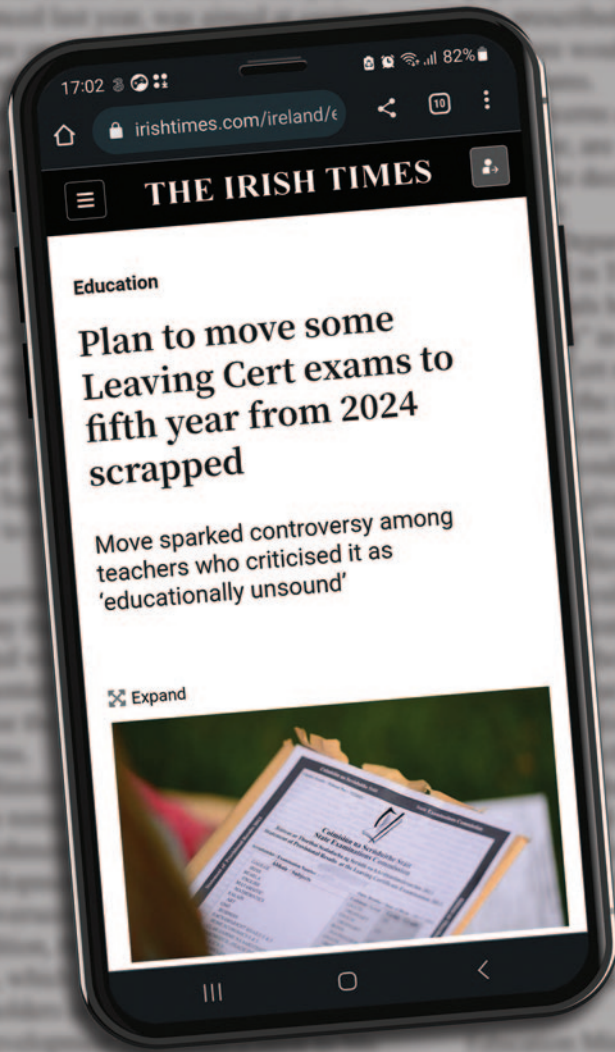


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Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland



Teachers' voice is heard on 5th year exam plan



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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.

Change needs collaboration

On March 4, the 2023 ASTI Education Conference took place in Limerick, all the more welcome since this was the first time we were able to host an education conference since the pandemic.

While we all recognise the staunch defence of teachers' terms and working conditions as one of the ASTI's key objectives, the Education Conference fulfils another key objective of our organisation, which is the promotion of education as a social good. Education, in its broadest sense, is a dynamic of social, physical, spiritual, intellectual, economic and cultural imperatives. We only have to look at the past 60 or 70 years in our own country to find evidence of the power of education to transform society, to transform our world. And it is that belief in the value and importance of education which is at the heart of our education conferences, where we gather people from varied backgrounds so we can explore varied perspectives. Through doing this, we hope to provide an opportunity for the ASTI to engage with the wider community and to give the wider community an opportunity to engage with us.

The theme of the conference was 'Curriculum of the Future – Getting Policy and Practice Right', a timely theme. We live in a society that values change – I remember a recent ad for a car that began with the bold assertion that change is good. Is it always good? I don't think so. Good change is good but not every change is positive and it's a mistake to think otherwise. This is particularly true of education, where we must ensure that any changes are evidence based, grounded in solid educational theory, and the result of meaningful collaboration with stakeholders.

Certainly we must approach change carefully – but it's equally certain that approach it we must. Today's students are tomorrow's citizens – citizens of a rapidly changing world – and we can all agree that we want those students to experience every possible advantage our education system can offer. But change in education is not a theoretical exercise and must take the reality of implementation into account. Teacher agency is primary in implementing policy because policy changes become our day-to-day, class-to-class responsibility and, without teacher agency, real transformation simply will not happen. That's why top-down policy changes never work – real transformation will only come about as a result of real and meaningful collaboration. Nor can there be real transformation without proper resourcing. As the practitioners, we teachers understand all too painfully and well, that policy change without proper resourcing and planning is destined to fail. Instead of producing the desired outcome, such changes often become no more than a tick-box exercise. On that note, I would like to acknowledge the Minister's announcement to defer her decision to move Paper 1 in English and Irish to fifth year next year after consultation with stakeholders. We welcome that decision as it allows scope and space for wider discussion. I am sure I am not alone in hoping it might augur well for replacing a top-down approach with meaningful stakeholder collaboration on any policy decisions in the future.



Miriam Duggan
ASTI President

Protecting teachers online

The ASTI has recently undertaken extensive work in exploring the role of schools in lessening the harm caused to a teacher by students who post or distribute harmful online content concerning teachers, within and outside of school hours, and the steps that schools are required to take to protect teachers as employees in such circumstances. These steps include proactively deterring students from posting or sending content that may harm others, and addressing the removal of harmful content or supporting the teacher in doing so. This role feeds into the overarching responsibility of schools to educate students on what it means to be a safe and responsible digital citizen.

Extensive legal advice in respect of liability, and practical measures to be taken in response to online content posted by students concerning teachers has been received. The online content in question, which in some cases takes the form of images of a salacious or malicious nature, causes harm and great distress to the teacher(s) affected. Unfortunately, the ASTI has had to deal with instances from time to time where material posted online has violated teachers' dignity and created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for the teacher(s) concerned.

Areas we are looking at include the potential liability of the board of management of a school for harmful online content concerning its teacher(s) posted by one or more students in the school, parental responsibility, proactive measures a school should take in this area, and what schools' policies should include to address the issue. Crucially, clear advice on what practical steps should be taken where an incident occurs involving a teacher is required.

Under the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022, it is also clear that a role for the soon-to-be-appointed Online Safety Commissioner to deal with the prevalence of bullying online is provided, particularly with regard to the ways that social media companies can support measures to prevent and address bullying among children and young people in schools and online. The Online Safety Commissioner will be empowered to move quickly to deal with complaints where the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved by the online service provider. Under the individual complaint mechanism, the Commissioner will consider complaints where a period of more than two days has elapsed since the complainant has raised the complaint with the service provider, and where the provider has failed to have the complaint resolved through the agreed complaints process. The Commissioner will be empowered to order the take down of harmful online content, either on foot of a complaint or on its own initiative.

The ASTI will engage with the Department of Education and the Online Safety Commissioner to ensure that any measures agreed upon with social media companies include dealing with harmful online content posted or shared by students targeting other students or teachers.

A sub-committee of Standing Committee is now working to produce practical advice on dealing with harmful online content for our members, ranging across all the key areas of this complex area. This will be published in due course.



Kieran Christie
ASTI General Secretary

New Director of The Teaching Council



The Teaching Council has appointed a new Director, Dr Lynn Ramsey. Lynn was previously Director of MicroCreds – the Irish Universities Association’s national lifelong learning framework for accredited microcredential qualifications. She holds a PhD in EU law from the University of Glasgow, a Master’s of Education in Leadership and Management from Trinity College Dublin, and has held academic and leadership positions in universities in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Registration and induction for teachers who qualified outside Ireland

The Teaching Council has announced that it will accept applications for registration from post-primary teachers who have qualified outside of Ireland but have not completed the required period of induction in the country in which they qualified.

Applications are being accepted from February 22, 2023, until February 1, 2024. Information on eligibility requirements and how to apply for registration can be found at: <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/registration/how-do-i-register-/qualified-outside-of-ireland-induction-not-completed-/qualified-outside-of-ireland-induction-not-completed-.html>

Check your details on the Register of Teachers

The Teaching Council maintains the Register of Teachers in Ireland. It is essential that you keep your details up to date to maintain the Register’s accuracy and ensure that you receive all important notifications and communications. You can change your details quickly and easily through your ‘My Registration’ portal on the Teaching Council website. Log in to your My Registration portal, click on the ‘My Personal Details’ tile, and follow the simple instructions to change the required details. If you are having issues logging in to your My Registration portal, please visit www.teachingcouncil.ie for guidance.

ASTI at BT Young Scientist



At the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition in January were (from left): Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Geraldine O’Brien (ASTI Vice President), students Cian McInerney, Caragh Killeen and Ailish Marrinan (St Joseph’s Community College, Killee), and their teacher Laura Egan. The students’ project was titled ‘Kelpoleum: Sugar Kelp Biofuel as an Alternative to Petroleum Fuel’.




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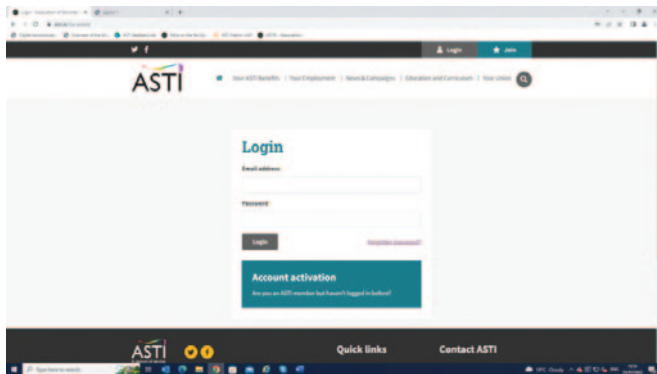
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Log in to MyUnion



ASTI members can access MyUnion, the members’ area of the ASTI website. Once you have created an account, you will have convenient access to information about your membership. This includes:

- the personal details the ASTI holds for you, e.g., name, phone number, school
- your school steward’s name and email address
- your industrial relations official’s name and email address
- the names of your elected representatives on CEC, and the names and

email addresses for your branch, and

- the name and email address of your Standing Committee representative.

Update your information

It is now possible to update your personal details directly in the MyUnion area – for example, your home address – and this change will be reflected in the ASTI’s membership database for future correspondence. There is also a facility to tell the ASTI what subjects you teach, in order to receive relevant notifications, such as subject-specific surveys.

Mailing preferences

Signing up for a MyUnion account will also give members the option of opting in or out of ASTI research surveys and opting to receive publications, such as *ASTIR* or *Nuacht*, by email instead of in hard copy.

To create your MyUnion account, go to <https://www.asti.ie/my-union/> and use the ‘Account Activation’ prompt. To register for a MyUnion account, your email address must match the one we have for you on our members’ database. If you do not receive an account activation email, this may be because we do not have your current email address. Contact info@asti.ie or 01-604 0160 if you believe this may be the case.

Teachers denied representation



From left: Anne Loughnane (ASTI Teaching Council nominee and Standing Committee representative), Miriam Duggan (ASTI President), Desmond O’Toole (ASTI Industrial Relations Official), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Sean O’Neill (ASTI member and Teaching Council member elected in the Post Primary-Voluntary Sector – Ireland South constituency), and Eamon Dennehy (ASTI Teaching Council nominee and ASTI Immediate Past President).

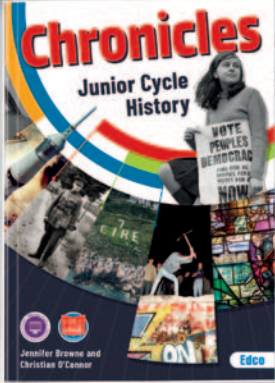
The ASTI recently staged a short protest to highlight the situation whereby a member of the Teaching Council is unable to attend Council meetings because his school’s Board of Management is refusing to release him.

Niall Duddy, a teacher at Presentation College Athenry, was elected by teachers to represent 8,000 second-level teachers across 13 counties on the Teaching Council. The protest took place on the day of a meeting of the Teaching Council, outside of the Teaching Council offices in Maynooth. Niall Duddy was not present at the meeting due to Presentation College Athenry’s denial of his request to attend.

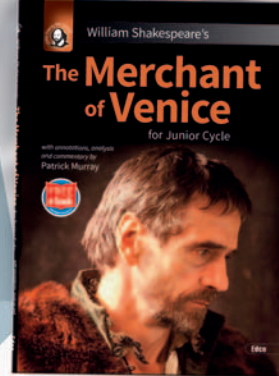
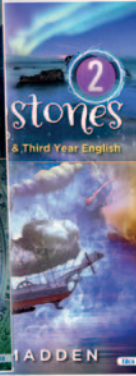
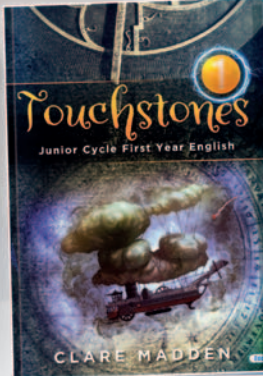
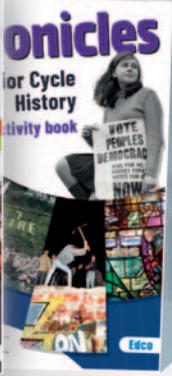
The ASTI previously held a short protest outside Presentation College Athenry (see the November 2022 edition of *ASTIR*). Since then, the school has continued to refuse to allow Niall Duddy to attend meetings of the Council. Speaking ahead of the protest, ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie said: “The Teaching Council performs vital work in the national interest including the registration of teachers, professional standards and investigations into complaints against teachers. It is astounding that a Board of Management of one school is able to frustrate this work and interfere with the democratic right of thousands of teachers to be represented on the Teaching Council”.

EDCO 2023 NEW PUBLICATIONS

JUNIOR CYCLE



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JC English

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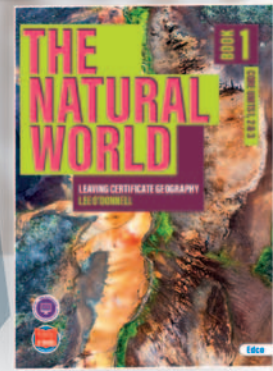
LC English Poetry



LC Irish OL

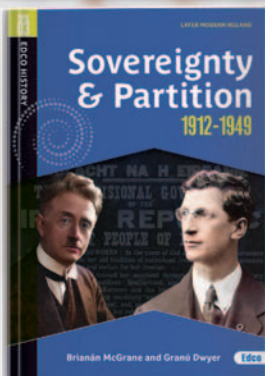


LC Irish HL



LC Geography

LEAVING CERTIFICATE



LC History



LC Spanish Oral & Aural



TY English



TY Irish

SCAN ME

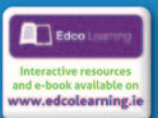


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Carbery Branch retirement function



The ASTI Carbery Branch recently held a retirement event in Fernhill House, Clonakilty. The event was attended by retirees Mary Barrett O'Connor, Eileen Hornibrook, Casey O'Donovan, Frances Milner, Margaret Cronin, Liam O'Donovan, Carol Kiely, Sheila Jennings, Ita McCarthy, Mary O'Neill, Anne Weldon, Martina McCarthy, Ann Twomey, Anne Galvin Hayes, Rose Uí Shuilleabháin, Cathy Cahalane, Pat O'Leary, Anne Crowley, Martina Healy, and Ger O'Sullivan. Also present on the night were: Gloria Helen (Carbery Branch Chairperson), Dermot

Brennan (Carbery Branch Hon. Secretary), Anne Loughnane (Standing Committee Representative Region 6), Orla O'Sullivan (Carbery Branch Vice-Chairperson), Frances O'Donoghue (Carbery Branch Equality Officer), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Geraldine O'Brien (ASTI Vice President), Conor McDonald (ASTI EO: Industrial Relations), Michael McGrath (ASTI Honorary National Organiser), Padraig Murphy (ASTI Honorary Treasurer), Ann Pigott (former ASTI President), and Susie Hall (RSTA President).

New ASTI officials appointed

The ASTI has appointed two new industrial relations officials.



Brian Burke has been appointed Executive Officer: Industrial Relations. Brian previously taught in St Ciaran's Community School, Navan. He has held several positions within the ASTI, including serving on Standing Committee from 2013-2018.

Brian is replacing Máire Collins, who has resigned her post as an industrial relations official. Máire joined Head Office after a career as a teacher and as an ASTI activist who served on Standing Committee and as Honorary National Organiser. As an industrial relations official, Máire provided her expertise and advice to members.



Breda Lynch has been appointed Executive Officer: Industrial Relations. Breda previously taught in Muckross Park College, Donnybrook. She has held several positions within the ASTI, including ASTI President 2018-2019.

Breda is replacing Ann-Marie Ryan, who has resigned her post after 25 years of service in ASTI Head Office. As an industrial relations official, Ann-Marie provided expertise and advice to members and also professional support to the Community and Comprehensive Committee. Prior to her appointment as an industrial relations official, Ann-Marie worked in various roles in ASTI Head Office, including as Staff Officer: Industrial Relations. The ASTI wishes Máire and Ann-Marie the best in all their future endeavours.

Teacher Fee Refund Scheme 2022

The Teacher Fee Refund Scheme provides funding towards the cost of professional development courses, relevant and of benefit to schools, and that are subject to certification/award by an accreditation authority recognised by the Department. Applications will only be considered for courses/part of courses completed in the period from September 1, 2021, to August 31, 2022 (see Circular 0005/2023). The closing date for receipt of applications is Friday, March 31, 2023: late applications will not be considered.



RSTA coffee morning

Mike Moriarty (RSTA Committee member), with Geraldine O'Brien (ASTI Vice President), pictured at the recent RSTA coffee morning held in ASTI Head Office.



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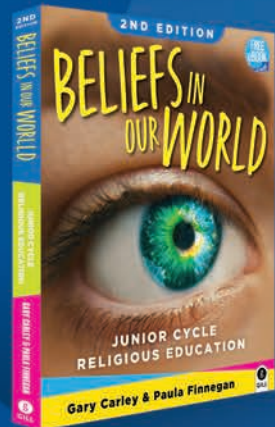
GEOGRAPHY



FRENCH



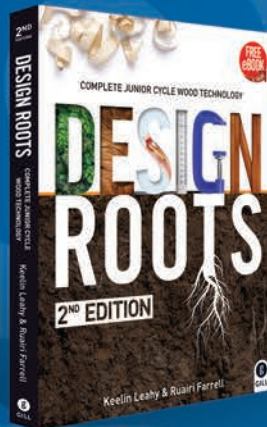
GERMAN



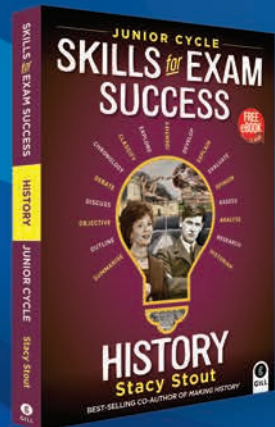
RELIGION



JC ENGLISH



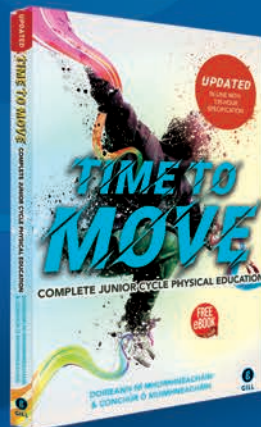
WOOD TECHNOLOGY



HISTORY

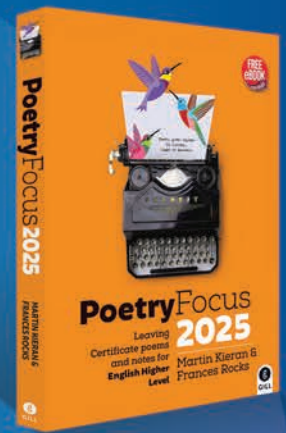


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TEACHERS' VOICE IS HEARD

The Minister has listened to the unified opposition from teachers to her plans for English and Irish paper 1.



In February the Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, announced the deferral of her plans for students to sit Leaving Certificate Paper 1 in English and Irish at the end of 5th year. This latest announcement followed a joint ASTI/TUI campaign of opposition to the plans.

The proposal to move the two exams to the end of 5th year for students entering 5th year this September was described as regressive and educationally unsound by the two teacher unions.

The ASTI and TUI had jointly presented the concerns of teachers to the Department of Education, including:

- increased stress for Senior Cycle students due to high-stakes examinations in 5th year as well as 6th year
- the syllabi were developed to be examined following two years of learning
- the option for students to change levels before their final exam would be severely curtailed
- other subjects would be impacted by students prioritising their high-stakes 5th year exams in English and Irish, and
- extracurricular and other activities would be impacted by students prioritising their high-stakes 5th year exams in English and Irish.

The ASTI and TUI also met with the English teachers' subject association INOTE and the Irish teachers' subject association An Gréasán. A joint press statement from the two unions and the two subject associations, setting out their objections, was issued in January.

Student representatives had also voiced their opposition to the proposal.

Minister defers plan

On Tuesday, February 28, a joint ASTI/TUI statement welcomed the Minister's decision to defer plans to move English and Irish paper 1 to the end of 5th year from 2024:

"At all times we had stated this was an educationally regressive move that would have increased pressure on students, who would have faced a high-stakes examination in both 5th and 6th year. To make matters worse, those

who entered 5th year directly from third year – around 25% of the cohort – would have had three concurrent years of State examinations under the plan". The statement also said the Minister's decision "demonstrates the importance of meaningful engagement and consultation, which recognises and acknowledges that the voice of the practitioners is required to ensure that future Senior Cycle change is educationally sound and, crucially, does not increase pressure on students".

Senior Cycle campaign set to continue

The Minister for Education announced plans for the redevelopment of Senior Cycle in March 2022. The standout measure is the proposal to change the final assessment procedure to significantly reduce reliance on final examinations and introduce teacher-based assessment components.

The ASTI believes that Senior Cycle change must protect the integrity of the examinations and any changes must be built upon fairness for students and trust in the system. It is longstanding ASTI policy that State examinations for certification purposes are entirely externally assessed, and this must be retained in all aspects of the development of the Leaving Certificate.

The ASTI has undertaken a number of actions as part of its campaign on Senior Cycle. These have included consultation with members via the ASTI branch network, the development of policy in response to the Minister's March 2022 announcement, and collaborative activities with colleague union the TUI.

The ASTI Education Conference held in March explored the wider paradigm for curriculum change and the need to enhance the voice of the teaching profession (see ASTI Education Conference report on pages 12/13).

ASTI Annual Convention in April will debate a number of motions on Senior Cycle change, including motions relating to the Minister's March 2022 announcement. The lack of consultation with teacher unions prior to the Minister's announcement, the need for external assessment for State certification, and the need for depth of treatment in subject specification development will be debated.

Keep up with the ASTI's Senior Cycle campaign at www.asti.ie

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CURRICULUM CHANGE WILL BE CONSTANT AND CONTESTED, ASTI CONFERENCE HEARS

The first ASTI Education Conference since the pandemic heard that curriculum development is necessary, but must involve teachers.



Pictured at the recent ASTI Education Conference were (from left): Cathal Mac Coille, Prof. Damian Murchan (Trinity College Dublin School of Education), Miriam Duggan (ASTI President), Dr Majella Dempsey (NUI Maynooth), and Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary).

Curriculum development is now a constant feature of education, involves predicting future challenges and opportunities and, therefore, will always be a contested space. Moreover, education is a deeply valued social good and every member of society has strong associations and views on education and the work of schools.

These were some of the key messages from the ASTI's 2023 Education Conference 'Curriculum for the Future: Getting Policy and Practice Right'. Keynote Speaker Prof. Damian Murchan from Trinity College Dublin School of Education told the conference that curriculum development needs to start with considering the world our students are going to be living in. He said curriculum development must contemplate issues such as climate change, technological advancements including artificial intelligence (AI), rising violence in society, declining levels of well-being including challenges such as drug and alcohol addictions among young people, and growing cultural diversity.

"What are the skills that students need, such as critical problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, digital literacy skills? What about technology: what technological skills are needed within the curriculum? How can we integrate technology more meaningfully in the curriculum rather than just using it as a teaching aid? What about interdisciplinary skills? Do we pollinate ideas across our subjects in schools, or do we just teach our subject? What about a culturally responsive curriculum?"

"That the world changes is assumed; that the curriculum needs to evolve is recognised, but the nature of the changes are often contested. This

should neither surprise nor deter us," said Prof. Murchan, who emphasised the need for teachers' voice to be heard, respected and brought into the discussion at an early stage. He also elaborated on the modalities wherein teachers' voice can be influential, and noted the importance of engaging with multiple social actors around curriculum policy and wider education policy.

The importance of teacher agency

Dr Majella Dempsey from NUI Maynooth spoke about the importance of teacher agency in every area of education – not just in the classroom – but particularly in the curriculum development space. Referencing Stenhouse, Dr Dempsey said: "There can be no change without teacher change".

She said that teachers can only have agency when the context supports agency. While individual teachers may perceive themselves as having different degrees of agency, at a collective level, teacher agency is largely determined by specific conditions: working conditions and the degree of autonomy teachers have, curriculum, the availability of resources, the regulatory environment for schools, and the wider policy and legislative frameworks. Therefore, structures and environments that support teachers, which ensure that their work environment is well resourced, and that their work is valued, are crucial.

Other conducive conditions include facilitating professional conversations between teachers, teachers having appropriate physical environments at

school, and achieving a balance between quality curriculum materials and allowing teacher creativity and power.

Echoing Prof. Murchan, Dr Dempsey said that resistance to change is a key part of curriculum development in society. She noted that Biesta (2022) talks about the need to protect education from the needs of society: “The teacher as a professional acting in agentic ways is important in keeping the balance in the ecology of schools”.

The Scottish experience

Andrea Bradley, General Secretary of the Education Institute of Scotland (EIS), explained her union’s experience of Curriculum for Excellence, introduced in 2010 following an eight-year development period. The EIS supported the initiative, as announced in 2002, due to its “ambitions of a seamless educational journey for learners, featuring breadth, depth and creativity in learning; an emphasis on learners’ health and well-being; the promise of less high-stakes assessment and the centrality of teacher professional judgment; and, crucially, greater equity for students,” explained Ms Bradley.


However, implementation has been challenging. Curriculum for Excellence was introduced in schools during a period of recession and cutbacks. There was a sharp focus on learning and assessment, with other aspects of the initiative being overlooked. Internal assessment increased, leading to students being over-assessed and teachers being overworked.

“Teachers in Scotland have one of the highest class contact hours in the OECD. A continuation of large class sizes and overcrowded classes, and the layout of classrooms and schools, militate against teachers employing the kind of creative pedagogies – those which emphasise personalisation and choice – for the benefit of learners who increasingly present with complex additional support needs. Such constraints within the pressures of daily professional practice damage teacher well-being and morale which, coupled with lack of resources, impacts negatively on the learning experiences of children and young people.”

Focus on the strengths

The afternoon session was a panel discussion on the contested space of curriculum development comprising: Dr Melanie Ni Dhuinn, Senior Lecturer in Education, Marino Institute of Education; Dalton Tatton, Assistant Secretary General, Department of Education; and, Kieran Christie, General Secretary, ASTI.

Panel speakers emphasised that education is highly valued in Ireland and that the current system has many strengths. Curriculum development should focus on addressing shortcomings rather than ripping up all that’s currently there. Curricula will continue to change and change proposals will continue to be contested. Lessons can be learned from the Framework for Junior Cycle.



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HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS' VOICES

Proposed changes to the Leaving Cert, and the recruitment crisis in teaching, have been front and centre for the ASTI in recent weeks.

“The current proposal that the Minister made in March 2022 was to split the Irish and English papers. Paper 1 in 5th year and Paper 2 in 6th year for both Irish and English. Now we believe this is a very bad decision. It is educationally unsound for a number of reasons. The syllabus is designed to be examined at the end of a two-year period. Having an assessment at the end of year one would mean that the specifications for both Irish and English would need to be rewritten and rewritten very quickly if this proposal goes ahead.”

Geraldine O'Brien, ASTI Vice President

Talks with Keith Finnegan, Galway Bay FM, February 2, 2023

“It takes three years to become permanent as a second-level teacher. During those three years there is no prospect of any bank manager even considering you for a mortgage. There is also the issue around the professional master's in education (PME). It now takes most teachers six or seven years to qualify. A number of years ago it was changed from a one-year HDip qualification to a two-year PME. That's a luxury we can no longer afford that should be at least temporarily suspended. This is not just a recruitment issue, it's a retention issue. One of the big problems we have with retention is that people in their 30s or 40s don't see a future in teaching because there are no promotional opportunities for them that they can see. There is a promotional opportunity called posts of responsibility, but it was effectively dismantled during the crash of 2008 and it has been very poorly rebuilt.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

Ireland AM, Virgin Media, February 8, 2023

“We welcome what the Minister has done [deferred her plan to hold English and Irish paper 1 at the end of 5th year in 2024] and we want to move on. We want to move on to proper and well-resourced and well thought through curricular development here. We've always been in favour of curricular development that isn't like that proposal, change for change's sake, but is well thought through, well resourced, and takes account of the workload involved and the integrity of the State exams, and doesn't make the kinds of mistakes that were made for instance in the Junior Cycle implementation.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

Drivetime, RTÉ Radio 1, February 28, 2023

“We definitely need support [for teaching sex education]; we need a huge amount of support but what I would say as well is we need to have the class sizes for this type of topic. We are facilitators – we need to be sitting alongside students as kind of guides on the side, so we definitely need to reduce class size in these types of curricula.”

Sinéad Moore, ASTI member at St Joseph's Secondary School, Co. Dublin

Upfront with Katie Hannon, RTÉ One, February 20, 2023

“Well, I'd ask you too, what do you mean by the word reform? To reform something is to improve it. We work at the coalface, that's our job as teachers. So we have a real understanding of what will and what won't work in the classroom, and we believe that that voice must be listened to ... Do understand, we bring our experience to this, and our experience sometimes tells us that what is headlined as reform, or given the title of reform, isn't necessarily reform. In that case, in the interest of our students, we most certainly would object to things that we don't think will work. But today is a good news story, and I think it's very important the Minister has shown that she does listen to the voice of practitioners and I think that's equally important.”

Miriam Duggan, ASTI President

Newstalk Breakfast, Newstalk, February 28, 2023

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SPOTLIGHT ON AWARDS: THE PJ KENNEDY AWARD

Every year, the ASTI holds an awards ceremony that recognises the contributions of members to the ASTI and the wider world. In this issue of *ASTIR*, the focus is on the PJ Kennedy Award.



Eamon Dennehy (ASTI President 2021-2022) and Margaret Kent (PJ Kennedy Award recipient 2022).

The PJ Kennedy Award is given to retired members who have provided valuable service to their branch or to members of their branch. This includes long and diligent service as a school steward or branch officer. The Award is named for the first president of the ASTI, PJ Kennedy, who understood the importance of a strong branch structure for the union. He was a member of the Fermoy Branch, but took an active role in setting up other branches, in particular the Dublin Branch. He recognised that unless the union was able to reach into every community, it would not survive. This begins within the school community, where diligent school stewards play an essential role in representing the union in their school and in representing their colleagues at branch meetings.

Active branches are crucial to the work of the ASTI, providing a conduit between members on the ground and their union at national level. Branch activists ensure that members' issues come to the fore and their voices are heard at branch meetings, CEC, Convention and in the wider world of education and trade unionism.

At the most turbulent times for the union, it is branch activists who stand alongside their colleagues, organising ballots and pickets, and ensuring that solidarity is maintained. The PJ Kennedy Award recognises the work of particularly committed branch-level activists, who do this work year after year to an exceptional standard.

At the most turbulent times for the union, it is branch activists who stand alongside their colleagues, organising ballots and pickets, and ensuring that solidarity is maintained.

Profile of a PJ Kennedy Award winner

Margaret Kent received a PJ Kennedy Award in 2022 for her sterling service at branch level. She dedicated a huge amount of time and effort to representing the views of her Fermoy Branch colleagues at CEC meetings and Annual Convention for many years.

At different points, Margaret also held branch officer roles as Fermoy Branch secretary and chairperson. These are roles that require significant responsibility and commitment from activists. Branch officers are collectively responsible for the running of branches, organising meetings and recruitment, and liaising with school stewards and head office.

Margaret held many roles within the ASTI, and served on a number of ASTI committees, including many years as part of the ASTI Education Committee, where she worked with other ASTI members to advise Standing Committee on educational matters. Margaret has also been school steward and subject convenor for home economics.

Margaret dedicated a huge amount of time and effort to representing the views of her Fermoy Branch colleagues at CEC meetings and Annual Convention for many years.

Branches can nominate retired members for a PJ Kennedy Award using the forms sent to the branches each September. For more information about ASTI awards, see: <https://www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants/>

PRIORITISING EDUCATION

Convincing governments to invest in education and safeguarding girls' education were among the pressing issues discussed at a recent online seminar hosted by the Irish Forum for Global Education.



The Irish Forum for Global Education (IFGE), of which the ASTI is a member organisation, hosted an online lunchtime seminar to celebrate UN International Day for Education in January. The seminar reflected on the international and domestic challenges on the theme for 2023: 'Invest in people, prioritise education'.

The IFGE is a voluntary network of civil society actors, NGOs, and other trade unions, education providers, professional associations, academics and individuals.

Aidan Clifford, Chairperson of the IFGE, welcomed attendees, emphasised the importance of inclusive and quality education in peace and development, and called on governments to commit to strong political mobilisation to support financing for education and ensure that commitments are translated into action.

Activism

This was followed by contributions from Maryam and Nivaal Rehman, Global Partnership for Education Youth Leaders. The twin activists from Pakistan spoke about the importance of education access for girls and the impact of climate change on girls' education. They explained that when climate emergencies occur, such as the devastating floods in Pakistan, schools close and girls are less likely to return to education when schools reopen.

David Archer, Head of Public Services for Action Aid International, then spoke about the financing of education. He outlined the importance of recognising domestic funding in education, with 97% of global education funding coming from domestic sources. He called for mechanisms to allow countries to renegotiate and cancel debt in order to allow them to increase investment in education. He condemned International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity policies, which often recommend reductions in public sector wage bills, and therefore lower investment in education.

Peter Wallet, education specialist for the UNESCO International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, discussed the work of the task force in attempting to mobilise governments and other stakeholders for the advancement of teachers and quality learning. He outlined the three main lines of action for the task force: knowledge production and dissemination; advocacy; and, policy learning.

Dr John Walsh, lecturer in the School of Education in Trinity College Dublin, then gave attendees a history of Irish investment in education, including the introduction of free education in the 1960s and its huge impact on school enrolment. He emphasised the importance of investment in education in creating economic and social change in Ireland.

For more information on the IFGE see:
<https://www.globaleducation.ie/>

BLENDED LEARNING

Ryan Gallagher from St Aloysius' College in Cork undertook a PhD showing how blended learning could assist teaching, but says support is key. Ryan was the recipient of an ASTI Scholarship.



Where were you studying and what was the title of your research?

I undertook my PhD in UCC from 2018-2022. It was research based, so there were no major programme modules to undertake. The title of my thesis was 'An Investigation of the Design, Implementation and Evaluation of an Online Chemistry Programme in the Irish Secondary School'.

I carried out all my research alongside teaching full-time. There were pros and cons to this. Some of the pros were that I needed an income and by continuing to teach, I was still in the teacher mindset and able to improve my resources. The cons were time commitments and balancing the teaching and my research. It was essentially a four-year juggling act.

I would encourage other teachers to apply for the ASTI Scholarship as there are very limited teacher-specific grants available. The ASTI has also been very supportive to me. As with any application for a grant, make sure to give yourself time to fill in the application form and when providing the details, be straight to the point.

Could you tell me about your research?

I wanted to determine to what effect online learning could be used to support the teaching of Leaving Cert Chemistry. Online learning is vast, so I specifically focused on the concept of blended learning. My research was to determine if blended learning could be implemented successfully into Leaving Cert Chemistry and, if so, to what extent? There are many models of blended learning but one that I explored in particular was the flipped classroom. The idea of the flipped classroom is that students learn new material outside of the classroom and then, within the classroom, the teacher has more time to implement active learning strategies that focus on higher-order thinking.

In theory, the benefits of the flipped classroom are immediate and powerful, but I wanted to determine if it could be implemented and just how effective it could be. To answer these questions, I built a website – The Conical Flask – and then created video lessons and uploaded them alongside other resources, such as notes, assessment activities and revision guides. Students and teachers used these resources and reported their findings. I analysed data from website usage, student performance and teacher feedback. The website was launched in 2018 and has undergone a number of revisions based on student and teacher feedback. The ASTI Scholarship was crucial to my PhD as colleges have limited grants. In addition to fees, my PhD required significant investment initially for the hardware, such as a laptop and iPad, as well as the software. One of the big disadvantages to creating online resources is the initial costs.

What were the main findings?

Blended learning

Blended learning is viable to support the teaching of Leaving Cert Chemistry, but only if multiple resources are available to students, such as notes and especially assessment resources. Teachers did find that they were covering the course more efficiently and that the classroom became more active when using blended learning strategies. Support is key – you can't just give online resources to students and expect them to know what to do. They need to be guided. When giving them work, be specific in what you expect from them, just as you would do when assigning written work.

The flipped classroom

The flipped classroom can be implemented successfully, provided a high-quality tailored teaching and learning package is arranged alongside self-assessment resources. Students regularly stated that they were unsure if they were learning or not using this model, so self-assessment resources are crucial. Student self-confidence is important to the success of the flipped classroom. The flipped classroom model should only be implemented where appropriate and not forced.

Teacher autonomy

Teacher autonomy needs to be respected; therefore, forcing a set ratio between online learning and face-to-face is not appropriate. Teachers should be allowed to adopt blended learning at their own pace and results from this study showed that teachers will use these new pedagogies more as they gain confidence utilising them.

Barriers

There are a lot of barriers to implementing blended learning. It's very time consuming to create video lessons and other resources. A significant amount of editing expertise is required. It is also quite expensive initially to buy both the hardware and software to create video lessons and other resources. The implementation of a new pedagogy is always challenging for any teacher and requires time to be utilised correctly.

How do you hope this work will help teachers/the ASTI?

I'm hoping this research will allow teachers to see the many educational advantages of implementing blended learning strategies, such as the flipped

MY RESEARCH

classroom. However, I also want to show teachers this in a practical sense. Literature on education can be quick to point out the amazing benefits of a new resource or pedagogy in an ideal world, but much of this is theory based and not practical based. I wanted to identify the challenges teachers may encounter and allow them to make up their own minds on the matter. I do believe my research is applicable to most Leaving Cert subjects and hopefully this research can act as a roadmap for teachers interested in doing the same for other subjects.

What is the potential of this research to improve learning in schools?

Learning can be enhanced by means of blended classroom approaches such as the flipped classroom. Students regularly stated that they felt more confident with the Chemistry curriculum. They believed that their learning was more efficient when compared to their other classes. This increased learning was echoed by their teachers. However, this is dependent on a number of factors. Scaffolding needs to be applied when using the flipped classroom. The research shows that self-assessment resources, alongside notes, are important for students' self-confidence. This makes sense considering we are asking them to study material not previously taught to them.

What inspired/motivated you to undertake postgraduate research?

I have a strong interest in science education and in particular how to make learning for students more efficient, and also make the classroom more interactive. I teach in an academic school, so finding a balance was important to me. I've always been interested in technology. In 2017, I found that students were missing classes due to matches and other extracurricular activities. Chemistry is a difficult subject to keep up with, so I started making video lessons to help these students and students who learn at a different pace. As a teacher, I owe it to the class to finish the course but I can see students finding some areas very challenging, becoming demotivated and then falling behind. So, it was my hope that these video lessons could improve student agency and allow them to learn at their own pace. It was my research supervisor, Dr Declan Kennedy, who encouraged me to pursue this interest in the form of a PhD.

What was it like returning to education as a student?

I've always been a student really as I started college straight after my Leaving Cert. When I finished my graduate degree, I did a research master's for two years. I took a break for about two years and then I started my PhD.

Personal profile

Ryan is a chemistry and biology teacher in St Aloysius College, Carrigtwohill, Cork. He is a big Formula 1 fan and watches as many races as he can. He hopes to see a race weekend in person this year, hopefully with Mercedes winning. He works part-time in UCC Science Education training student teachers in laboratory best practice. He likes to travel often and regularly goes scuba diving when he can on those travels.

Ryan's website is available for use by students and teachers at:
www.theconicalflask.ie

For more information on the ASTI Scholarship, go to:
<https://www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants>

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LISTEN TO TEACHERS' VOICE ON SENIOR CYCLE

Any change to Senior Cycle requires thoughtful discussion and understanding of the complexity of education, says ASTI President MIRIAM DUGGAN in this article, which was previously published in *Education Matters*.

Education is a social and economic good. Education enables our students to socialise, to develop key life skills, and to live healthy, balanced lives. It also develops their capacity to reason, to understand their society and other societies, and to know their history and that of others. It enables them to become engaged in critical thinking about the world they live in, to become active citizens, to understand how decisions are made – and challenged – perhaps to discover a lifelong interest in a subject of study, and to respect the role that arts and the humanities play in our interior lives, especially in a world of TikTok and Instagram. In short, education constitutes a dynamic interplay of social, physical, intellectual, economic and cultural imperatives. To understate things, it is complex, and understanding that complexity ought to be an essential aspect of any change process at second level.

Recent change

Recent years have seen much change at Junior Cycle. Whether these changes merit being called reforms, history will decide. Nonetheless, it seems timely to reflect on what can be learned from our experience of the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle.

From the beginning, the ASTI has monitored the process of implementing the Framework and its impact on the work of students and teachers. We have completed regular surveys of our members, offering them the opportunity to air their professional views and concerns, and assessing their experience of the implementation process and subject specifications. These surveys include Teachers' Voice (2013), Survey of English, Business and Science Teachers on CBAs, SLARs and Assessment Tasks (February 2018), Teachers' Experience of Inservice for Junior Cycle (October 2018), and the

Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle (January 2022). This body of work by the ASTI is significant on a number of levels – not least because it is the only real-time record of teachers' experiences of implementing enormous change. It is to be hoped that the Minister will study what we have learned from the introduction of the Framework on how and how not to approach further change at second level.

Several key strands emerged in these surveys. Teachers could see that the Framework could have the potential to improve learning outcomes and this is contrary to the narrative that later grew around teachers resisting change. Teachers did raise their concerns from the start, which in retrospect were quite prophetic. Given their understanding of the complexity of the school system and the need to plan change thoroughly, teachers were correctly cautious about the timeframe for the implementation of the Framework, believing that meaningful change can only occur over a reasonable time period.

Added to this, the context of change was given insufficient consideration. Successive austerity budgets and cutbacks in education – reduced staffing levels, fewer resources, reductions in guidance provision, larger classes, the consequences of removal of in-school management structures – did not create conducive conditions for successive innovations such as the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and School Self-Evaluation. Most significantly, the increased workload and lack of consultation in this process led to teachers experiencing “dissonance, demoralisation and a feeling of disempowerment” (Teachers' Voice, 2019). These legacy issues in the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle have had a negative impact on the attractiveness of the teaching profession, as evidenced by the growing

recruitment and retention crisis we are experiencing in schools throughout the country.

Teacher concerns

Throughout the ASTI's engagement on the Framework for Junior Cycle, teachers have been very clear on the importance of retaining the externally assessed Junior Certificate examination as a trusted and valued form of assessment. As teachers, we regularly assess our students but we know that this process is complemented by assessment for State certification being externally set and marked. It is a trusted and valued system, and allows for real comparability of standards. This is a very important part of ASTI policy and an absolute red line for our members.

Curricular revision and redevelopment are necessary – this is nothing new. As the body of knowledge, discovery, interest and technology advances, so too the curriculum must adapt. However, as our experience of the Framework for Junior Cycle's subject specifications grew, so too did teachers' concern over each subject's depth of treatment in the new subject specifications, and this was a recurrent theme in our January 2022 survey of 2,981 teachers. A total of 40% of respondents disagreed that the subject specifications contained an appropriate balance between knowledge and skills, while only 35% agreed. It says much about teachers' uncertainty about the specifications that 25% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Including some open questions in the survey allowed the ASTI to access a rich seam of qualitative data, including teachers' perceptions of the new subject specifications. The following comments give a flavour of some of those perceptions:

- “The specifications for my subject are too vague”.
- “I am concerned with the watering down of skills and knowledge that the new Junior Cycle has introduced”.

Perhaps most starkly, another teacher commented: “My subject has been dumbed down – I am no longer confident that I am teaching correctly”.

Volume of content and its impact on depth of treatment emerged as another theme in this survey. Teachers felt that the volume of content in the new specifications left little time for real student engagement with the subject, thereby having a ‘dumbing-down’ impact. It was clear from responses that the introduction of common-level papers for non-core subjects also had a negative effect on learning and preparation for Senior Cycle, with 78% disagreeing that the subject specifications support progression to Senior Cycle.

ASTI research

In the context of reviewing Senior Cycle, the ASTI commissioned Dr Brian Fleming to do independent research on the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle, the results of which were published in ‘Making Education Policy Work’ (2019). Acknowledging the importance of setting realistic time targets, Fleming emphasises several features crucial to encouraging transformative change in teaching and learning. He speaks of the need for a clear and shared articulation of the principles of change, the importance of building capacity in schools prior to implementing change, and the significance of recognising that change needs to be incremental rather than radical. Allied with the recognition of how teachers' workload has intensified over recent years, these key findings have great relevance for any further proposed change.

In tracing how best to form and deliver policy, Fleming gives the history of the development of two policy implementation models: the top-down view, whereby Government ministers make policy decisions and practitioners simply implement them; and, the bottom-up view, which acknowledges the necessary input of practitioners. The former perspective sees implementation as a matter of course, the success of which can be judged by performative measures. This was largely the approach taken to the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle and, in short, it was not a success. Despite bypassing National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) recommendations and announcing wide-ranging changes to Senior Cycle last March, it is to be hoped that the Minister will come to see that top-down policy development has limited chance of success.

It is unsurprising that Fleming emphasises that teacher agency is central to any change process in schools. Teachers are probably the first to recognise what is happening on the ground and in the lives of our students. We are tuned into them intellectually and emotionally like no other group of professionals – these are our everyday working lives. Thus, we are placed in a unique position to inform any redevelopment of the curriculum because our voice is that of the reflective, experienced, professional practitioner.

Listen to the teacher's voice

It is important to note that the voice of teachers is different from that of other stakeholders. Teachers understand their subject areas and, more importantly, know what works in the classroom to support their students' learning. Engaged rather than ignored, the voice of the practitioner can offer great insight into any change process in schools and ought to be at the heart of any proposed change.

Two final thoughts on the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle. The first is that there are many lessons to be learned and, before making definitive changes, we would hope that the Minister would reflect on the serious body of work the ASTI has compiled on teachers' experience of Junior Cycle.

The second point refers to what it is hoped we don't have to learn from our recent experience. During the Covid pandemic, teachers made the difficult decision to involve themselves in calculated and predicted grades. We did this because the alternative was to leave our students in stasis. It would, however, be a serious mistake to interpret the decision we made during the global pandemic as a weakening of our policy on external assessment for State certification. Assessing our own students for State certification is directly contrary to the relational style of teaching, which our society values so highly. When we teach, we say to our students if they make mistakes, we will help them and guide them. We are their advocates and so much of what we do is based on that relationship. We can't be advocates and judges, and that is why we cannot accept the Minister's intention that we would be involved in assessing our own students for State certification. We are not simply saying no, but rather are defending a value that we, as the practitioners on the spot, know to be of immeasurable worth.

This article was first published in *Ireland's Education Yearbook 2022*, print edition Second Level chapter, and in the online edition at: <https://irelandseducationyearbook.ie/downloads/IEYB2022/YB2022-Second-Level-03.pdf>

PRESSING ISSUES ON THE AGENDA AT CONVENTION

Some of the key items on the agenda for ASTI Annual Convention 2023 include Senior Cycle redevelopment and improving education for students.



This year's ASTI Annual Convention will be held in the Clayton Whites Hotel, Wexford, from April 11-13. Convention is where ASTI members from across the country gather to decide ASTI policy for the coming year. Delegates will listen to key speeches from ASTI President Miriam Duggan, Minister for Education Norma Foley TD, and others.

Topics for debate

Some of the key motions for debate at Annual Convention 2023 are Senior Cycle redevelopment, improving education for students, teacher workload, middle management in schools, and sick leave arrangements.

On the issue of Senior Cycle redevelopment, delegates will stress that any changes must build upon existing high standards in education, fairness and equity for students, and trust in the State exams system.

Motion 53 will ask for a committee to be formed to develop a set of positive proposals for Senior Cycle reform that the ASTI can promote as an alternative to the Minister's proposals.

The OECD report Education at a Glance 2022 ranks Ireland in last place out of 36 countries for investment in second-level education as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP). Convention will have motions on the ASTI entering negotiations with the Department of Education on reducing class sizes and increasing the services provided by the National Educational Psychological Service to all secondary schools to ensure sufficient special educational needs (SEN) provision.

On teacher workload, Motion 33 will ask that the ASTI enter into negotiations with the Department of Education regarding the current requirements of Croke Park hours, to seek a reduction to reflect concessions made in other sectors of the public service.

On middle management in schools, Motion 5 is a composite motion, which asks that the ASTI seek additional allocation of teaching hours to provide for a reduction in teaching time on a pro-rata basis, to allow AP1 and AP2

post holders to perform their duties.

On sick leave, Motion 28 asks that the ASTI seek significant improvements in teachers' sick leave entitlements, and Motion 18 asks that the ASTI demand special leave be granted to those who experience a miscarriage or who are partners of those who experience a miscarriage.

There are many more motions on the above topics and additional motions include those on Teaching Council representation and the Framework for Junior Cycle.

For a full list of motions at Convention 2023 visit:
<https://www.asti.ie/member-benefits/events/annual-convention-2023/>

Tune in to ASTI Convention 2023

How to follow what's happening at Convention 2023

Watch key speeches live and read them back

Key speeches from the ASTI President and the Minister for Education will be streamed live on the ASTI website. 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 2023, including what delegates are saying and what decisions are being made. Don't forget to use the hashtag #ASTI23 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

ASTI COMMUNITY AND COMPREHENSIVE COMMITTEE

The Community and Comprehensive Committee represents members in the community and comprehensive sector.



Standing (from left): Community and Comprehensive Committee members Liam McHugh, Patrick Curley, Anne Marie O'Mahony, Ian McColgan (Chairperson), Jackie Wallace, Peter Masterson and Breda Lynch (EO: Industrial Relations). On screen: Michael McGrath and Geraldine O'Brien.

The role of the ASTI Community and Comprehensive Committee is to advise and make recommendations to Standing Committee on issues affecting members in community and comprehensive schools and community colleges. The committee meets approximately five times a year.

The 10 members of the committee are elected on a regional basis by the ASTI membership in the community and comprehensive sector. The current members of the committee are:

- Sinead Keegan
- Ian McColgan
- Peter Masterson
- Anne Marie O'Mahony
- Dermot Brennan
- Jackie Wallace
- Patrick Curley
- Liam McHugh

The ASTI President, Vice President and Honorary National Organiser also attend meetings and Breda Lynch, EO: Industrial Relations, provides professional support to the Committee.

The Community and Comprehensive Committee was formed at a time when there were very few ASTI members outside of the voluntary

secondary schools. The Committee was created to ensure that the concerns of members within the community and comprehensive sector were attended to by the ASTI and to encourage recruitment of new ASTI members from within the growing community and comprehensive sector. Recruitment continues to be a key concern of the Committee. Members of the Committee liaise regularly with school stewards within their region in community and comprehensive schools regarding recruitment of new members. As schools in this sector are often dual-union schools, recruitment can be particularly challenging. The Committee has recently noted the fact that many teachers are refusing to join either union in their school.

The Committee monitors growth in ASTI membership in the community and comprehensive sector. Membership in this sector has grown from 2,305 in 1997 to 3,277 in 2022. Membership growth in the sector improved at an increasing rate to 2020, but has seen a marginal reduction during 2021 and 2022.

Other concerns of the Committee include additional layers of management within the community and comprehensive sector, the lack of adequate posts of responsibility, and the appointment/appeal process. The Committee is also concerned about ASTI representation on the Teaching Council and is keen to see an ASTI-endorsed candidate in each constituency in the next Teaching Council election.

ASSAULT LEAVE

Teachers who are physically injured at work may be entitled to assault leave. The ASTI continues to raise the issue of lack of recognition of mental trauma for assault leave purposes with the Department of Education at every opportunity.



Who is eligible for assault leave?

Leave of absence under the Scheme for Leave of Absence following Assault may be granted to a teacher who is unable to perform his/her duties due to physical injury following an assault in the course of the teacher's duties and during approved school activities.

The incident giving rise to an application for leave under this scheme must not have been due to any negligence or any act or omission on the part of the teacher, and all due procedures and protocols in regard to personal safety must have been adhered to.

What are the school's responsibilities in relation to assault in the classroom?

Boards of Management should have in place a clearly defined policy/code of behaviour/safety statement, which includes procedures to be implemented in the event of an assault of an employee. These procedures should include:

- seeking medical assistance, where necessary
- immediate reporting of incidents to school management
- recording of incidents in an incident report book
- reporting of the incident to the Health and Safety Authority
- reporting to the Gardaí, where appropriate, and
- ensuring that all appropriate safeguards have been put in place to protect persons at risk and to prevent, in so far as is practicable, the occurrence of assault.

How much absence can I take under the assault leave scheme?

Only absences medically certified as a physical injury qualify for leave under this scheme. The maximum leave available under the Scheme for Leave of Absence following Assault is three months (92 days) at full pay in a rolling four-year period.

In exceptional cases, such as where a significant period of hospitalisation is required or in situations of a second or subsequent incident of assault, the leave may be extended for a further period, not exceeding three months (92 days) at full pay, subject to an overall limit of six months (183 days) at full pay in a rolling four-year period. Any subsequent absence will be dealt with

under the Sick Leave Scheme.

Leave of absence following assault ends on:

- the ceasing of the certification by a duly qualified medical practitioner of the physical injury, or
- the maximum leave limits available under this scheme being exhausted, or
- certification of fitness to return to duties.

How can I apply for assault leave?

In order for an absence to be recorded as leave of absence following assault, the application form (Appendix A – Circular 0061/2017) must be completed by the teacher concerned and the employer (or, in the case of Education and Training Board (ETB) schools, the Principal) and forwarded by the employer to the Department/ETB within a week of the incident occurring.

Where in exceptional cases a teacher is unable to complete his/her part of the application within a week of the incident due to physical incapacity, this period may be extended by the employer – applications must be forwarded to the Department/ETB within a reasonable period in this event.

The application form must set out details of the incident and must be accompanied by copies of the required reporting documentation.

What if I am assaulted in the classroom but there are emotional rather than physical injuries, e.g., sexual assault?

Unfortunately, unless you have suffered physical injuries as a result of an assault, you will not be entitled to assault leave and will have to use your ordinary sick leave to cover any absences from school. The Circular states that "Only absences medically certified as a physical injury qualify for leave under this Scheme..."

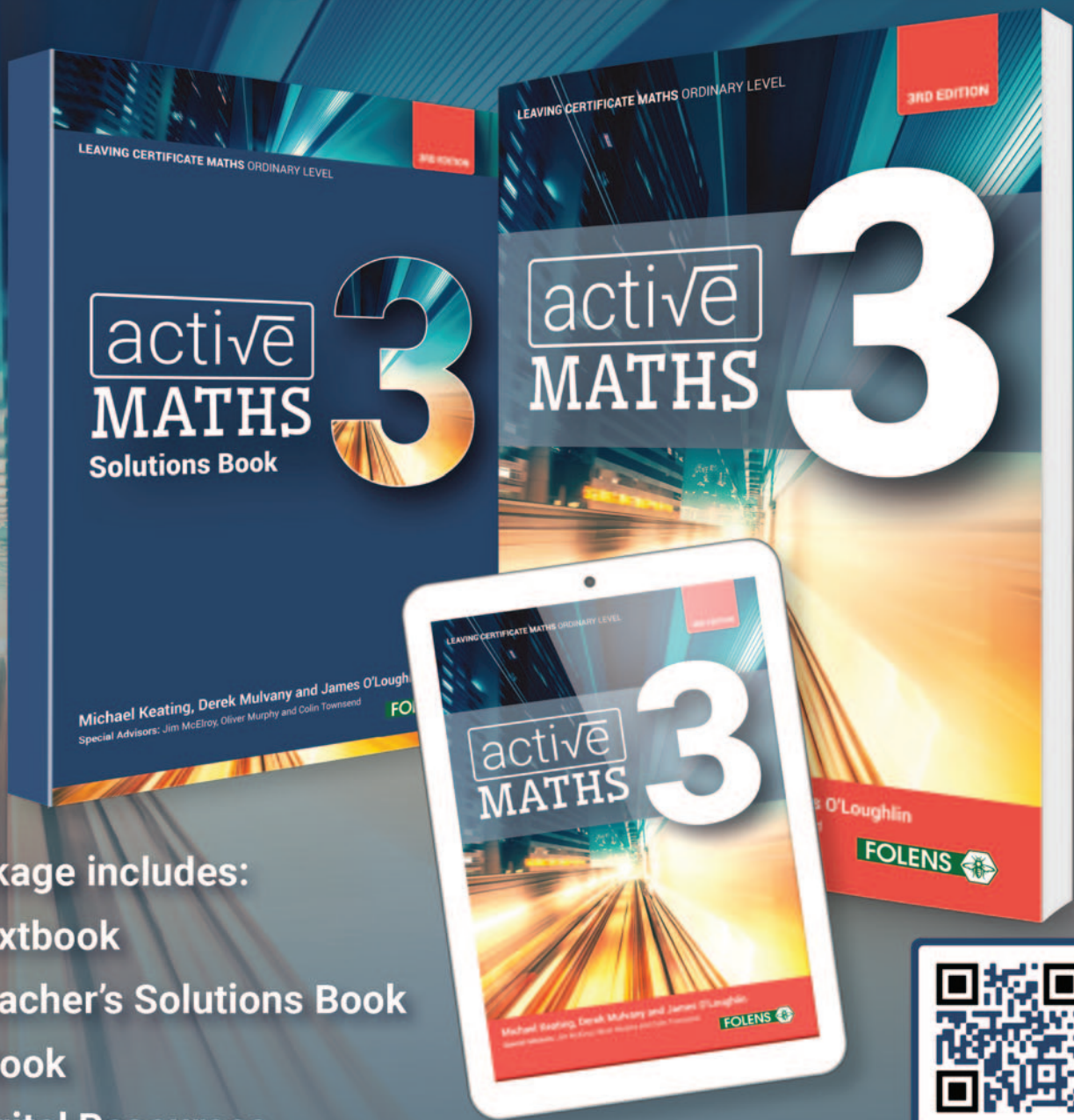
The ASTI recognises that this is an appalling situation where mental trauma suffered as a result of assault (including assaults of a sexual nature) is not regarded as assault for leave purposes. To this end the union raises this issue with the Department of Education at every opportunity, including directly with the Minister. The practice of excluding the non-physical effects of assault from an assault leave scheme is out of step with most of Europe and must change.

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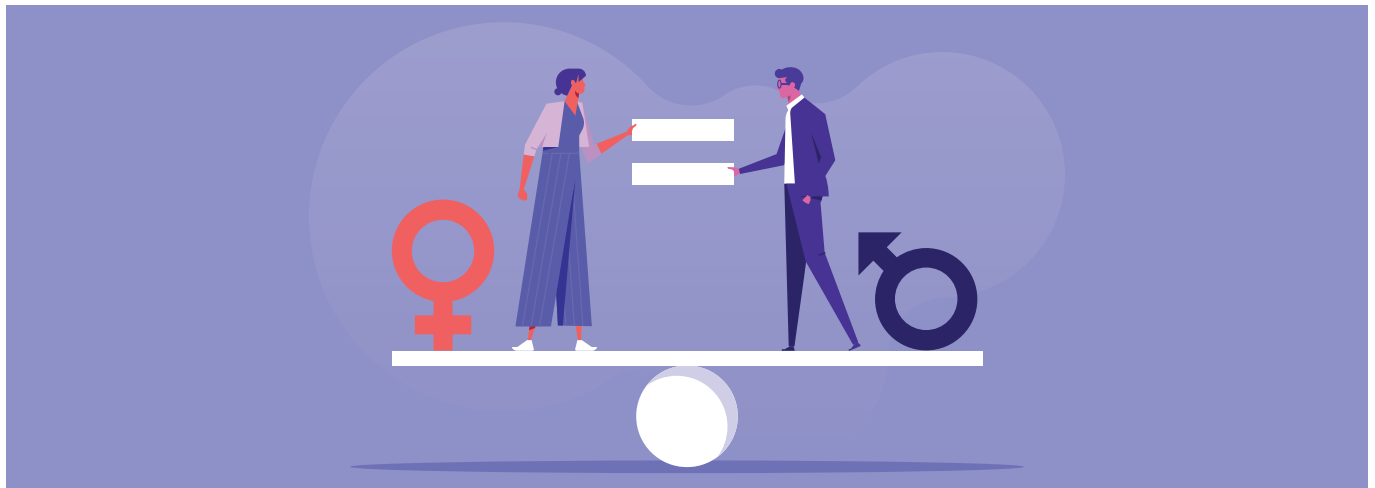
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WOMEN IN THE ASTI

March 8 was International Women’s Day. Women make up 70% of ASTI membership, but this is not reflected in their representation at branch, committee or CEC level, says DIARMAID DE PAOR, ASTI Deputy General Secretary.



Each year, figures showing the proportion of women who hold positions in the ASTI are published in the Convention Handbook. Women make up 70% of the ASTI’s membership. Therefore, if women were represented

in proportion to their numbers, we would expect that 70% of the branch officers, committee members, delegates to Annual Convention, etc., would be women. Unfortunately, the actuality is very different.

Gender profile within the ASTI		
	Female	Male
Membership	12,640	5,517
School stewards	265	193
CEC	76	91
Branch delegates to Convention	120	102
Standing Committee	5	13
Branch Honorary Organisers	18	12
Branch Chair	27	29
Branch Vice-Chair	21	17
Branch Secretary	29	25
Branch Treasurers	24	30
Branch Equality Officers	20	13
Regional Organisers	6	12
Principals and Deputy Principals Advisory Committee	5	7
Community/Comprehensive	4	5
Rules Committee	1	4
Teaching Council Advisory Committee	2	3
Steering Committee	2	3
Education Committee	6	3
Pensions Sub-Committee	2	3
Sickness Benefit Committee	4	3
Investment Committee	1	3
Equality Committee	5	4
Trustees	1	2
Safety, Health & Welfare Committee	4	2
Benevolent Committee	2	1
Awards Committee	1	2
ASTIR Editorial Boards	1	1
Non-Permanent Teachers Advisory Committee	3	3

Looking at the numbers

Beginning with the officers of the Association, although the President and the Vice-President are both women, the other three officers of the Association are men. Out of 18 Standing Committee Regional Representatives, only five are women (28%). When it comes to ASTI committees the situation is a bit better, with 44 out of 53 committee members being women, although this figure of 45% does not even get us to an even representation – and remember the union’s membership is 70% female.

Things improve again when we get to branch level, with 139 out of 265 committee members being women (52.5%). CEC has 45% female representation and women make up 54% of branch delegates to Convention. When it comes to representation at school level, 265 women and 193 men are school stewards, meaning that 58% of these positions are held by women.

Unsatisfactory

An interesting pattern in these figures is that, the higher up in the ranks of the ASTI you go, the lower the female representation. This is particularly notable at Standing Committee, where women have struggled to make up more than one-third of the members.

Another point to note is that the figures have changed very little over the past decade or so. Female representation among branch delegates to Convention has grown slightly, for example. However, this has been offset by an increase in the proportion of men on CEC. To be fair, there are many organisations where (even in proportion to overall gender breakdown) female representation is much worse, but can we be satisfied with a situation where women are not present, in proportion to their dominance in ASTI membership, at all levels of the union?

Working towards change

On the assumption that we do want to change this situation, what can be done about it? That is one of the questions that will face the new Equality Committee, which is due to be elected at Convention 2023. Firstly, the Committee will have to explore the reasons for this situation, a situation that is echoed in the figures we have for school management, where 54% of ASTI deputy principals and just under 50% of ASTI principal teachers are women. Reasons for this underrepresentation almost certainly include caring responsibilities, which still fall disproportionately on women, and the lack of a tradition of women in leadership roles.

At past Conventions, delegates have consistently adopted reports from the Equality Committee that proposed the examination of quotas as a possible move to support women to achieve representative positions. This is not to say that any decision has been taken on the introduction of quotas, but rather that a discussion is opened up within the union, at branches and in schools, on the issue. The Equality Committee will be developing proposals to facilitate this discussion in the coming months.

As stated earlier, the situation with regard to the under-representation of women within the ASTI is not the worst that it could be, but there is definitely room for considerable improvement and the work on this is only beginning.

GERRY FAHY



The Tuam Branch of the ASTI was very saddened by the sudden and untimely passing of our good friend Gerry Fahy in April 2021.

Gerry was a revered teacher of accounting and business subjects in Ballinrobe Community School. In addition, he was an excellent supporter of teachers through his long involvement with the ASTI. Gerry was a regular

attendee at branch meetings and kindly gave of his time as a dedicated branch officer, holding the role of Branch Treasurer for many years.

Gerry loved to catch up with friends in the branch. He was renowned for his brilliant sense of humour and an après-meeting chat with Gerry always brought laughter. Gerry and other branch officers organised many retirement events for ASTI branch members and they were always great occasions.

Tuam Branch was delighted to nominate Gerry for a P.J. Kennedy Award a number of years ago to mark our appreciation of his outstanding service to our branch. Gerry and his lifelong friend and fellow branch member, Tommy Davin, were both recipients of these awards by the ASTI on the same night and it was a proud and enjoyable occasion for them both.

Gerry was a very active member of the RSTA and attended many events organised by his great friend and former school colleague Carmel Heneghan. A particular highlight of Gerry’s calendar after retirement was the locally renowned annual Christmas gathering in Ashford Castle organised by Carmel as chairperson of the Mayo branch of the RSTA.

Gerry spoke with great pride of his family always – his beloved wife Monica, his daughter Deirdre and son-in-law Declan, and his three grandchildren Dylan, Faye and Laoise. One of Gerry’s proudest moments was in April 2020 when Dylan, eight years old at the time, cycled the equivalent of a marathon around Tuam, raising €14,000 for healthcare workers at University Hospital Galway, while staying inside the permitted 2km radius. Gerry, Dylan and family were interviewed on RTÉ news.

Gerry was a very committed sportsman. In his younger years he played football for his secondary school, CBS Tuam, and played corner forward for his local club Tuam Stars. He met many of his lifelong friends through his involvement with football. Gerry was also heavily involved in Gaelic games in Ballinrobe Community School. He gave generously of his time coaching and encouraging young players. He was one of two trainers who led the senior boys’ football team to an All-Ireland title in 1990. In that same decade he coached the senior ladies team to five All-Ireland titles in a row, which was a monumental achievement.

Gerry loved golf and was a valued member of Tuam Golf Club. Again, he volunteered his time coaching young people on the golf course and serving on various committees. Gerry was also a member of the Mayo Teachers’ Golf Alliance. He really enjoyed the social side of this involvement too. He and Monica went on numerous trips abroad organised by the Alliance, including a very memorable one to Argentina.

Gerry was a gem and an absolute character. The inimitable sound of his familiar laughter filled the air wherever he was. He was great fun and brilliant company. Gerry will always be missed by his huge circle of friends but will certainly never be forgotten.

Go mbeidh leaba i measc na Naomh dár gcara dílis Gerry! Ní bheidh a leithéid arís ann. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.

All of Gerry’s great friends in Tuam Branch ASTI.

RSTA welcomes new members

The RSTA would be delighted to welcome retiring teachers to its ranks.

As Spring approaches and the days get longer, teachers can begin to look forward to the summer and a well-earned rest. Some of you may be thinking of retirement, or you may have colleagues who are. The RSTA extends a warm welcome to you and any colleagues who may be retiring this year. Over the years, serving teachers have been superbly represented by the ASTI. However, once teachers retire, they still need an association to fight for their rights and defend their pensions. This need is amply met by the RSTA. It is a founder member of The Alliance of Retired Public Servants, and is also represented on the Retired Workers' Committee of Congress. The RSTA is actively campaigning for the maintenance of parity with the salaries of serving teachers and representation at talks where pay agreements are being discussed. We need numerical strength, so we are encouraging all retiring teachers to join. Apart from advocacy, the RSTA also organises regular meetings, social and cultural activities,



Susie Hall (RSTA President).



From left: Carmel Heneghan (RSTA Committee), Michael O'Neill (RSTA National Secretary), Diarmaid de Paor (ASTI Deputy General Secretary), Susie Hall (RSTA President), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Padraig Murphy (ASTI Honorary Treasurer), and Henry Collins (RSTA Committee) at the recent RSTA coffee morning in ASTI Head Office.

and trips both within Ireland and abroad. We will be delighted to welcome you!

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___

Well-being resources for teachers

The Department of Education and Spectrum.Life, Ireland's largest corporate health and wellness provider, provide teachers and school staff with free health and well-being support services. The service is called Wellbeing Together | Follaine le Cheile, and offers all school staff access to a free employee assistance programme and mental health supports, including 24/7 support via freephone number or live chat, case management from a qualified counsellor, and well-being information and webinars available via a bespoke online portal. All points of contact for the service are qualified and experienced mental health professionals. Spectrum.Life's Digital Wellbeing Studio is also available to all school staff. This is a service that delivers a weekly seminar on health and wellness topics and a live Digital Gym timetable. In 2022, the Digital Gym had over 15,000 views, with the most popular classes including Pilates for Beginners, Quick HIIT & Abs, and Combat Fitness.

Register now for access to the well-being platform at:
<https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login?org=y1VIIU17>

Scan the QR code to find out more about how the employee assistance service can help you.



Understanding Low Vision



The National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) has released a video, 'Understanding Low Vision', which aims to educate members of the public about sight loss and how they should interact with people who

have sight loss conditions, and who have different sight and life experiences as a result.

The NCBI's Low Vision Project Group, which is comprised of people with different sight loss conditions and who have different lived experiences of sight loss, wrote and produced the video, in which they explain to the public that sight loss is a spectrum that affects people in different ways. As such, they should be aware that how they interact with people with sight loss will vary from person to person, based on what their needs are.

'Understanding Low Vision' is available to watch on the NCBI's YouTube channel, which also contains other resources related to sight loss for those seeking information about, or who are experiencing, sight loss:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_u65FzVjoI

Anyone who is living with sight loss and who requires assistance can contact the NCBI on their dedicated Infoline at 1800 911 250 to learn about the services, supports and training that the NCBI can provide.



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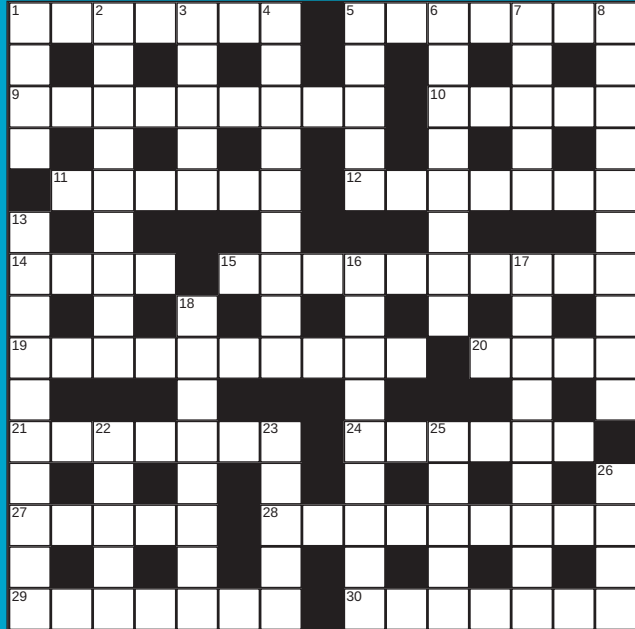


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Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: ASTIR Crossword No. 2302,
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, April 7, 2023.

LEIDEANNA TRASNA

1. Rogha an fheoilséantóra (7)
5. Caint, comhrá, clabaireacht (7)
9. Pónaí (9)
10. Iasc amh na Seapáine (5)
11. Déad ón bhfia clasaiceach (6)
12. Ní inniu ná inné an t-am a rachaidh seo (7)
14. An chéad duine ar domhan a maraíodh go fealltach, de réir an Bhíobla (4)
15. Bruachbhaile i ndeisceart Bhaile Átha Cliath (5,5)
19. Sa ghramadach, ... na Fusachta, na Deacrachta, na hOiríúnachta nó an Ríachtanaís (10)
20. Áirse (4)
21. Pancóg traidisiúnta na hÉireann, déanta as prátaí agus plúr (7)
24. Allende, scríbhneoir de chuid na Sile (6)
27. Déirtear go raibh sé an-Raibléiseach, an rí seo ar Shasana (5)
28. ... uirbeach, bainise nó bealaigh (9)
29. Iar-rí na hIordáine a fuair bás i 1999 (7)
30. Cumadóir *The Barber of Seville* (7)

LEIDEANNA SÍOS

1. Bíonn go leor sa chúinne (4)
2. Tuairim, barúil, smaoinemh (9)
3. An chéad ríomhaire leictreónach a tháinig ar an saol i 1945 (5)
4. Bhí 101 den phór seo i scannán Disney ó 1956 (9)
5. Amhrán de chuid na Dubliners: "Only me says ..." (5)
6. Príomhchathair na Táidsíceastáine (8)
7. Seanda ó chraos tanáí (5)
8. Cúis nó fáth a thugtar às gan rud éigin a dhéanamh (10)
13. Réigiún soir ó dheas ó Mhurascaill Mheisiceo, nó duine ón réigiún seo (10)
16. Creachadóir, scriostóir, milleadóir (9)
17. Saineolaí ar chultúir daoine nó treibheanna (9)
18. Téann rudaí in aimhréidh nuair a chaitear é seo sna "works" (8)
22. ... iompair, sláinte nó oideachais (5)
23. Frankfurter, mar shampla, nó Salami (5)
25. Ainm baiste Mrs Brown. (5)
26. Iris a labraíonn leat! (4)

Solutions to ASTIR Crossword No. 2301

ACROSS	DOWN
1. June Whitfield	2. Underdogs
10. Proud	3. ETA
11. Assistance	4. Hesitate
13. Inferno	5. Taser
15. Terminate	6. Italics
16. Frodo	7. Lycra
17. Isthmus	8. April Fool's Day
19. Bah	9. Tomfoolery
20. Overseas	12. Be that as it may
21. Wall unit	14. Origami
24. Spy	18. Meander
25. Aligned	19. Bunga bunga
26. Amass	22. Llandudno
27. Avalanche	23. Angelica
30. Redoubt	25. Alabama
31. Negativism	28. Agent
33. Dogma	29. China
34. Steal a march on	32. Mac

Did you miss?

ASTI education conference 12
 ASTI Scholarship recipient 18

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 2301: Marie McGahern, Presentation Secondary School, Clonmel Tipperary Branch member

Our NEW Programmes for 2023

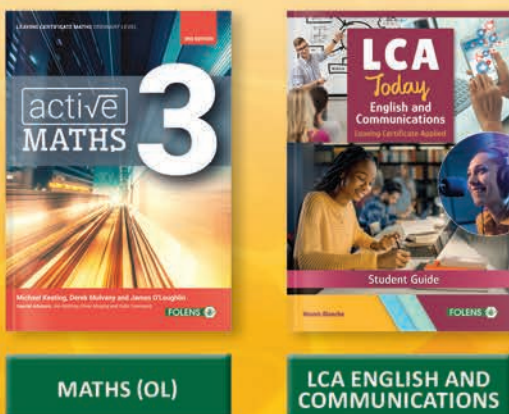
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