooms. They want us to use them to support education in the community and to drive the mission of the Museum. I got a train ticket recently from the Ballybrophy to Cloughjordan line. A tiny museum in Canada had found it in their collection and posted it to us. It’s just amazing”. The collection has changed significantly in recent years, however, largely due to the donation by the MacDonagh family of an extensive collection of memorabilia. This includes hundreds of notebooks and manuscripts that belonged to Mary Louise MacDonagh, and to Thomas’s sister Francesca, says Tori: “Mary Louise did a huge amount of transcribing for Thomas. He was notorious for having terrible handwriting, so she used to rewrite his stories and poems, correct spelling mistakes, and then send them off to publishers. Francesca made sure that everything of his and the family’s was collected and protected – every scrap of paper, every receipt and every notebook. She would have been a fantastic archivist – she labelled everything and she wrote the family histories. Every piece of paper that we have has a story attached to it, and thanks to her we have this huge amount of material. It’s a phenomenal resource”.

This incredible donation led the Museum’s trustees to take the extra step of entering the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland, through the Heritage Council, to achieve museum accreditation, a seven-year process that they have just completed. Part of this process led them to discussions on what the focus of the museum should be, and to expand its mission to reflect not just MacDonagh, but his family and their achievements, and the wider history of Cloughjordan: “We focus now on the period from the 1870s to the 1930s, and on the family legacy. We look at the development of Cloughjordan and beyond in relation to the family’s progress, the developments in radio related to his brother, external developments like the coming of the train station and how that impacted on the family. A lot of

the larger folk life collection is gone, although we still have some items that relate to that time period”.

The museum also contains collections related to Francesca MacDonagh, and to Thomas’ brother Joe, who was a Sinn Féin councillor and political activist in North Tipperary. There is material on Conradh Na Gaeilge, the theatre, and the Gaelic revival. As Tori says: “One of the problems with MacDonagh is that he was so involved in so many aspects that it’s hard to put it all into one Museum!”

ASTI

Of course, MacDonagh is also remembered as a founder member of the ASTI, and this is represented in the Museum by a collection of material related to him, and to Patrick Kennedy, another founder member who was also from Cloughjordan. Kennedy’s direct descendants still live in the area, and have also donated material to the Museum. Tori says that this collection focuses on the personal: “We have letters between Patrick Kennedy and Thomas. We have notebooks that outline their plans and ideas. The exhibition also features items donated by the family that belonged to Patrick Kennedy, such as a commemorative medal and his pocket watch. It’s about making sure that we include those personal items so that people can feel a connection”.

The local ASTI Branch members are also strong supporters of the Museum, and have held meetings there to further cement their connection to MacDonagh and to support the project. The ASTI also presented a gold Cummann na Meanmhuinteoirí Éire Thomas MacDonagh 1978-1916 medal to the Museum during their meeting held at the Museum in 2016.

Ongoing education

Tori explains that the Museum is also developing a range of educational resources: “As in all museums, education is one of our pillars. We’ve created a number of resources for schools to participate in when they come to the Museum. We created an audio guide that you can download onto your phone. This year we’re looking to develop our links to the curriculum. Our potential there is huge, but we need to make sure that it’s a resource that has value for teachers. Our aim for the next three years is to really look at the curriculum links for our existing education, and get our educational activities online so that they’re accessible to everybody, and you don’t have to come here to explore them”.

These resources go beyond the Museum building into the wider area around

Cloughjordan, to reflect its enormous influence on MacDonagh’s life and work: “We have Evie Hone and Harry Clarke windows in the church across the road. We have a little fever hospital from famine times. There’s the Jordan stone, which was brought from the River Jordan. We have Cloughjordan House, which is intrinsic to the formation of Cloughjordan itself”.

Tori feels that the lesson in this connection is an important one: “It’s about MacDonagh and Cloughjordan because his poetry and his writings talk about Cloughjordan and the influence of the landscape on him. We try to inspire that connection in schoolchildren of all ages, and adults of all ages, to say: he had this connection. Can you feel why? They come to the Museum, they learn about Cloughjordan and they do things like engage in developing an acrostic poem, which is what he did, or writing poetry. We do a ‘find this item in the collection’ activity. But we also like to extend it out into the village, and to say the reason we’re here is because he wasn’t just someone who was born here. He was inspired by being here. He was influenced by this place”.

At the moment, the Museum is open to the public from 2.00pm-4.00pm, Tuesdays to Sundays. However, volunteers are available to facilitate school tours outside those hours, and Tori encourages teachers to get in touch (see panel for contact details).

Tori says that these volunteers, and the community at large, are essential to the running of the museum: “We have amazing support in the community. We have a great team now, the board of directors and the management team. We’ll be ten years old next year, and we’re planning big celebrations. We really hope that people will be able to come and we will be able to celebrate and to show how grateful we are”.

Contact the Thomas MacDonagh Museum

Thomas MacDonagh Museum, Lower Main Street, Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary

T: 087-394 6882

E: info@macdonaghmuseum.ie

www.macdonaghmuseum.ie

Opens: 2.00pm-4.00pm Tuesday-Sunday and by appointment.



A butter knife made from bullets at Frongoch internment camp in 1916.



The collection includes a piano that belonged to Thomas MacDonagh’s mother Marie Louise, who was a music teacher.



AN CHAINT SAN AER ... LEIS AN BHFÁMAIRE FABHRACH AGUS MÉ AG SMAOINEAMH SIAR ...

Conas a chaithimid lena chéile, oidí agus daltaí? Cad iad na tuairimí a roinnimid eadrainn ar ár gcomhdhaoine? Caitheann VERNON Ó BUACHALLA a shúil ar an scéal.

Drochscéala a tháinig chugainn le déanaí gur chuir iarscoláire dem' chuid lámh ina bhás féin cúpla mí ó shin. Duine eile imithe ar shlí na firinne dá dheoin féin, go ndéana Dia trócaire air. Thiar sna nóchaidí bhíos mar cheann bliana aige agus chuireas aithne réasúnta maith air. Déagóir breá scafánta a bhí ann, an-shuim aige sa rugbaí. Is cuimhin liom go maith an lá deireannach ar scoil aige – chroitheas lámh leis tar éis searmanas chun clabhsúr a chur leis an dtréimhse ar scoil, agus ghuigh mé gach rath air sa saol a bhí roimhe amach. Chailleadas radharc air ina dhiaidh sin, sioscadh anois is arís go raibh sé ag gabháil do seo nó siúd. N'fheadar cad d'imigh ar strae air ina shaol nó cad a bhrúigh é chun an cinneadh a thógaint nár oir an saol seo dó.

Agus é níos óige

Tá cuimhne agam freisin air agus é níos óige, é suite i measc lucht na céad bliana. É ciúin, támáilte mar is dual do mhuintir óg na scoile agus na súile ar ghais acu le teann fíorachta, nó scáth b'fheidir, ag iarraidh a slí a dhéanamh i dtimpeallacht choimhthíoch. Dhéanainn iarracht go minic, agus

mé ag caint leo den gcéad uair, a gcéad impreisiún a fháil ó bhéal uathu ar an scoil, ar ghnóthaí na scoile, múinteoirí, agus a leithéid. "Mór" an focal is coitianta a d'úsáididís agus measúnú á dhéanamh acu ar a dtimpeallacht – múinteoirí agus daltaí a bheith "mór". Níos déanaí sa bhliain, nuair a bhíodh aithne níos fearr acu ar fhoireann na scoile, ba nós leo bheith faobhrach agus suimiú suas á dhéanamh acu ar mhúinteoirí. Ach a bheith discrídeach, gheobhfá amach go raibh an múinteoir gnó "cancrach go maith ach an gomh a bheith uirthi". Tic! An múinteoir staire? "Sound". Tic eile! Agus an príomhoide? "Neirbhíseach agus ag iarraidh a bheith 'cool'". Wow! – a leithéid de léamh ar an gcine daonna ó dhream chomh hóg.

Agus bhíodh measúnú á dhéanamh againne múinteoirí orthu siúd freisin. An Murphy sin sa chúinne, é i gcónaí smugach? Codlatán, i bhfad níos mó breosla sa teainc. Forrest ar an gcliathán? "Can't see the woods for the trees", mar a dúirt an té a dúirt é. An cúpla comhionann sotalach i lár baill, an ghruaig slíochta siar le 'Brylcream' acu? Dainséarach dá mbeadh brains acu tuairim na coitiantachta. Agus cad faoin leaid úd sa chúinne a déarfadh nach raibh an obair bhaile déanta aige, fiú agus é críochnaithe go slachtmhar agus

Ráitis

Agus é seo ó Bhrathair Críostaí agus é ag cur comhairle ar an aos óg i 1953:

"He is so dull and shrivelled with age that he only comes in late and is unable

Ró-dhéanach do sin go léir anois, a bhuachaill!

ASTIR Volume 40: Number 2: March 2022

PROTECTING SCHOOLS

As Covid-19 restriction are lifted, the ASTI continues to campaign to keep schools safe.

“Our position has been that we want to maximise person-to-person class contact to the greatest possible extent. However, as I mentioned earlier, it is a disgrace that medical-grade masks are not being made available in schools. It is a further disgrace that some 20 months into this pandemic, many classrooms do not have HEPA filters, and we need absolute urgency to ensure this is addressed.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary
Virgin Media News, January 6, 2022

“We have been calling for HEPA filters because the science worldwide as far as we are aware indicates that they would be enormously beneficial in classrooms. We’ve been calling for them for well over a year and yet it was only in the dying days coming up to the Christmas break that the Minister made funding available in a substantive way for their installation. There has been chaos out there and there has been no audit done on the levels of HEPA filters in schools, but what I can tell you for certain is that teachers contact me in large numbers on a daily basis saying that they are working in classrooms that don’t have one and that need one in their view.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary
Newstalk Breakfast, January 5, 2022

“We at the ASTI would point to a number of problems associated with running a hybrid Leaving Certificate this year. We do acknowledge that it’s a difficult position for everybody, but on balance we are strongly of the view that the established Leaving Certificate should go ahead this year. We would point to the fact that adjustments have been made and more could potentially be implemented to account for the disruption in face-to-face teaching that has happened to this cohort of students. We would particularly point to the fact that the two previous grading processes included Junior Certificate results as a major element in the process, to give coherence and credibility from the point of view of statistics. That situation is a major problem this year because many of this year’s Leaving Cert students did not undertake the established Junior Certificate as we know, so that data is not available.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary
News at One, RTÉ Radio 1, January 17, 2022

“From the beginning of this pandemic we have been anxious that the maximum possible restrictions were put in place in schools to ensure that the coronavirus would not spread in schools, and that was to protect the education system. We are getting figures on average of 2,300 students missing school every week because of Covid, and so one of our objectives has been to get the maximum number of students in schools and keep them there, and one of the things that might help to do that is to continue to wear masks. We have managed to keep the schools open 100%. That is a tribute to the teaching staff, but even more so to the students. There has been a huge effort made with regard to keeping our schools open by everybody involved, and I think it would be a pity now to back off on that because the price is perhaps that orals wouldn’t be able to go ahead or certain people would miss their orals because they are ill.”

Eamon Dennehy, ASTI President
Ireland AM, Virgin Media, February 17, 2022

“The overall feeling I get is that staff in schools want the measures to stay in place as much as possible and to have the wind down happen slowly and carefully, and make sure that the situation is under control before we make these changes. The fact of the matter is, it is mandatory to go to school. A teacher or an older student has a choice between going to a pub or a club if they don’t think it is absolutely safe, so that is the key difference. I suppose we are being ultra-careful because this is the place where we do our work, and the work we do is to teach young people. We want to make sure that schools stay open and we want to make sure that all the students are fit to come in, not sick with Covid. I agree: is a school operating with masks and all the restrictions as nice a place? Is it as effective? No. Covid measures did slow us down, and made our job less enjoyable, but these were necessary. I’m not sure that they are not still to some extent necessary and again I would say caution about change.”

Eamon Dennehy, ASTI President
Claire Byrne Show, RTÉ Radio 1, February 16, 2022



IN-PERSON ASTI ANNUAL CONVENTION RETURNS

ASTI Annual Convention returns to Cork in 2022 for the first in-person Convention since 2019.

The 100th ASTI Annual Convention will be held in the Clayton Hotel Silver Springs, Cork, on April 19, 20 and 21, 2022.

This will be the first in-person Convention since 2019, and approximately 500 ASTI members from all over the country will gather to determine the ASTI's policy priorities for the coming year.

Delegates will debate motions that decide the union's policy for the year ahead, and will listen to key speeches from ASTI President Eamon Dennehy, Minister for Education Norma Foley TD, and guest speaker Dr John Cunningham.

Topics for debate

Some of the key motions for debate at Annual Convention 2022 will deal with teachers' pay, curriculum change in Senior Cycle, and safety at work. On the first day of Convention, a motion will be debated asking that ASTI members demand equal pay for post-2010 entrants to teaching, a pay increase to offset cost of living increases, and an end to unpaid additional working hours.

Motions on education policy that will be debated at Convention 2022 include a motion calling on the ASTI to refuse to engage in discussion on Leaving Certificate change until a full, open and transparent study of the Framework for Junior Cycle has been undertaken.

A number of motions for debate at Convention 2022 relate to teachers' concerns about their health and safety in the workplace. Motions include a demand for a review of Department of Education policies to ensure that teachers are protected in line with health and safety legislation.

For a full list of motions at Convention 2022, visit <https://www.asti.ie/member-benefits/events/asti-convention-2022/>

Tune in to ASTI Convention 2022

How to follow what's happening at Convention 2022

Watch key speeches live and read them back

Key speeches from the ASTI President, the Minister for Education, and Dr John Cunningham will be streamed live on the ASTI website from 4.25pm on Tuesday, April 19. The text of the speeches will also be available on the website after they have been given.



Social media

The ASTI Twitter account – @astionion – will be tweeting updates from Convention 2022, including what delegates are saying and what decisions are being made. Don't forget to use the hashtag #ASTI22 to see all the latest tweets from Convention and to join in the discussion.



Updates will also be posted to the ASTI Facebook account – <https://www.facebook.com/astiteachers> – and to the ASTI website – www.asti.ie

Emerging, with caution, from restrictions

RSTA branches have recommenced meetings and are back to planning trips as Covid-19 restrictions ease.

After two years of pandemic the restrictions have been lifted, coinciding with the blossoming of spring; this gives a reassurance of better times ahead. At school, planning for the next academic year is taking place, while the main teaching focus is towards the public examinations.

The RSTA is emerging, with caution, from the restrictions. Most branches have arranged meetings to nominate voting delegates for the National Conference and AGM to be held at the Brehon Hotel, Killarney, from May 3-5. This conference was postponed during the past two years. Thanks and appreciation is due to the officers who remained at their posts during this time.

Activities are starting with outdoor walks, and the weekly golf games have returned for some members. The postponed Christmas lunches have been re-scheduled and the Mayo branch led the way at Ashford Castle. Memorial services have celebrated the lives of deceased members. Bookings are now



From left: Mary Bourke, Ann McGovern, and Antoinette Casey, Mayo RSTA golfers who play at home and abroad with the very active Teachers' Golf Alliance.

closed for the Midland Branch's trip to Andalucia. There is a group from Kildare heading to Vienna and the surrounding cities while attending the Passion Play at Oberammergau. The surge of energy is palpable.

The Alliance of Retired Public Servants (ARPS) continues to support the Industrial Relations Bill, while working with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) to ensure adequate legislative mechanisms for retired workers concerning pension matters. A meeting with An Tánaiste, Leo Varadkar TD, accompanied by Bríd Smith TD, who introduced the Bill originally, is expected shortly. The ARPS wrote to Minister Paschal Donohoe regarding the proposed removal of the PRSI exemption for the over 65s in the Social Welfare Bill 2021. Although it hasn't materialised, there is no guarantee in the future.

Neart déanta agus neart le déanamh.

RSTA membership application/renewal

Name:

Address:

Home phone:

Mobile:

Email:

RSTA branch:

Annual subscription: €24
Annual renewal date: September 1

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

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

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

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

Standing order set-up form

To: The Manager (Bank name and full address)

I hereby authorise and request you to DEBIT my account:

Account name/s:

IBAN

BIC

And to credit the account of:

RETIRED SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

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

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

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

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

Member name

Signature: Date: ____/____/20____

Darkness into Light

Darkness into Light, proudly supported by Electric Ireland, will take place at sunrise on Saturday, May 7. The team at Pieta would like to invite teachers and their students to get involved.

The past two years have been difficult for students, with seismic changes, uncertainty, and the impact of the pandemic on education and well-being. Darkness into Light is a great opportunity for teachers and students to come together, to register for one of the official Darkness into Light walks, and/or to organise a fundraiser for Pieta's life-saving services, which support people affected by suicide and self-harm. By taking part in Darkness into Light, your school can provide hope to all those affected by suicide and self-harm. Every school has the power to be the light against the dark.

This year, Pieta is welcoming back in-person walks across Ireland and the world. Many people enjoyed taking part in their own way throughout the pandemic. So, this year, students can take part in Darkness into Light in whatever way they want!

For more information on how to get involved and receive school discount codes, please contact Shauna Peyton, Darkness into Light Team, at schools@darknessintolight.ie

For more information or to sign up your school, go to: www.darknessintolight.ie

Mental health as Gaeilge

Jigsaw, the national centre for youth mental health, has made its 'Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing' toolkit available as Gaeilge. It is also available in English. The aim of this toolkit is for schools to support staff to build the mental health literacy of young people, support them to manage their mental health, and to develop help-seeking skills.

This toolkit is interactive and provides opportunities for young people to explore topics related to mental health and well-being. Active engagement in learning about mental health supports young people to normalise conversations around mental health and to ask for help if needed.

All the Jigsaw resources support young people to be actively involved in their learning so that they can develop well-being skills. These include a mix of methodologies including classroom discussions, animations, scenarios, reflective exercises, and other worksheets.

The toolkit also includes support materials for staff on the delivery of these resources, so that they can use the resources in a way that meets the needs of their young people.

To access the toolkit as Gaeilge visit: <https://jigsaw.ie/mheabhairshlaint-agus-follaine/>

Teaching Council update

New ICT resources on Teaching Council website

A new set of resources has been added to the 'Using Research in Our School' section of the Teaching Council's website. The new resources focus on the theme of information and communications technology (ICT). ICT is one of the six learning areas highlighted in Cosán, the national framework for teachers' learning.

The resources include:

- ▶ a webinar on 'Digital Technology in Our Schools: Learning from Research and Practice'
- ▶ two e-zines on research on topics related to ICT
- ▶ two podcast series on ICT in education
- ▶ access to a number of ebooks on the topic of ICT in education, and
- ▶ key journal articles on ICT in education.

Find these resources at:

<https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/website/en/research-croi-/using-research-in-our-school/ict/>

Conversations with School Leaders: Harnessing the power of professional learning to support school needs

Are you interested in harnessing the power of your school's professional learning culture? The Teaching Council, in partnership with Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI) and the Centre for School Leadership (CSL), invites you to join fellow senior school leaders for a short online conversation about the autumn series of Cosán workshops in education centres nationwide.

In the session, you'll hear from practising school leaders who will share their experience of the Cosán workshops and the impact they have had on the learning culture in their schools. Early registration is recommended and for further information, please contact: cosan@teachingcouncil.ie

MyRegistration portal

The Teaching Council launched the enhanced MyRegistration portal in October 2021, which allows teachers to access and manage registration information 24/7 online.

Over 50% of registered teachers have activated their portal accounts since October. To activate your account, please use the link provided by email by the Teaching Council. Should you require assistance, please email myreghelp@teachingcouncil.ie.

Renewals

The renewals process is now available via the MyRegistration portal. If it is your first time using the portal, you will need to activate your account and then begin the renewal process. Please ensure that you update your contact information and provide any missing data such as postcodes and mobile phone numbers. Please note that it is no longer possible for Teaching Council staff to take payments over the phone.

Re-vetting

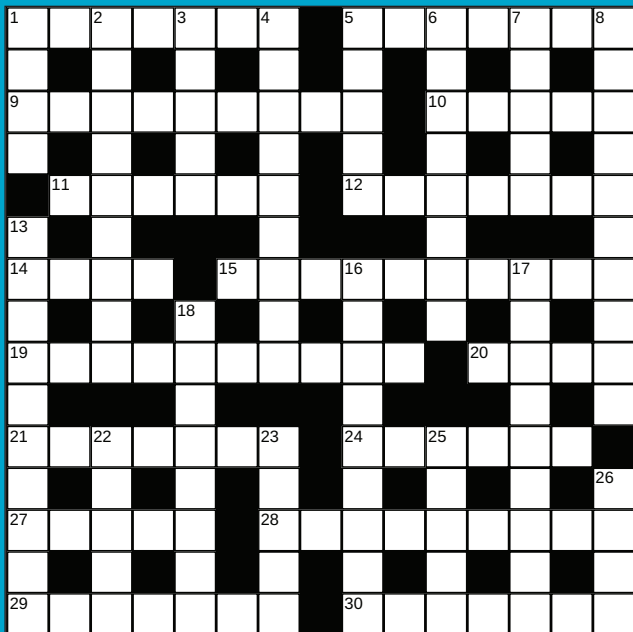
If you have received an invitation to apply for re-vetting, you should commence the re-vetting process by logging on to the MyRegistration portal.

Expiring conditions

If you are a teacher who intends to request an extension of time to comply with the conditions attached to your registration, the Teaching Council has asked that you submit the required documentation as early as possible and promptly respond to any follow-up queries. You can make your extension request and submit the supporting documentation by logging on to the MyRegistration portal and selecting 'My Conditions'.

For more information, see: www.teachingcouncil.ie

Win €250



LEIDEANNA TRASNA

1. An chathair leis an leasainm 'Motown' (7)
5. Mailis nó naimhdeas (7)
9. Dianchúrsáí, siollabais, cláir (9)
10. Fiche bliain ag fas, fiche bliain ag íar (3,2)
11. Gríomh grá ó thobar rógaire (6)
12. Clár nach beag é a thábhacht (7)
14. An bhliain a tháinig Acht an Aontais i bhfeidhm in Éirinn (4)
15. Mothúchán ceanúil ó Aime Ashton (10)
19. Bealach tirim idir an Fhrainc agus an Bhreatain (10)
20. Ardteist na Breataine (4)
21. Tír lena rialtas fein (7)
24. Spásárthach Eorpach a rinne staidéar ar Chóimhead Haley sna hochtóidí (6)
27. B'é Ruairí Ua Conchubhair an ceann deireannach (3-2)
28. Lasair, bladhm, splanc (9)
29. Oilte, eolach, foghlamtha, sibhialta (7)
30. Hornblower nó Nelson (7)

LEIDEANNA SÍOS

1. Van Dyke, aisteoir Meiriceánach (4)
2. Teann sé roimh an géachta (9)
3. Cosc ar dhuine de na Fianna (5)
4. Seomra ina bhfoghlaimítear Spáinnis nó Fraincis, mar shampla (9)
5. Caoga mallacht ort, a amadain! (5)
6. Dúchasach, dual, dairire (8)
7. Capall tapa a d'fhéadfadh a bheith fíain (5)
8. Osfan cáiliúil ar Park Lane i Londain (10)
13. Gearcheim, drochuair, cruachás, práinn (10)
16. Míchéal ag mothú uafais (9)
17. Leid (9)
18. R na G, mar shampla, nó Heuston (8)
22. An fir dhaonlathach is mó ar domhan (5)
23. Mioncharachtar sa dráma An Triail, le Mairéad Ní Ghráda (5)
25. Dath dorcha, donn (5)
26. Thabharfaí é seo do leanbh le go mbeadh sé ag súgradh leis (4)

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ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 2202

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. 2202,
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, April 8, 2022

Solutions to ASTIR Crossword No. 2201

ACROSS

1. Around the bend
10. Viola
11. Allegation
13. Reunion
15. Gestation
16. Cop on
17. Mentors
19. Due
20. Incident
21. Airstrip
24. Vas
25. Freshen
26. Swede
27. Rearrange
30. Simpers
31. Legalistic
33. Ongar
34. Beside oneself

DOWN

2. Realigned
3. Uma
4. Diligent
5. Higgs
6. Betrays
7. Naomi
8. Overachievers
9. Pocus pocus
12. Under pressure
14. Nominee
18. Orients
19. Dark energy
22. Sesame oil
23. Threaten
25. Ferrari
28. Arete
29. Noise
32. Cos

Did you miss?

100th ASTI Annual Convention 18
Are Zoom branch meetings here to stay? 20

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the winner of
Crossword No. 2201:
Bernie Johnson, Spencer Park,
Castlebar, Co. Mayo.
RSTA Mayo Branch.

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