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Volume 26: Number 3: May 2008
ISSN 0790-6560

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Published on behalf of ASTI by Think Media.
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Design: Tony Byrne, Tom Cullen and Ruth O'Sullivan.
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ASTIR is published five times annually by the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland. The opinions expressed in ASTIR are those of individual authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the ASTI. While every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure information published is accurate, the ASTI cannot accept responsibility for articles or advertisements. The ASTI reserves the right to edit all material submitted for publication.

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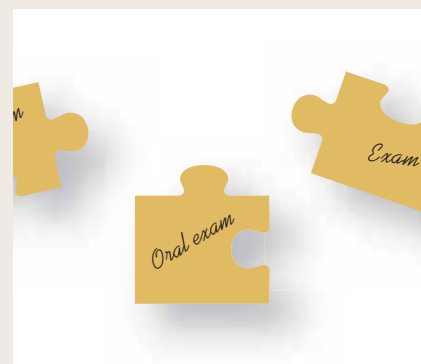
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Importance of education

Investment in education is a strategic priority for this country. This is the most important statement one can make about education today. But this fact is evidently not understood by those who determine the monies invested in education. The core theme that emerged from this year's Annual Convention in Killarney was the fact that second-level education is severely under-funded. This lack of funding showed up in our debates and reports on classroom management, from behaviour and discipline to the fundamental issue of class size. It was evident in all our discussions during Convention on the shortage in the provisions for the myriad of students' needs and on our own pay and working conditions, as you will read in this edition of ASTIR.

It is not surprising that men are deserting teaching – other careers are more attractive to them. There is no doubt that a pay level on par with that of other comparable professions, recognising the strategic importance to society of the work that teaching is, would redress that problem. There is no shortage of men in other important professions. The strategic aspect of education was reinforced by Professor Tom Collins, NUI Maynooth, our guest speaker, who said that we should commit ourselves nationally to a particular percentage of our GNP. He recommended 7% of GNP, in line with what other countries like Finland and the USA invest. This, he emphasised, would give the Minister another €3 billion this year. It also gives some indication of the investment shortfall under which Irish education is working. Just to counter the argument that it is not possible to invest in the time of an economic downturn, I was struck particularly by the comment Professor Collins attributed to Jack Lynch who, in the 1960s when *Investment in Education* was published, said: "It's not that we are too poor to invest in this, it is that we're too poor not to invest in it." The truth is, if this country is to be economically viable in 2020, then we need people who are emotionally stable, creative and capable of lifelong learning. We also need people with the skills necessary to compete in world markets and who have the capacity to build stable relationships and to be good parents in their turn. I believe that we therefore have but a small window of opportunity to invest the necessary extra funding we know is needed. This investment would enable teachers to support all their students so they can develop into well-rounded people, able to cope with and meet the demands of the world of today. As John White, our General Secretary, showed in his address to Convention, teachers give great value and return on any investment in

education. He pointed out that the most important activity in a school is the interaction in the classroom, and that teachers have been in the vanguard of real reforms of many kinds, including syllabi and classroom management. We have transformed our schools, despite the lack of funding. He declared that we have given real modernisation, but that we have had more than enough of the bureaucratic burdens of spurious modernisation, which involve endless paper trails that distract from our real work of producing a quality service.

It was heartening for Convention to hear him say that there is good news in relation to the Early Retirement Scheme (see his speech for the details). He was also optimistic that talks on part-time teachers and those who have permanent contracts of continuous employment for an indefinite duration, but who do not have full hours, would yield positive results.

The first day of Convention ended on an upbeat and heart-warming note: Paraic Duffy, Director General of the GAA, acknowledged the value of the significant voluntary contribution ASTI members make to society when he presented the first of the plaques the GAA will give to all schools in which there are ASTI members who foster an interest in GAA sport. This edition of ASTIR provides a comprehensive overview of our Annual Convention and I am delighted to see reported the views and contributions of both our seasoned campaigners and those who came to Convention for the first time.



Patricia Wroe
ASTI President

GAA awards for second-level schools



Paraic Duffy, GAA Director General, presenting the GAA plaque for schools to Patricia Wroe, ASTI President.

The GAA will honour the contribution of second-level teachers to sport by presenting plaques to ASTI schools where teachers are involved in gaelic games. GAA Director General, Paraic Duffy – a former second-level teacher and ASTI member – launched the initiative at ASTI Annual Convention in March by presenting the first such plaque to ASTI President, Patricia Wroe. He praised the work of teachers in the area of sport, saying: “Teachers at all levels have long offered training and games within a safe, structured environment. Indeed, the GAA might never have reached the 21st century were it not for the contribution of the teaching fraternity across the country. We hope that this new initiative will in some way record our gratitude to those who have helped us over the years”.

Education Act amendment

Changes to Section 29 of the Education Act will become law in June and will apply from September 2008. Section 29 provides for a parent or a pupil over the age of 18 to appeal a decision to permanently exclude, suspend or refuse to enroll a pupil. The changes to Section 29, which were recommended by the Taskforce on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools, are intended to balance the rights of the majority of students to learn, while protecting the rights of all students to an education. The Amendment Bill allows for the following factors to be considered by a Section 29 Appeals Committee:

- behaviour;
- reasonableness of the school's efforts to assist the pupil;
- educational interests of the individual pupil;
- educational interests of other pupils in the school;
- maintenance of a school environment supportive of learning;
- ensuring continuity of teaching and learning in the classroom;
- health, safety and welfare of teachers and other staff;
- health, safety and welfare of pupils;
- school admission policies, code of behaviour and other policies; and,
- duties of schools/boards of management and published guidelines.

Law module for CSPE



Pictured at the launch of the new CSPE law module are (from left): Hon. Mr Justice John L. Murray, Chief Justice; Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin; and, Sheena O'Brien, a student at Holy Family Secondary School, Newbridge, Co. Kildare.

A new law module for CSPE, ‘Lets Look at the Law’, was launched by the Courts Service in March. The first comprehensive law module for second-level schools was designed by the Courts Service in consultation with teachers, legal professionals and the National Co-ordinator for CSPE at the Department of Education and Science. It is an interactive series aimed at educating students about specific areas of our legal system, while empowering them to be active citizens.

The module aims to equip students with the knowledge to run mock trials and organise other action projects. The module will explain who is who in the courtroom, the difference between civil and criminal law, and the structure of the courts, and will set out the limits of what can and cannot be asked of a witness. Speaking at the launch of the module, Hon. Mr Justice John L. Murray, Chief Justice, said: “Knowledge of the legal system will help students to develop their identity as citizens and gain a greater understanding of the democracy in which we live. It will also prove to be a considerable asset when students progress, be that through to further education or into the workforce”. He thanked all teachers and students who participated in the project and provided ideas and suggestions for module content.

‘Project Maths’

Revised syllabus strands for Junior Cert and Leaving Cert maths will be implemented in a number of schools from September 2008. This is part of ‘Project Maths’, an overall review of post-primary mathematics education, involving teacher professional development and other supports for a new approach to teaching and learning mathematics. The phased implementation will allow for feedback from teachers and students before the syllabus strands are implemented in all schools. The project arises from a review of second-level mathematics, which highlighted particular problems in maths learning and teaching such as: a lack of continuity in some areas of maths from primary to second level; low uptake in higher-level maths; lack of emphasis on contexts and applications; and, the need for professional development support for teachers. The ASTI has conveyed its concerns to the NCCA regarding potential inequalities between students in the 24 pilot schools and those in other schools in terms of the marking of Leaving Cert exams.

English as an additional language

The integration of newcomer students into the Irish education system and the allocation of appropriate supports to assess English language competence and deliver appropriate education were key issues at ASTI Convention last month. Convention passed a motion that the ASTI engage with the Department of Education and Science to establish appropriate school-based facilities to ensure an adequate competency in the English language for each newcomer student prior to their inclusion in mainstream classes.

Over 17,000 second-level students claim a nationality other than Irish. While Convention praised the 'open door' policy of the Irish Government in relation to the right of all such children to an education, it was critical of the level of supports currently provided to schools. At present, such supports are entirely in the form of language support teachers to schools. The amount of training provided to these teachers is questionable. Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT), the body with responsibility for providing resources to determine language competency and for training English language support teachers, provides only one day's training to such teachers. This is completely inadequate and cannot equip teachers with the depth of knowledge and skills to teach in what is, in effect, a multilingual environment. The Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, was recently

asked by Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD in the Dáil to explain why IILT had not run English language teacher training seminars in some time, and has no plans to run such seminars in the near future. She said that the training role of IILT was a limited one and that English language teacher training is conducted as part of pre-service and in-service training for teachers and through the resources provided by IILT. She also said that Department of Education and Science inspectors are to conduct an evaluation of the provision of English as an additional language in a number of schools in the next school year to help identify needs and inform future policy. In its 2006 school inspection report on English – 'Looking at English: Teaching and Learning English in Post-Primary Schools', the Inspectorate noted that: "There was a lack of coherence in the provision and delivery of this support in many instances." In addition to seeking improvements in the training provision for language support teachers, the ASTI is also calling for guidelines on how to deal with cultural challenges in classrooms, as well as a formal system of assessing international students when they arrive in Ireland.

For more information on resources for teaching English as an additional language, contact Integrate Ireland Language and Learning, Tel: 01-6677232, Email: info@iilt.ie, or visit www.iilt.ie.

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* Recognised by the DES

ICT news



A group of teachers involved in TeachNet, pictured at a recent ceremony to mark their achievements.

New ICT skills development centre

A training centre for teachers aimed at promoting excellence in educational technology and pedagogical research was opened in the School of Education at NUI Galway in March. The facility will provide ICT skills development training for students of the Postgraduate Diploma in Education. The centre will also support teachers' ICT skills development in other postgraduate education courses. The new centre, known as the Apple iPedagogy Learning Environment (AiPLE), was part-funded by Apple Ireland.

ICT grants for teachers

The Department of Education and Science presented 46 teachers with financial grants under the TeachNet project in February of this year. The teachers, many of whom are ASTI members, were awarded grants of €750

each in recognition of their creativity in using the Internet to improve teaching practice throughout Ireland.

TeachNet provides teachers with the skills and support, as well as an online space, to circulate their curriculum resources to colleagues and around the country. The site is used by an increasing number of teachers and to date has published over 1,230 resources created by teachers for teachers. Up to 50 TeachNet grants of €750 are available for 2008. Primary and post-primary teachers working directly with students in the classroom are eligible to apply. In order to be selected for a grant, projects must demonstrate creative integration of ICT in a chosen curriculum area. It is expected that the project will be implemented during the school year in the teacher's own classroom and will be easy to adapt for use by other teachers. Application forms and further information can be accessed at www.teachnet.ie.

Show Racism the Red Card

Show Racism the Red Card is an initiative set up to tackle racism in society through the medium of sport. The ASTI has made a number of donations in support of the education project, which harnesses the profile of sports personalities and others to communicate an anti-racism message.

As part of the recent Anti-Racism Week, the ASTI distributed a Show Racism the Red Card interactive education pack to schools. The pack aims to familiarise young people with the causes and consequences of racism, and to equip them with a range of skills that will enable them to challenge the issue. The pack will also enable young people to develop good relationships, and teach them to respect people regardless of ethnicity. The pack is structured to provide for active learning and project-based work, and is applicable in particular to the 'Human Dignity' and 'Rights and Responsibilities' modules of the CSPE curriculum. It can also be used in Transition Year or incorporated into subjects such as history, geography or religion.

Show Racism the Red Card provides training for teachers who wish to use the resource. Contact info@theredcard.ie or visit www.theredcard.ie for more details.

Audit of enrolment policies

The Department of Education and Science (DES) recently undertook an audit of school enrolment policies and compiled data on the number of traveller students, newcomer students and students with special needs enrolled in individual schools. While the Department has not published results relating to individual schools, the overall results show that some schools are not meeting their responsibility to welcome and include children of every background and need. The results do not point to a nationwide problem; however, there are certain geographical pockets where, within a cluster of schools, the evidence points to certain schools assuming a greater or lesser share of the responsibility for meeting the full range of community needs.

ASTI policy favours inclusive schools, whereby all schools accept a fair and proportionate share of special needs students, immigrant students and students from less privileged socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The issue of 'cherry picking' student intake was debated at this year's Annual Convention, where a motion was adopted that the ASTI support the principle that all schools should have policies that support equality of access and participation, and call on the DES to either accord incentives or penalties to support this principle.

ASTI launches leaflet on homophobic bullying



Pictured at the launch of the GLEN brochure are (from left): Patricia Wroe, ASTI President; Sandra Gowran, GLEN Director of Education Policy; and, John White, ASTI General Secretary.

A guidance brochure for teachers on how they might address homophobic bullying in schools was launched at ASTI Convention in March. The brochure was produced by the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) following recent research showing that the majority of teachers (79%) are aware of instances of verbal homophobic bullying, and 16% are aware of physical bullying, in their schools. Stamping out bullying is important to create an environment in which all students can flourish. ASTI General Secretary John White, speaking at the launch of the brochure, said: "Schools should be safe places where diversity is valued. The ASTI says that respect for the individual student is paramount and members will willingly co-operate with the useful advice in this brochure". Sandra Gowran, GLEN Director of Education Policy, said: "It is extremely important that such a significant stakeholder in education as the ASTI is taking a leading role in tackling the serious problem of homophobic bullying in schools. Teachers who are confident and supported in tackling homophobic bullying will encourage schools to tackle the issue seriously. We know from research that there are significant problems around homophobic bullying and name-calling in schools and that very often teachers do not feel equipped to deal with it. This guidance provides an important stepping stone to equipping teachers to effectively address the issue."

Opel discount for ASTI members

The ASTI has agreed a special discount offer with Opel Ireland. Opel is offering savings on a range of new Opel cars and vans to ASTI members. Members who wish to avail of the offer must fill out a nomination form available at www.opelaffinity.ie. Once registered and deemed eligible, the discount will be added when a member purchases a new Opel model at any Opel dealer.

ASTI Members can also nominate family to participate in the programme. Full details of the offer can be found by visiting www.opelaffinity.ie and keying in 'af2asti'.

Chief examiners' reports on the internet

The following Chief Examiners' reports for State Examinations are available at www.examinations.ie:

- Leaving Certificate classical studies;
- Leaving Certificate home economics (social and scientific);
- Leaving Certificate agricultural economics;
- Junior Certificate art, craft and design;
- Junior Certificate business studies; and,
- Junior Certificate classical studies.

The reports provide an analysis of overall achievement in each subject at higher and ordinary level. They cite common weaknesses found by examiners and provide helpful advice to teachers in relation to how successful students approached exam work.

ASTI meets with IBEC



Pictured at a recent meeting of IBEC and ASTI representatives are: Back row (from left): Tony O'Donoghue, Head of Social and Educational Policy, IBEC; and, Diarmaid de Paor, ASTI Deputy General Secretary. Front row (from left): Patricia Wroe, ASTI President; Siobhan Masterson, IBEC Education and Training Policy Executive; and, Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary: Education and Research.

ICT in education conference

Tipperary Institute is holding its annual Internet Experience in Education conference on Thursday May 22 in Thurles. The event will focus on the most appropriate strategies to employ in relation to the NDP funding of €252m allocated to ICT in schools. Educators will also learn how to address teacher professional development and the common software and hardware issues that arise in the classroom. The conference will be addressed by a number of speakers and there will also be workshops and demonstrations dealing with the themes relating to infrastructure and funding, ICT in the classroom, and innovative use of technologies in education.

September ASTIR

ASTIR welcomes contributions from members. The editorial deadline for the September issue of Astir is July 4. Contributions should be forwarded to astir@asti.ie.

Improved retention rates

Figures recently published by the Department of Education and Science show retention rates increasing slightly year-on-year for those students entering second-level education between 1996 and 1999. Almost 84% of these pupils completed second level, compared with just over 81% three years earlier.

Speaking about the figures, ASTI General Secretary John White said: "The improvement in retention rates for second-level students is evidence of the continuous reform of second-level education". He expressed concern, however, about the high number of boys leaving second-level education early: while the retention rate for students entering second level in 1999 was 83.7%, this figure represents 85.7% females and 78.5% males. He said: "We must do more to tackle school dropout, particularly in relation to boys. There is a need to properly resource subject areas such as technology so as to provide every student with educational opportunities that best suit their interests and abilities". The ASTI has expressed disappointment at the recent decision of the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, to postpone the implementation of two new technology subjects at second level.

Civic education study

An international comparative study of civic and citizenship education in second-level schools (ICCS) is due to be carried out in autumn of this year. Implemented in Ireland by the Education Research Centre, the study will compare 37 countries and is being conducted internationally by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

The purpose of the study is to investigate ways in which young people are being prepared to undertake their roles as citizens and Ireland's participation was recommended by the report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship. The study takes place within the wider context of growing concern about active citizenship and education at international, EU and national levels.

A field trial was carried out in 28 Irish schools in January and all schools that participated will be sent a summary of results for their school in autumn 2008. The main study will take place in March 2009 and initial contact will be made with schools selected for participation in September. Schools will be chosen at random, ensuring that all school sectors and types are represented. Assessment will take the form of a test of civic and citizenship knowledge; a questionnaire on students' backgrounds and attitudes to various civic and citizenship issues; and, a European module, which asks about students' knowledge of and attitudes towards matters relating to Europe and the EU. Teachers will also be invited to complete short questionnaires to gather information about the broader educational contexts within which civic and citizenship education occurs. It is envisioned that the results of the study will form an important contribution to the national debate on active citizenship and on policy development in the area of CSPE. The international report will be published in autumn 2010.

Further information on ICCS is available on the ICCS website for Ireland, www.erc.ie/iccs or by contacting 01-8065217 or iccs@erc.ie

School attendance conference

A first step towards the development of guidelines on school attendance strategies was taken in February when a national conference on school attendance was held in Dublin. Organised by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), the statutory agency charged with encouraging school attendance, the conference was addressed by international and national experts who outlined research evidence on why children become disengaged from school and what encourages them to stay in school.

Speaking at the conference, Nuala Doherty, NEWB Director, said: "The first step to ensuring that children come to school is to ensure that they have a sense of belonging to the school – that they like school and see its relevance to their future. School attendance strategies must promote this sense of belonging and participation in whichever way suits the particular school and the needs of the student body". These strategies may include: initiatives that ensure the curriculum is better suited to the students; projects that may help to ensure more student input through student councils; programmes that concentrate on behaviour and classroom discipline; or, plans that improve school and parent communication.

RSTA news

Dublin Belfast Exchange

Louis O'Flaherty and Nuala O'Connor represented the RSTA at the AGM of the NASUWT (retired) held recently in Belfast. It is hoped that two representatives from the NASUWT (retired) will attend the RSTA's AGM in May.

Visit to Stormont

A visit to Stormont is planned for Wednesday June 11, 2008. See the RSTA website – www.rsta-ireland.com – for further details.

North Eastern Branch

The North Eastern Branch will hold a lunch and tour on Wednesday May 21. Assemble at the Radisson Hotel, Cavan, for a four-course lunch at 12.30pm (near the golf course). After lunch, local RSTA member and historian Jim Hannon will take the group on a guided coach tour to:

- the Church of Ireland Cathedral and Bishop Bedell's grave at Kilmore;
- Owen Roe O'Neill's Castle, Crossdoney, where Owen Roe O'Neill camped after the battle of Benburb; and,
- a tour of Cavan town.

The day will conclude with afternoon tea in the Radisson Hotel. The total cost will be no more than €50.

For further information contact Michael McMahon, Tel: 042-9661097, or Email: michaelimc@hotmail.com.

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- A fresh student-friendly design with colour images
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- In depth character analysis and exploration of themes

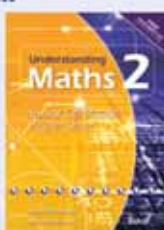


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- Graded typical exam-type questions
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- Textboxes explain how a question is approached
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- Answers to all questions included
- Free Teacher's CD-Rom



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Junior Certificate History

Maire de Builféir · Grainne Henry · Tim Nyhan · Stephen Tonge · Special Advisor M.E. Collins

- Complete ONE volume text
- Full-colour and student-friendly with easy-to-read language
- Large number of high-quality photographs, illustrations & maps
- Exam focused questions with lots of sample answers
- Exam brief sections highlight essential topics for the Junior Certificate
- Timeline website with additional exam material



KING LEAR

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Edited with notes by Patrick Murray

- Detailed annotations on the entire play
- A fresh student-friendly design with colour images
- Includes general questions on the play and an extensive appendix
- Exploration of Themes
- In-depth character analysis and exploration of themes



NEW DISCOVERY 2010

Leaving Certificate English Higher & Ordinary Level

Poetry Anthology

Patrick Murray · Kevin McDermott · Mary Slattery

- Every poem is accompanied by: detailed, thought-provoking guidelines, useful glossaries and questions that explore themes and techniques
- Personal response encouraged
- Examination-style questions and general discussion questions
- Snapshots of Higher Level poets for easy revision
- Glossary of poetic terms and viewpoints of critics outlined
- Three sample exam essays included



NEW DISCOVERY 2010

Leaving Certificate Ordinary Level Poetry Anthology

Patrick Murray · Kevin McDermott · Mary Slattery

- New & improved student-friendly layout
- Biographical introduction to each poet
- Examination-style questions included and detailed guidelines on each poem
- Personal response encouraged throughout
- Glossary of terms
- Guidelines for reading unseen poetry and for answering questions



POETRY NOTES 2010

Leaving Certificate English Higher Level

Patrick Murray · Kevin McDermott · Mary Slattery

- Attractive layout with clear and helpful commentaries
- A Snapshot of each poet, points to remember & timelines given to facilitate easy revision
- Detailed discussion of each poem: theme; argument; imagery; poetic method and voice
- Detailed and thought-provoking exploration of each poem's themes and techniques
- Exam-style questions and viewpoints of critics provided



WORDCRAFT

Leaving Certificate English Ordinary Level

Edmond Behan · Frank Fahy

- Vibrant, full-colour, student-friendly language book
- Key Functional writing skills developed throughout
- Essential for strengthening students' reading & writing skills
- A section each on the language of Information, Persuasion, Argument and Narration
- Builds the student's ability to use language that is accurate & appropriate
- Focused notes on how to compose a short story



COMPARATIVE STUDY

Leaving Certificate English Higher Level

Mary Slattery

- Explores three possible options for Comparative Study from the prescribed list 2010
- Focused overview of comparative study requirements
- Concise plot summaries
- Advice on answering questions
- Comprehensive discussion of texts includes commentary notes
- Comparative links are highlighted
- Examination Question Section



UNDERSTANDING ECONOMICS

Leaving Certificate Economics Higher & Ordinary Level

Richard Delaney

- Clear and user-friendly approach
- Demystifies "economic terminology"
- Graduated questions throughout
- Up-to-date methods & terminology
- Comprehensive Exam Chapter included
- Free Teacher's CD-Rom with summaries & PowerPoint presentations



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Junior Certificate French Ordinary & Higher Level

Geraldine McQuillan · Marie Stafford · Carmel Timmins

- A very accessible and user-friendly text
- All skills are covered – reading, listening, writing & speaking
- "Epreuve" section provides aural & reading comprehension
- "Lexique" covers all vocabulary used in each unit
- A selection of useful websites is included
- Exam Practice section focuses on each element of the Junior Cert Examination
- Free Student's CDs, Teacher's CD's and script



TODAY'S WORLD – BOOK 2 & BOOK 3

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Liam Ashe · Kieran McCarthy

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NEW PUBLICATIONS 2008

Patricia Wroe, ASTI President, gives

The view from the chair

Convention photos by MacMonagle Photography.



Pictured at a civic reception to mark the beginning of ASTI Convention in Killarney are: Back row (from left): John O'Donovan, Kerry Branch; Sean O'Brien, Kerry Branch; Conor Hennigan, General Manager of the Malton Hotel; and, Cllr Michael Gleeson. Third row (from left): ASTI Deputy General Secretary Diarmaid de Paor; Cllr. Sean O'Grady; and, Michael Moriarty, ASTI Standing Committee. Second row (from left): Lilly Cronin, Kerry Branch; Pat Hurley, ASTI President-Elect; and, ASTI General Secretary, John White. Front row (from left): Cllr Sheila Casey; Cllr Niall O'Callaghan, Mayor of Killarney; ASTI President, Patricia Wroe; and, Breda Lyons, Kerry Branch.

Annual Convention is important for the ASTI. It is an opportunity for us to showcase the value of the work that we teachers do and the contribution we make to society.

It is democratic in that all the issues chosen for debate have come from our branches. Not only do they suggest an issue for consideration, but they propose in what manner it will be handled. From all the suggestions, sent in by branches across the country and grouped in a booklet entitled 'Preliminary Agenda', all 56 branches each choose, before January 31, the issues they wish Convention to consider, and they also choose their delegates to represent the branch at Convention itself.

And so, from early in the morning of a cold but sunny Easter Tuesday,

delegates arrived into the elegant foyer of the Killarney Malton Hotel.

By noon, when Vice-President Pat Hurley and I welcomed first-time delegates in the conference hall itself and introduced them to how Convention operates, there was a real buzz about the place.

Registration is a great way for people to get their Convention packs and begin to settle in, get their bearings and meet up with old friends. They were aided that morning by the office staff, who worked efficiently to get all delegates registered and signed in quickly. There is a huge amount of work behind the scenes running a Convention, including dealing with the media and handling interviews, helping delegates with their needs and generally ensuring that all paperwork is to hand when needed – and much of that is often at short notice! The contribution

and work of all the staff members is much appreciated. Over the three days, Annual Convention sets ASTI policies and deliberates on and considers written reports on a wide range of matters. The motions for debate were wide-ranging.

Classroom environment

The motions on class size (Carbery Branch) and Section 29 of the Education Act (Drogheda Sean Higgins Branch) sought to improve the classroom environment. The fundamental importance to us of having a class size that enables the development of modern teaching and learning is evident: notwithstanding that the issue was debated last year and that this year's motion carried the note that it is already policy, branches voted to have the matter aired yet again. In my speech to the Minister, the importance of recognising that many of our classes are too large and exceed the 20 that Convention called for, was driven home. General Secretary, John White, made a very strong case that all schools must have the necessary supports to ensure that everyone experiences an atmosphere of good discipline. In the modern school, discipline is not a simple matter and delegates made it clear that where supports are lacking, teachers – and students – experience stress, and many feel they are left to effectively fend for themselves, which creates an intolerable experience.

Adequate resources focused on student needs

There was great concern that adequate resources must be focused on students' needs through the deliberations on providing for students with special needs (Stillorgan/Wicklow), along with a call for an audit of the enrolment intake of schools. (The Minister announced that day that such an audit had been undertaken.) The very precise and clear motion on individual education plans (IEPs) from Carlow found full approval, to include the demand (which we have already been putting to the DES and personally to the Minister at every opportunity) that each school has an ex-quota IEP co-ordinator.

When Pat Hurley, as Vice-President, along with Ray St John, Honorary Treasurer, and myself, met representatives from every branch in the country last autumn, we heard the national concerns about the lack of provision to enable newcomer students to quickly gain a reasonable competency in English. The West Mayo motion made the point well. Finally, Cork South's simply worded: "All schools be allocated a home school liaison teacher", struck a supportive chord with Convention.

Teachers' working conditions

Convention roundly endorsed Tipperary's call that we make our number one issue with the DES the bringing of both non-permanent teachers and teachers with a permanent CID of less than full teaching hours up to full teaching hours. Education is of strategic importance and yet government expects many teachers to work for years for part-time money. No other comparable profession accepts that! Other issues around pay, in the light of our receiving nothing from benchmarking, concerned shortening our long pay scale (Wicklow) and qualification allowances for those with qualifications in learning support and special needs (Waterford). I was pleased personally that, even though it was not the subject of a motion, delegates also highlighted the fact that some fee-paying schools plead that they cannot afford to pay their privately paid teachers the DES rates and expect them to work for less!

Drogheda Sean Higgins gained Convention's support for the call that

Retirement Strands 1, 2 and 3 be maintained permanently and improved. Convention learned that this matter is already in train.

Two matters that would make life less stressful were supported: Cork South's call that all teachers be given annually a copy of the record of their absences from work, and the call from Drogheda Sean Higgins (with such a high number of its suggested motions appearing on the programme, this branch certainly had the measure of teachers' concerns!) that the DES agree that inspections of schools should not be carried out in the last term due to unnecessary disruption of exam preparation. That we have lost patience with the lack of reduction in teaching hours for those with posts of responsibility was evident from the fact that the motion dealing with it came from five branches: Clare, Fermoy, Carbery, Donegal and Kildare. The fact that it was already policy did not stop branches wanting Convention to air the matter afresh. The delegates gave it robust support.

Fingal struck a chord with Convention with its motion that the class teacher no longer be required to sign off on project work for state examinations. 'Plagiarism', 'the scholarly efforts of others, not the student' and even 'commercial transactions' were phrases that peppered the speeches of delegates who spoke to the motion.

While everyone agrees totally that all that can be done must be done to ensure that schools are safe places for our students, West Mayo, in a pithily proposed motion, right up against the clock on the last day, had no difficulty in getting Convention's support for their motion that the information provided from the vetting of teachers should be contained within the structures of the Teaching Council accreditation system.

*CONVENTION IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR
US TO SHOWCASE THE VALUE OF THE
WORK THAT WE TEACHERS DO AND THE
CONTRIBUTION WE MAKE TO SOCIETY.*

Changes to improve the way we do our business

There were a number of motions instructing ASTI itself to undertake reviews and research. From the Kerry branch came the proposal that ASTI undertakes a review of parent-teacher meetings outside school hours on the grounds of health and safety, also to take into account parity of arrangement as pertains for primary teachers. Convention elected a sub-committee to investigate and report to CEC next January on the role of principals and deputy principals within the ASTI, as proposed by Carbery and Cork North.

And there was one change to the Rules and Constitution of the ASTI to bring a rule on emeritus membership in line with a decision taken last October by CEC that emeritus members are not members of Standing Committee.

All of the above matters were widely supported, and many of them passed unanimously. The debates were serious, earnest, and sometimes featured flashes of good humour, which we all enjoyed. Convention put its mind to its work seriously by allowing some motions, which it was clear had universal support, to go through quickly, thus freeing up time for other matters on a crowded programme.

Committee reports

Anyone reading that committees made reports to Convention could be



John White, ASTI General Secretary, and Patricia Wroe, ASTI President, pictured during Convention proceedings.



Paraic Duffy, GAA Director General, launched a special awards scheme to honour teachers' contribution to gaelic sport at Convention.

forgiven for thinking that they had missed nothing – but how wrong they would be. The Education Committee had prepared a range of informative pieces, each delivered in a short presentation by a member of the Committee. Delegates were very interested indeed to hear that research on the second components, which are such a large part of many subjects these days, shows that the component has unforeseen impacts on the marks an individual student gains. Right throughout the Wednesday afternoon devoted to education issues, it was evident how concerned we are at the lack of resources and supports for our students, and how this has a huge impact on the work of the classroom teacher who devotes much unnecessary energy to trying to compensate for the shortfalls.

The Equal Opportunities Committee brought the novelty of a sharp PowerPoint presentation and a competition for every delegate to give them hands-on experience of a learning tool that the Committee will make available to all teachers on the ASTI website in the near future, when the site's revamp is completed. Among the Committee's reports was one on the work done to support the ASTI Gay Network, and Convention was moved by a speech from a member of the Network telling of the simple, but emotionally difficult, problems encountered as a gay teacher.

THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE TO US OF HAVING A CLASS SIZE THAT ENABLES THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN TEACHING AND LEARNING IS EVIDENT.

At Thursday lunchtime, ASTI was proud to have our General Secretary launch, in the presence of the Equal Opportunities Committee, members of Standing Committee, members of the ASTI Gay Network and the ASTI Officers, a leaflet prepared by the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) to help teachers help students to deal with student homophobia, and to ensure it has no place in a school. The few measured and calm words from their Director of Education, Sandra Gowran, in explaining

the leaflet were both telling and uplifting. I was delighted to add my few words of support also.

The Community and Comprehensive Committee had a report on its work that was so concise and to the point that delegates had to really be on the alert. It was definitely the non-stop express train delivery of Convention!

Part-time teachers were well served by their Committee, who made Convention very aware of their concerns in a professional manner. One other committee that drew serious response from Convention was the report from the sub-committee commissioned to investigate bullying in teachers' workplaces. The report was sobering, as were the experiences relayed by some delegates who spoke endorsing the report. I was appreciative of and indebted to all the delegates who contributed to the debate, who respected my request that they would not identify any person or workplace in their accounts of poor management practices experienced either by them or their colleagues.

Other events

ASTI members who have never been to an Annual Convention might imagine that they would be letting themselves in for three days of 'heavy weather' if they were to become a delegate. But the days' events flow along, and motions and reports are interwoven with other speakers. Paul Atkinson gave Convention a whistle-stop slide presentation of the workings of the ASTI Credit Union – if only all banking institutions were managed so well! Louis O'Flaherty, who announced his forthcoming retirement as President of the Retired Secondary Teachers' Association, gave sterling evidence that being permanently out of the classroom is something to look forward to with joyful expectation! The Honorary Treasurer, Ray St John, gave clear accounts of the state of our finances and got Convention to endorse his proposal for a subscription increase. The Trustees gave a succinct account of their work reviewing the actual role of ASTI Trustees. All of these speakers are prime examples of the unstinting voluntary work undertaken by the one or few, for the many. We were also given word of the winner of the (early) Tuesday morning golf competition and of the crossword and quiz winners, and (late)



Pat Hurley, ASTI President Elect, addresses Convention.



Christina Henehan, Ed Moran and Gretta Harrison, West Mayo Branch.

Easter Eggs were awarded to the winners of the equal opportunities competition, not to mention the winners of the Cornmarket and VHI competitions.

Delegates co-operated wonderfully with the request to drop their delegate lanyard credential pouch in a large box: as the last afternoon came to a close, President Elect Pat Hurley was asked to draw one out. The named person was the winner of a weekend in the Malton Hotel! We were indebted to Cora Guinnane, Chairperson of the School Chaplains' Association of Ireland, who conducted a prayer service with a difference just before the speeches on Tuesday afternoon. The short audio-visual presentation appealed to a broad church across the spectrum of human spirituality, from those who have strong religious faith to those who profess none, and drew appreciative applause as it ended.

The speeches – how we see ourselves and others see us

Traditionally, ASTI Convention invites guests from many organisations in Ireland relevant to our work, and teaching bodies overseas, to the late Tuesday afternoon session, which is covered by radio, television and newsprint media. You will read reports of the speeches delivered by Mary Hanafin, Minister for Education, and myself elsewhere in this edition. Early on in her speech I thought the Minister was making my speech for me – she acknowledged the work done by teachers outside of the curriculum to help students in their personal and social development, but her concept of what is to be budgeted for education is short of what we need. Professor Tom Collins of NUI Maynooth looked at how government funds development aid, and made a strong suggestion that education should get defined percentage increases. That makes great sense. In my speech, I pointed out that education is truly of strategic importance for this country, that the lack of funding for supports and resources, and the fact that teachers are not paid in line with other comparable professionals, sells students, society and teachers short, and challenged the Minister to have the courage, like her predecessor, Donagh O'Malley, to get her Cabinet colleagues to see and agree that investment in education is absolutely essential – even in an economic downturn.

In a surprise move for Convention, Páraic Duffy, Director General of the

GAA, who was one of our invited guests, came to the podium as the evening ended. In a short speech, he announced that the GAA, to show its appreciation of the voluntary work carried out by ASTI members in fostering interest and participation in youth sport, has recently decided to present a plaque to each second-level school in which an ASTI member is making that contribution to his or her community. The plaques will be delivered to the schools next September. I was delighted to receive such a plaque honouring our members' valuable work. In a wide-ranging and strongly worded speech on Wednesday morning, covered by all media, John White, General Secretary, set forth our concerns on various aspects of pay and conditions, while underlining the high standards delivered by our members in their professional work. He also addressed the issue of student discipline.

Other important things

It gave me great pleasure to host a short reception for all our guests and members of Standing Committee prior to the Convention Dinner, which itself was attended by 325 people – the largest number for many years. People said that they found it most pleasant and enjoyable, that the atmosphere, lighting and the food were all agreeable, and that you could dance to the music that followed!

Wednesday night is traditionally the night branches go out together and this year was no different; there were lots of tales of a pleasant night experienced in the restaurants of Killarney. As delegates made their way out of the hall at the end of Convention, shortly after six o'clock on Wednesday evening, they were attracted to the hotel foyer by the sound of excellent jazz music and found Spanish food and sparkling wine being served as a treat for everyone.

Many availed of the crèche facilities throughout Convention. There were also some older children who remained with their parent/guardian, enjoying the hotel swimming pool, the guided tours and the attractions of Killarney. That was nice to see.

We had a good number of first-time delegates, which is good news. Overall, the message from Convention 2008 was that ASTI members are strongly of the mind that resources and supports are a must and that patience is ebbing fast.



ASTI President Patricia Wroe addresses Convention 2008.



Professor Tom Collins, guest speaker at ASTI Convention, with Minister Mary Hanafin and ASTI President Patricia Wroe.

Annual Convention 2008

This year's Annual Convention looked at why education is strategically important and thus has to get more priority in the national budget, even in a downturn. Class size, special needs education and the integration of newcomer pupils took up most of the debating time, while pay and discipline were also on the agenda.

Address by ASTI President Patricia Wroe to Convention

Minister, invited guests and colleagues: welcome to our Convention here in Killarney in this, our 99th year as an Association, and thank you for being here.

This is a unique gathering. Everyone here is interested in education – passionately so. We are aware of the important difference that education makes to the life of a human being. I'd like to share with you the kind of difference I believe we as teachers make to the lives of students in our schools every day across this land.

We know that education is important. We know that it shapes our lives, our work and our social interactions. I believe that education is of particular strategic importance to Irish society at this point in its development, both economically and socially, because it has been demonstrated time and time again that it makes a quantum difference to every aspect of human development and social progress. I would like to spend some time:

- exploring how the strategic importance of education relates to the value of the work that teachers do and how they are supported as a profession;
- looking at some of the issues in education, first from the viewpoint of the educationalist and then from the wider viewpoint of society; and, finally,
- looking at what impact this has on the decisions we make for Irish education.

First of all, I want to look at the strategic importance of education and how it relates to the value of the teacher's work and how teachers are supported as a profession.

The value of what teachers do

As well as the important work of the curriculum and the various syllabi, teachers help students to develop healthy attitudes to others and to grow their own self-worth through the living out of the school policies and through a huge variety of activities, many of which may start within a programmed class but quickly encompass much more time:

- Gaisce – The President's Award;
- ICT and ECDL;
- Young Scientist entries;
- art awards;
- Transition Year outdoor pursuits and activity weekends away;
- Young Social Innovators programme;
- public speaking;
- extra-curricular sports;
- the annual musical/play;
- Transition Year;
- Special Junior Cert;
- CSPE;
- SPHE;
- safe driving;
- drugs and alcohol awareness;
- parenting;
- sexuality;
- community service; and,
- anti-bullying.



Patricia Wroe, ASTI President, pictured with the Mayor of Killarney, Councillor Niall O'Callaghan, and Lilly Cronin, Kerry Branch.



Delegates from the Clare Branch pictured during Convention. From left: Peter Quinn; Jack Keane; and, Helen Meade.

All of these are fundamental to society.

In our fast-paced world, society now expects schools to provide the emotional and sociological education as well as the curriculum. This is the education that enables students to take their place in society and to develop into people who look out for others and who have self-reliance. The social personal and health education (SPHE) and civic social and political education (CSPE) courses have been created to answer society's needs.

To answer the needs of students, differentiated courses such as the established Leaving, Applied and Vocational Certificates, and the Junior Cert Schools Programme have been created. Each school has developed its own Transition Year Programme, including a Transition Year Work Experience Programme. They are developed by the teachers and re-invented and refreshed every year. Currently, the possibility of new innovations around certification is being examined to make it possible for students to gain awards across a variety of certification programmes rather than shoe-horning them into one that may not recognise the variation in their capabilities.

Every time society sees a problem, schools are invited – rather exhorted – to remedy the problem by putting on a course, so there is a plethora of courses. More recently, we have seen calls for:

- driving skills (the AA has called for driving to be taught in all schools);
- nutrition (society is seriously concerned about obesity); and,
- environmental awareness.

The work teachers do in areas such as these provides real answers and solutions to everyday problems and forms the basis for what a school is doing strategically to help society. Citizenship is alive in such a school, along with the societal cohesiveness that holds and binds the community together.

Sadly, however, we are experiencing disintegration in our society, and therefore these issues are being pushed into our schools. But interestingly, let us remember that the main external focus is continually on the CAO results as indicators that a school is performing and is a 'good' school. We are conscious as teachers of the incessant drive to deliver high points, which, we believe, engenders a 'me' culture based on separateness and individuality: 'my success', literally, in many cases, at any cost. This must

be balanced with the seminal work of teachers in schools, which encourages integration and a cohesive and collaborative response to the challenges in our society.

I would like to look now at how teachers are supported as a profession.

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The Teaching Council

We are especially pleased that there is now a Teaching Council. We have been looking for our own professional regulatory body literally for decades. It is important that there will be a focus on ongoing continuing professional development (CPD). In the absence, up to now, of structured CPD for teachers, I am proud to record that 40% of teachers, on their own initiative, have pursued qualifications to masters level and beyond, and self fund these qualifications.

However, we want to put a marker down – we will never accept the UK model whereby basic salary is linked to certain CPD. That is a dangerous road to embark on and one, we believe, that does not support the partnership and collegiate model that is critical to education today. Minister, we are concerned, however, that nothing has been done over time to deal with the issue of unqualified personnel working in the place of teachers. A qualified, registered teacher in every class is our objective. The Teaching Council Act upholds this. Yet the proposed solution to the current shortage of professional teachers is to create amending legislation to allow you, Minister, to pay non-qualified persons to work in classrooms before this year's end.

We, as a union representing professional teachers, would find this amending legislation very difficult to accept. We would need to know what you intend to put in place to bring the need for personnel who are not qualified to an end. It will require decisive and costly action on



From left: ASTI Deputy General Secretary, Diarmaid de Paor; Cllr Michael Gleeson, Kerry Town Council; and, Michael Moriarty, ASTI Standing Committee.



Susie Hall, Dublin North East, speaking during Convention.

your part. If we cannot see you taking action, why should we think of accommodating a derogation from the Act?

We are too familiar with decisions that are sold as short-term interim measures to Ministers, which, though couched in restrictive terms, are used beyond their intended date on the basis of pragmatism. Then there is no imperative to find a solution, with the result that the concept of a qualified teaching profession is put on hold indefinitely.

We could not countenance such a development.

Let us turn to some of the issues in education, first from the viewpoint of the educationalist – the internal view – and then from the wider viewpoint of society.

The view of the educationalist – teachers' concerns

Pat Hurley, our President-Elect, Ray St John, our Honorary Treasurer, and I have met representatives from every branch in the country. Their message has been the same – Bandon, Bundoran, Balbriggan, Ballinrobe and Buncrana are all telling the same story. Their concerns are centred on:

- whole school evaluation – getting it right and all the preparation it creates;
- special needs and international students – their needs are often being met precariously and teachers are asked to create individual education plans without the promised training; and,
- discipline – or rather, what it takes these days to ensure that it exists, given that society at large has failed to give support to its young people and equip them with appropriate modes of self-expression.

The teachers' concerns were about classroom motivation and management, resources and behaviours; nothing to do with syllabus. No one referred to their subject. It was about student motivation, discipline, resources, and working with parents.

I am going to touch on two particular areas, class size, and special needs and international students.

Class size

Today in our secondary schools we are faced with large classes – 16% of junior cycle students are in classes of 30 and more for core subjects, including maths. Many of the popular subjects at Leaving Cert also have large classes

of 25, 28 or 29. Yes, we are told that other Leaving Cert subjects have small classes, even in single figures, but that does not change one whit the reality that Leaving Cert students are in large classes.

Of course, it has recently been stated that class size is not the issue but that teacher quality is. The business case, the social case and the right case, despite what is said to you in what I believe is a limited analysis of the situation, is that class size does matter. Indeed, is like being compared with like? Some groups think a lot of Finland. In Finland, they have the highest investment in early childhood education and development in ways unheard of here, and there is integrated education from the time they start school at seven years through to 16 years of age. So, their early development is far, far different from that experienced by Irish students.

I come back to what I said: you have the care, commitment and unending effort of Irish teachers and this is supported by the teacher education departments of our universities, which tell us they are amazed and delighted with the personal calibre of the people coming to them. And yet, you cannot continue to fail to properly invest in second-level Irish education, given the demands made on classrooms today and the diverse range of educational and other outcomes they are expected to achieve.

In other areas of Irish education, e.g. Fás, the maximum tolerated ratio for training is 1:15. If you want a knowledge-based society – and every independent and international commentator is telling us that this is a cherished goal for us – a society where there is creativity; independence of mind and thought; integrated joined-up thinking; ability to see linkages; and, understanding of the needs of society and businesses, then you need to resource us properly.

*IF WE WANT A KNOWLEDGE-BASED
SOCIETY, THEN SCHOOLS MUST
BE RESOURCED PROPERLY.*

Special needs and international students

The challenges of today include:

- different students with special needs;
- international students; and,



From left: Ruairi Quinn, Labour Party spokesperson on education and science; John White, ASTI General Secretary; and, Brigid McManus, Secretary General at the Department of Education.



Stillorgan delegates pictured during Convention.

- students who may or may not be in the category of special or international but who have personal educational/learning difficulties such as ADHD.

Such students require resources tailor-made for them. That is not an unreasonable statement. They require classes that are not large. This is particularly important so that all the students can have integrated learning. We recognise that students learn differently and that it is not a question of one size fits all. Teachers are multi-talented but need the resources to carry out their work effectively. We must get past the thinking that such students are putting demands on schools and see such requirements as the norm. When the resources are in place, this will be possible. At present, teachers daily experience shortfall and inadequate levels of support, and students are not getting the educational experience they deserve.

It is heartening to note the ESRI research, which shows that in a mixed ability class the most able students perform as well, and the less able students do better. What a positive win-win for society in both the long and short term.

From the wider viewpoint of society

There are a number of challenges today, and I am going to focus on male teachers, lack of funding, wider societal issues, and getting the last 20% into education.

Male teachers

The fact that men are not being attracted to teaching as a profession is a serious issue. At second level, within another five to seven years, no more than 15% of teachers will be male. Teaching will be truly feminised. It is my belief that in today's society money matters; we are a profession and money is a way of reflecting the value of the work that we do. Is education driving men out? Why are they not comfortable staying in the education system?

We have rejected the notion that teachers have a vocation. Society, we found, did not value vocation: if you had a vocation you did not need money! But much of what was encompassed in the notion of vocation is at the heart of the professional teacher. As Richard Sennett has been quoted as saying of his work as a professor of sociology, the work is a calling: it involves craftsmanship, not commodities produced in a factory

and 'measured' by input-output data.

That concept matters when you have to measure how many widgets you can produce. And schools are not about that at all. That, Minister, is why benchmarking fails. It does not measure what teachers do.

And so we come back to pay: as a sheer yardstick, teachers are not paid the rate for their contribution to society.

Eight years after gaining a primary degree, a second-level teacher may, at best, have a permanent contract for a part-time job, or may have recently gained full-time permanent work, but either way has paid hefty fees for training and had poor pay for part-time work for a number of years. At best, after seven years as a qualified teacher, they are earning c. €46,000. Anyone who went into chartered accountancy is currently, eight years on from their degree, earning €65,000-70,000 and has been paid, and worked, full time from day one for those eight years, including the years of their apprenticeship. And we ask why men are not attracted to teaching!

*WE MUST GET PAST THE THINKING
THAT STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ARE PUTTING
DEMANDS ON SCHOOLS, AND SEE
SUCH REQUIREMENTS AS THE NORM.*

Lack of funding

Be assured, Minister, that this is not a rant born of teachers wanting a cushy number, but is based on the concern that education is strategically important and thus it has to get more priority in the national budget, even in an economic downturn.

You and we are aware, in spite of the billions of euro spend you quote on many occasions, that Ireland experiences below average funding in education compared to other countries, and this has been internationally and objectively verified. The level of investment is such that we never catch up, and as a result our pupil:teacher ratio has not changed in almost 10 years, although the expectations of what happens in that class, and the demographics within it, have undergone a revolution.



Longford Branch delegates.



Delegates from the Carlow Branch pictured during Convention (from left): Patrick Coffey; Fiona Lennon; and, Maurice Browne.

Investment in science and ICT would be invaluable to Ireland in a knowledge-based society. Government forecasters want investment in science and ICT such that we would be positioned in the top 5 by 2020. Minister, that investment is not seen at second level across all schools. We still have schools with inferior labs, and all schools lack laboratory technicians. Even with the ICT investment of €250 million promised over six years of the National Development Plan we will still not achieve an average grade in our ICT performance in the international report card.

We are tired of pilot programmes and reports – there have to be national rollouts across the board. The Task Force on the Physical Sciences report still awaits implementation. Our world is running out of its prime energy sources and we are rapidly damaging our biosphere. There is a huge challenge for us to manage our waste. These are pressing issues fundamental to our very existence and our survival. We know we live in a knowledge-based economy. We have the multiple intelligences to create solutions, but only if all of our people are scientifically literate. At present, the funding for second level makes that impossible.

If only some of us have an understanding of science, that gives them power; the rest of us are disenfranchised, and democracy is damaged. Science must be integral to everyone's understanding and to everyone's education. Otherwise they are second-class citizens and we are creating a two-tier society.

Society also requires that schools can properly provide the professional, emotional and psychological supports needed by students – not just funding the response to a crisis, but funding the preventive strategies as well.

Societal challenges and getting the last 20% into education

We are rapidly becoming a two-tier society and that is a concept that causes wide concern among Irish people. Look at the United States: healthcare is not available to half its citizens; unemployment is rampant among those who do not have a good education; and, those with means shun state-funded education. In the United States, one in 100 of the population is incarcerated in prison. That equates to 2.3m people. They have a two-tier society.

Look at some of the challenges for Irish society today, which we experience in our schools:

"One-quarter of teens admit to getting drunk by the time they reach 13" (*Irish Independent*, February 28, 2008)

"Aimless students admit drug taking" (*Irish Independent*, February 29, 2008)

"Mental health concerns among young" (*Irish Times*, December 13, 2008)

"One in 10 Irish teens harming themselves" (*Irish Times*, March 9, 2008)

We also have 20% of young people not finishing school to Leaving Cert level. A survey last week reinforced what we have long known: that from among this 20% come the vast majority of young offenders in our society. They are the people who find it hard to get work, easy to get into drugs and the cycle continues.

Currently, we are told that it costs almost €7,400 to educate each second-level student.

It costs €104,000 to keep an adult in prison and approximately €94,000 to keep young offenders in St Patrick's Institution. That's 14 second-level places for every unfortunate prisoner. In other words, Minister, it is worth investing in education. The cost in 2004 of maintaining a young person in Lusk was €233,000 – that's 31 second-level student places. And that is the financial cost and says nothing about the emotional cost to the young person, their family and community.

There is an economic principle here: the law of diminishing returns. To achieve 100% in anything, it will take considerably more effort to achieve the last 20% than it did the first 80%. You have to be prepared to adequately resource and fund our schools – the old pro rata rate will not work, nor will simplistic pilot programmes.

**EDUCATION IS A STRATEGIC
PRIORITY THAT NEEDS PRIORITY
FUNDING IN OUR NATIONAL BUDGET,
INDEPENDENT OF ECONOMIC
SWINGS, BE THEY UP OR DOWN.**

Decisions

Let us now look at what impact this has on the decisions we make for Irish education. If we do not make the investment now, in 10 years time



Kevin Brogan, Drogheda Sean Higgins Branch.



Granu Dwyer, Nenagh Branch.

too many of our people will not be able to get work or function properly. They will not have the ability to constantly re-learn in changing circumstances. Look at the 2004 report from ForFás predicting skills needs for 2020: we need massive – and I mean massive – investment if we are to attain those targets. That investment is required at second level. There is little point in gearing up for research at third and fourth level if no one with the interests and education from second level wants to go into those fields.

All of the economic forecasts and reports want to put us in the top five in different ways within Europe. We will be able to do that only by improving the economic spend at all levels of education. We simply must be prepared to give education strategic priority in our national budget.

*WE REQUIRE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO
ARE INDEPENDENT THINKERS,
WHO ARE CONTRIBUTORS
AND WHO ARE CREATIVE.*

Ireland has already demonstrated that we have the vision, but only if the work of the teacher is valued, and if society embraces the problems jointly with teachers, will we achieve a sustainable solution.

It is four decades since your departmental predecessor, Donagh O'Malley, had the courage to make radical change. Change whose reverberations we still feel to this day. Many, many hundreds of thousands of people have reason to be grateful to him. As a society we are all grateful. At a stroke he made fundamental change possible.

We are asking no less of you. In O'Malley's day, less than 12% stayed in school, few could get jobs and people were leaving Ireland in droves. The knowledge-based society of today has different needs. Some 80% of students finish school and currently there is nearly full employment. Today we are competing in a global knowledge economy for the world's resources and the world's markets. We also require people working in science, and a country that is scientifically literate, with ICT integrated throughout society. We require young people who are independent thinkers, who are contributors and who are also creative. Education is a strategic priority that needs priority

funding in our national budget. This is independent of economic swings, be they up or down.

We need a Minister with integrity and enormous courage to step in and make education a fundamental priority for Ireland – like O'Malley did. But like O'Malley, it is up to you Minister, to convince your colleagues in Cabinet that education demands this strategic priority and requires radical funding decisions.

We need a Minister that will step up to the mark and bring about this necessary change in priority funding. Minister, I believe you have that courage.

Address by ASTI General Secretary John White to Convention Quality in education

It is a great honour for me to address Convention, as General Secretary of the ASTI, in the 99th year since the Association was founded. When we come to celebrate next year the centenary of the founding of the ASTI, we can be proud that we, as teachers, have delivered a quality education to the young people of this country. This is not simply an assertion – it is evidence-based: the OECD report, 'Education at a Glance', stated last December that parents in Ireland "can rely on high and consistent performance standards across schools in the entire education system". And it further adds: "Parents can be less concerned about choice between schools in order to attain high performance" than in many other countries.

What better evidence is there that we have been true to the founding principle of our own members: we deliver a quality education across the entire education system, from the smallest stand-alone school in rural Ireland to the schools in our larger towns and cities. This is the positive message we have today for the media, the parents of Ireland and, indeed, the whole country.

It is galling, therefore, to read blanket statements from certain politicians and right-wing commentators about reform of the public service. I wonder how many of those would survive in the modern classroom? As far as second-level education is concerned, on behalf of 17,000 second-level teachers, teaching in schools attended by 75% of pupils, I want to give a message today to those anti-public service warriors: we have reformed; we have transformed our schools, despite coming near



Dublin South West Branch delegates pictured during Convention.



Fingal Branch delegates (from left): Eddie MacCarthy; and, Kathlyn Hennelly.

the bottom of the OECD tables on funding for each second-level student relative to our wealth; we have welcomed and successfully integrated international students; we have welcomed and successfully integrated pupils with special needs; we have introduced the Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate Applied, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, the Junior Certificate Schools Programme; and, we have modernised our syllabi. That is real modernisation, not populist but ultimately superficial modernisation such as the standardisation of the school year. We must constantly emphasise that the most important activity in a school is the interaction in the classroom. Everything else is there to support that. We, as teachers, have been in the vanguard of real reform in ensuring a quality education and we've had enough of populist so-called modernisation, which simply places bureaucratic burdens on schools involving endless paper trails that serve to distract us from our real work – producing a quality service.

*WE DELIVER A QUALITY EDUCATION
ACROSS THE ENTIRE EDUCATION
SYSTEM, FROM THE SMALLEST
STAND-ALONE SCHOOL IN RURAL
IRELAND TO THE SCHOOLS IN OUR
LARGER TOWNS AND CITIES.*

Teachers' pay

Central to quality education are professional, committed, enthusiastic teachers who are valued by society. Speaking of being valued by society, I come to the issue of pay. The ASTI has expressed its bitter disappointment with the report of the Second Benchmarking Body. The fact that we received no increases reflects profound changes in the global economy, where market forces are triumphant and operate with the minimum of regulation. It is worth considering these changes so that we understand them and see how best we can advance the interests of teachers. Since the 1950s, there has been an acceptance of what are referred to as

the Priestly Principles in relation to public service pay. These principles arose out of the Priestly Commission on Public Service Pay in England and have been broadly accepted in Ireland. The traditional principles for determining public sector pay state that a public servant should be paid the same salary that a good employer in the private sector pays to a person carrying out comparable work. Public sector pay cannot be determined unfettered by the economic realities of society. Of course, there can be pragmatic and ad hoc settlements and these may be justifiable on occasion, but they are not sustainable in the long term. Comparison with comparable private sector employment has been seen as a fair system in that it should ensure that equivalent work, or work of equal value, is paid in line with that in the private sector. However, recent reports by the Review Body on Higher Remuneration and the report of Benchmarking II have highlighted the unfairness inherent in recent pay movements in the private sector, whereby enormous salaries are paid to chief executives and salaries to middle ranking employees are depressed. Benchmarking II has delivered no increases to teachers because over the past 10 years, with the operation of raw market forces in the private sector, chief executives' salaries have taken giant leaps, while there have been no equivalent increases for other employees. This, of course, is a matter of great concern to teachers, given that our comparators in the private sector have not made giant leaps in salary, and marks the end of benchmarking in its current form.

Other public sector groups have also expressed similar sentiments regarding the Benchmarking Report, as the vast majority of public servants received no increases. It is unlikely that public service unions will agree to enter another benchmarking process, which anyway would not report until 2012. The successor to benchmarking will have to be able to deal with the new demands upon individual groups such as teachers, and recognise the changes in conditions of service consequent upon societal change. What is at issue here is: how do you determine the price of a job? In a market economy operating with the minimum of regulation and the maximum of competitiveness, the price of a job is determined in the same way as the price of a product: how scarce the product is, and how much the purchaser is willing to pay, determines its price. In a socialist economy, of

course, prices are determined differently, but since 1989 capitalism has been triumphant world-wide. The social market, which is the dominant ideology in the EU, mitigates the rawer effects of crude capitalism. The social market can be defined as capitalism that has regard to social coherence and fairness. Combined with this ideology of the free market, the social market influence has been responsible for a raft of legislation governing industrial relations, much of which has improved conditions of workers but has meant that unions increasingly operate within a legislative rather than a voluntarist framework.

*WE HAVE REFORMED; WE HAVE
TRANSFORMED OUR SCHOOLS; WE
HAVE WELCOMED AND SUCCESSFULLY
INTEGRATED INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
AND STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.*

This is the political environment within which the ASTI seeks to obtain a salary for teachers that recognises their worth in the community. What we ask for is a fair system of determining our worth, which will ensure the recruitment of highly motivated teachers to continue the provision of a quality education to our community. In this environment, there was never more need for a union attuned to modern circumstances to argue the case for teachers.

Module 1 of Towards 2016

I now come to the current situation with regard to pay. Module 1 of Towards 2016 runs until September 30, 2008. We are due increases of 2.5% from March 1, payable in the salary issue of March 27, and 2.5% from September 1. That is an increase of 5% in the calendar year 2008. The second payment is still subject to the agreement of the ESPVG (Education Sector Performance Verification Group), on which I will for the first time be representing the unions. Inflation is extremely difficult to predict in the volatile circumstances of global uncertainty, but the ESRI's latest prediction for the CPI is 3.4% for

2008, although inflation is currently running at 4.8%. It remains to be seen, given increases in food and oil prices, if this prediction will be correct.

Module 2 of Towards 2016

Talks on module two of Towards 2016 are likely to begin in late April or early May. The four teacher unions, the ASTI, the TUI, the INTO and the IFUT, have adopted a position paper with regard to the talks, the main features of which are:

- pay increases must be significantly ahead of inflation and should comprise increases:
 - (a) to reflect increases in the CPI; and,
 - (b) to reflect growth in the economy;
- the pay agreement should be of briefer duration than previous agreements and should not be for more than two years;
- the pay pause for the public service should be removed;
- a review mechanism must be built into the pay agreement so as to prevent erosion of the increases by inflation; and,
- additional resources will be sought to improve teaching and learning.

I want to assure members of Convention here today, and I know the President strongly supports me in this, that at every meeting we have stated that since the value of the last module was eaten away by inflation, we have no intention of giving any further bureaucratic productivity. Of course we favour reform, and we have delivered it, as I have stated earlier, as part of our professional work as teachers. However, bureaucratic impositions add nothing to the quality of our work in the classroom and that is the criteria by which reform should be judged. These talks will be difficult. While there is always a softening up process before talks like this, the predicted American recession and European slowdown are real. If the talks collapse, they collapse, but there will then be a public service deal that will be negotiated in the same way. For example, in Britain, where there are no centralised pay agreements and trade unions operate within the unregulated market, the Prime Minister Gordon Brown has told all of the British public service that they are going to get 2.5% maximum for each of the next three years, accompanied by change, flexibility and modernisation.



General Secretary John White talks to Minister Mary Hanafin.



Vincent Diffley, Dun Laoghaire Branch.

President, we believe that despite the slowdown in the economy, Ireland is an extremely wealthy country. Teachers deserve to benefit from this wealth creation because, as educators, we clearly have had a role in its creation. We will abide by the agreements we have made. We have delivered a quality education. Let the government deliver a fair salary to us.

Teachers experiencing professional difficulties

It is a measure of the vital importance of second-level teachers' work that the media highlights this issue at every opportunity. There is no point in blaming the media for this. 'Blaming the media' is always a waste of time because the media will always highlight what is of interest to readers. Our work is of interest to readers because it is such important work and, unlike many other types of activity, there is no hiding place. The classroom is a very public place and up to 30 pupils await a performance seven or eight times a day. This fact must always be part of every discussion on pay and retirement. Under the terms of Towards 2016, it has been agreed that a new disciplinary process will be put in place, as required under Section 24(b) of the Education Act. The major issue that has arisen in these negotiations is the involvement of the inspectorate in dealing with teachers experiencing professional difficulties. In the primary and vocational sectors, there is a formal process involving the inspectorate at all stages. In the voluntary secondary sector or the C & C sector, where we have the great majority of members, there is no such formal procedure involving the inspectorate. There is currently a robust disciplinary procedure agreed with the JMB for the voluntary secondary sector and, contrary to common belief, it is utilised. Any new system has to conform to the principles of fair hearing. There have been a number of meetings in relation to this matter and a draft is currently being prepared. We are insisting on: (a) extensive supports for teachers experiencing professional difficulties; (b) involvement of the inspectorate as appropriate; and, (c) a proper appeal system.

In this context, let me tell Convention some good news. We recently received proposals from the DES in relation to the Early Retirement Scheme, commonly referred to as Strands 1, 2 and 3. This Early Retirement Scheme, negotiated as part of PCW, was one of the great achievements of the ASTI in recent years. The proposals have been welcomed by the Pensions Committee

and by Standing Committee. Over 1,000 of our members have benefited from these schemes and, even if a member never benefited, they provide an essential comfort zone.

The other issues in Module 1 are redeployment and a review of promotional arrangements. A redeployment scheme for school closures has been agreed and includes for the first time the closure of a C & C school. Strand 3 early retirement with seven added years was available to any teacher who wished to avail of it. There have been no talks on a general redeployment scheme and, therefore, no such scheme could be in operation for the school year 2008/09, but it has been intimated to the President and to me that the DES wishes to have such talks for implementation in the year 2009/10. Similarly, there have been no talks on a review of the promotional structures but we expect the same situation as in redeployment: that such talks will commence over the coming months.

*THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITY IN
A SCHOOL IS THE INTERACTION IN THE
CLASSROOM. EVERYTHING ELSE IS
THERE TO SUPPORT THAT.*

Pupil behaviour

I have stressed throughout my speech the concept of a quality education. Quality in education is what all of the partners in education – parents, managers, the Department of Education and Science, and the wider community – desire. Let us be very clear today about one fundamental and let this message be heard loud and clear by all those interested in education. You cannot have a quality education if the education of the great majority of pupils is subject to disruptive behaviour by a minority of pupils. We must as a society support our schools to be orderly, harmonious places; we must restore a just balance between rights and responsibilities.

This does not mean that we as teachers shouldn't make every effort to deal with difficult, recalcitrant students; we do make every effort. We recognise as professionals the great skill in educating very challenging



From left: Brian Hayes, Fine Gael spokesperson on education; Mike Jennings, IFUT; and, Emer Nowlan, Educate Together.



Paddy Mulcahy and John Byrne, Cork South Branch, pictured at Convention.

pupils, even if our league table culture gives this no recognition. As teachers, we deal with rebellious attitudes by our pupils. Indeed, we try to foster creative and critical responses. But we want support when we are dealing with downright unacceptable behaviour and we say that teachers and schools must be supported by the Department of Education and Science and the broader community.

WE HAVE DELIVERED A QUALITY EDUCATION. LET THE GOVERNMENT DELIVER A FAIR SALARY TO US.

A society that does not do so has lost its way. In this regard, the National Education Welfare Board is preparing guidelines on student behaviour. Susie Hall, the ASTI representative on the Schools Implementation Committee, expressed great concern at the first draft of these guidelines. Subsequently, the President and I had what I believe was a very productive meeting with the National Education Welfare Board, at which we robustly presented ASTI policy. There is, of course, no magic bullet to deal with behaviour problems in schools. I believe we have had some success in that we persuaded the Minister to amend Section 29 of the Education Act, which deals with appeals against suspensions and expulsions. In the amendment, it is now clearly stated that in hearing appeals the appeal committee will have regard to "the educational interests of the student concerned, and the effective provision of education for other students in the school and the maintenance of a classroom and learning environment which is supportive of learning ...".

Fixed-term and CID teachers

The legislation for part-time and fixed-term workers fundamentally means that such persons cannot be treated any less favourably than their full-time comparators. Transposing the terms of the EU directives into Irish legislation and then implementing that legislation insofar as it refers to teachers has been an extremely complex matter and the negotiations have still not concluded.

The first thing I want to say is that a CID, i.e., a contract of indefinite duration, is a permanent contract. CID merely follows the nomenclature used in the EU. There are now at least 1,300 CID holders on 18-22 hours. The introduction of CIDs has the advantage of giving our temporary members legislative certainty that they will be made permanent. That did not exist hitherto. However, we have two major issues to address. Firstly, there is the issue of those on CIDs of less than 18 hours. A proportion of the total number (300) in this category is probably content to be permanent part-time because of lifestyle issues. However, there is probably a significant majority who wish to be 'whole time.' In the ongoing fixed-term talks, which are scheduled to conclude at a meeting on April 7, I am hopeful that, except in exceptional circumstances, where there is a vacancy in a school, those on part-time CIDs will be upgraded to whole time. A further major issue is the anomaly of the different treatment of CIDs on 18-22 hours in C & C schools and in voluntary secondary schools. We have lodged a claim at the Conciliation Council, and I want to assure our members in the C & C sector, where we have 60% of the membership, that we will pursue this through every avenue – conciliation, arbitration and through the Rights Commissioner service, Labour Court and courts if necessary. If our younger teachers sometimes wonder what the union is doing for them, you can give them this reassurance.

Conclusion

President, I have only had an opportunity to report to Convention some of the major issues facing our members. We face many challenges in the coming year and I want to assure Convention that with a coherent, rational and united ASTI, we can deal with these challenges. Next year will be a proud year for the ASTI, when we celebrate our centenary, and I know many of our stalwart activists and Convention attendees have made a commitment to see out the centenary. Our illustrious founders, such as De Valera and Thomas MacDonagh knew that, working together in solidarity and confidence, we can advance the interests of teachers. I want to thank everyone who contributes to the work of the ASTI on behalf of teachers. I want to thank our school stewards, branch officers, CEC members and Standing Committee members, our representatives on NCCA committees and all of the staff at Head Office who are committed to serving teachers in this



Pictured at the launch of 'Diversity Powering Success in Education', a leaflet produced by the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) are (from left): Mary Ohle, Dublin North West Branch; Patricia Wroe, ASTI President; John White, ASTI General Secretary; Sandra Gowran, GLEN Director of Education Policy Change; Odhrán Allen, GLEN Director of Mental Health Strategy; Maire Mulcahy, ASTI Assistant General Secretary; and, Carmel Heneghan, Tuam Branch and Chair of the ASTI Equal Opportunities Committee.

changing world. Finally, I want to thank you, members of Convention, who give up your Easter holidays every year to carry on the work of our illustrious founders. Wouldn't they love to be with us today to ensure that the ASTI will continue as the respected voice of second-level teachers.

*QUALITY IN EDUCATION IS
WHAT ALL OF THE PARTNERS IN
EDUCATION – PARENTS, MANAGERS,
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND SCIENCE, AND THE WIDER
COMMUNITY – DESIRE.*

Minister Mary Hanafin, guest speaker

Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, began her address to Convention on a positive note, echoing the sentiments of President Patricia Wroe on teachers' value to society. "Our education system has served this country very well, driving major improvements in our social and economic prosperity. Within a relatively short period of time, we have achieved participation rates and educational outcomes that are among the best in the world". She cited second-level performance in PISA assessments and noted that this year 55% of all 17-19 year olds, or 70% of those who sit the Leaving Cert, will go on to third-level colleges. Because of this, she told Convention, "everyone in this room can rightly be proud of what you have helped to achieve". However, she continued: "We cannot afford to be complacent ... the Irish economy is changing, moving up the value chain away from manufacturing and towards more knowledge-intensive employment. While this is a very positive move, it will become increasingly difficult for people who don't have good levels of education to find employment. It is in this context that the National Skills Strategy set important targets for our education system". She detailed these targets as increasing the Leaving Cert retention rate and the proportions entering third-level education. "While these targets are challenging, when you consider the huge progress

that has already been made you realise that they are achievable." She added: "They will require improvements and reforms at all levels". She outlined curricular change, high quality teaching, targeted additional supports for vulnerable groups, and improved school facilities as the key areas for post-primary schools.

In relation to curricular change, the Minister said: "The government is committed to curriculum change at second level that maximises the strengths of our existing system, while responding to emerging needs. A curriculum that every student can engage with, and which strikes an appropriate balance between acquiring knowledge and developing key skills". She continued: "We are conscious of the fact that in order for change to lead to real improvement on the ground it must be carefully planned, introduced in an incremental and sustainable way, and well resourced".

According to the Minister: "Teacher quality is the single most important factor – far and above anything else – in securing the best outcomes for children. It is vital therefore that we not only continue to attract the right people into teaching but that we provide them with the continuum of professional development opportunities that they need to be effective educators".

The Minister recalled her first address to ASTI Convention, where she acknowledged the major historical deficit in services for children with special educational needs and vowed to make improvements in this area her number one priority. She detailed recent increased investment in special education and said: "I know that many of you are concerned about the implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act and I too want to make sure that we get this right. A detailed plan for implementing the Act in full by October 2010 is currently being finalised, which will include an immediate emphasis on meeting the additional training of teachers".

Moving from special educational needs to social disadvantage, the Minister said: "In 2008 some €800 million is being provided for social inclusion initiatives across the education system, an increase of 75% on the comparable figure for 2003. Under the DEIS Action Plan, the most disadvantaged second-level schools are being targeted to benefit from a

comprehensive package of extra resources. And an emphasis is also being put on school planning, target setting and monitoring to ensure that the additional investment leads to better educational outcomes". Touching on a key theme of this year's Convention, the Minister spoke of language and cultural support, saying: "Support for children with English language needs has been improved significantly in recent years ... We are conscious of the fact that this is a relatively new issue for Irish schools and we are working with the ESRI and the OECD to evaluate how effectively we are dealing with it and to learn from the experience of other countries and international best practice". She highlighted the fact that all schools are responsible for "welcoming and including children of every background and need", and reported that "the Department recently undertook an audit of school enrolment policies and practices. Over the coming weeks, I will be consulting with each of the education partners in relation to the issues that must now be considered on foot of this".

*TEACHER QUALITY IS THE SINGLE MOST
IMPORTANT FACTOR – FAR AND ABOVE
ANYTHING ELSE – IN SECURING THE
BEST OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN.*

Concluding her speech, the Minister promised: "This Government has and will continue to prioritise education. Our schools and colleges have helped to create the well-educated workforce that has been central to our economic progress to date. And they will be just as crucial to meeting the skills needs that our future social and economic prosperity depends on. It is vital, therefore, that even in this tighter budgetary environment, further improvements in education are prioritised. Over the next few years, I intend to ensure that education has a strong voice at the Cabinet table, that a powerful case is made for increased investment, and that the Government and teachers continue to work well together in a spirit of partnership".

Professor Tom Collins, NUI Maynooth, guest speaker

Professor Collins began his speech by saying of the motions and speeches earlier in the day: "What strikes me is the seriousness of the debate that is opening up here in terms of investment in education, not just the amount but also where it should go and how it should be allocated". He went on to consider some of the areas of investment in education, starting with curriculum development. In a postmodern society, he said, "development is indistinguishable from implementation ... Research happens conterminously with development". However, he said schools are much more than places that teach subjects. "It was very interesting that both the Minister and the President picked up on the much wider role that secondary schools play. This hugely enhances the moral position of the school in the community, but also the well-being and development and growth of young people in the school". Professor Collins spoke of the need to invest in education strategically, quoting Jack Lynch, who said: "It's not that we're too poor to invest in this, it is that we're too poor not to invest in it". He said: "One of the interesting things that we do in Ireland, one of the really valuable things, which we may not give enough attention to, is the work we do in Third World development. We have committed in Ireland to growing our Third World contribution to 0.7% of GNP by the year 2012 ... That is a model of financing that I like ... I do believe that we should commit ourselves nationally to a particular percentage of our GNP on education. I think it should be about 7%. That would give the Minister approximately €3 billion extra this year to spend on education if we had committed to some percentage ... With that kind of commitment, we could then plan".

He acknowledged, however, that there is an issue about how decisions are made in Ireland and, in order to centre education as a priority investment area, "all the teacher unions need to be helping the Minister and the Department of Education. That is a critical part of the education coalition. It's actually ensuring that we get, first of all, a bigger slice of the cake for education; having got it, we can argue among ourselves as to who would get more of it".

He continued: "Teaching has become such a gentle experience for

children, and I think that is so important, because so much of their lives lack gentleness. So much of it is harsh and hard ... The subject focus has strengths, but it also has limitations. Especially as you go through to Leaving Cert where the child's agenda becomes above all things, 'I have to do well in this exam'. This puts huge pressure to teach to the test ... How do you manage an individual attainment focus in the context of co-operativism and a communal identity?"

I BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD COMMIT OURSELVES NATIONALLY TO A PARTICULAR PERCENTAGE OF OUR GNP ON EDUCATION. I THINK IT SHOULD BE ABOUT 7%.

"The future focus in schools is very problematic ... You have to work towards individual attainment, but also co-operation; recognising that individual attainment can only happen in co-operation, recognising that the child who excels in maths for instance, but comes out of school unable to relate to another child, has been badly served by Irish education. I think it is so important that people understand that a child can only grow to

their full attainment as individuals in the context of a social role. And that social role can never be supplied by the grinds school".

Of this pressure to attain, Professor Collins said: "I think increasingly in second level you will work with children to prepare them for a life of learning. Not for a life of work. The notion of second level as a terminal experience in education, which is a model that we have all grown up with, no longer applies. The great majority of the children that will finish in education this year will go on to further and higher education next year, or at some other point ... One of the big changes that has happened is the realisation that there are opportunities to come back, but I must never underestimate the importance of early life education in whether they choose to come back or not. All the evidence of people who return to education is that those who do it are invariably the ones that had the best experience in early life education".

Continuing on this note, Professor Collins closed his address to convention by saying: "I have a great image of the 21st century – when the space shuttle is about to launch, and there's a countdown, and you see the smoke and suddenly it slowly takes off. I think a teacher is really there at the launching of every child into the world, and that's a great privilege. We've been lucky in Ireland – the people who have been entrusted with that task have done it so well. I would want to congratulate all of you on that".



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Auf Wiedersehen!

Motions debated at convention

Alongside reports on matters such as health and safety, teacher bullying, equal opportunities and education, a number of specific motions were debated and adopted at this year's Convention.

Discipline

Before debate began on a motion "that the ASTI negotiate with the Department of Education and Science to amend Section 29 of the Education Act to place the emphasis on the right of the majority of pupils to be taught and the teacher to teach without disruption", ASTI General Secretary, John White, referred to the recent amendment to Section 29 of the Education Act, saying: "To some extent, the terms of this motion have been superseded, but the essence, to do with discipline and the problems to do with behaviour, are still live".

Kevin Brogan, Drogheda Sean Higgins Branch, then proposed the motion, making clear that "what is important here is the right of the pupil to learn and the teacher to teach. What is happening is that the rights of the students who are compliant are not taken into consideration at all". He pointed out the health and safety implications of disruptive students, saying that there are a minority of students that are a danger to themselves as well as others. Niamh Walker, Dublin South 2, speaking for the motion, said: "I think this is the most important issue on which we can actually make progress that will affect the education we deliver. It is an extremely different situation going in to teach a class when you have the co-operation of the majority and when they want to learn". Paddy Mulcahy, Limerick North, spoke against the use of the word 'majority' in the motion, saying: "If there is only one child in a class that needs good teaching, that needs a calm atmosphere to work in, then that child should have it".

The motion was carried.

Salary scale

PJ Sheehy, Wicklow, proposing a motion that "the ASTI adopt as a key priority the achievement of a significant reduction in the length of the teacher's basic salary scale in any future pay negotiations with the Department of Education and Science, e.g., a new national pay deal, benchmarking exercise or negotiations held under the terms of free collective bargaining", made the point that we are currently in a situation where people start on the salary scale at a later stage in life than in the past and therefore it takes longer to get to the maximum point. He said: "We are about to embark on new negotiations for future pay deals. The current scale was introduced as part of pay negotiations in the past; there is no reason why it shouldn't be on the table now". Gerry Maloney, Wicklow, in seconding the motion, said: "The average teacher now spends eight years on part-time contracts before obtaining a permanent position, so the actual amount of time it takes to reach the maximum point on the salary scale has increased". He also made the point that this situation means that the discrepancy in the lifetime earnings of teachers, as opposed to graduates with similar qualifications, has also increased.

The motion was carried.

Special needs allowance

A motion "that the ASTI campaign that the current diploma allowance in

special education needs payable to qualified teachers working as special needs teachers be also made available to teachers who have: (a) a graduate diploma in learning support; (b) equivalent qualifications in special education, acquired in third-level institutions either within or outside of Ireland; or, (c) undergone comprehensive training organised by the Department of Education and Science prior to such training being accredited by third-level colleges or institutions", was proposed by Brideen Kirwan, Waterford, who explained the background to the special education allowance and why it currently applies only to certain courses. She simplified the argument by saying: "Teachers are doing the same work, but because they do not have the required special education qualification, they are not receiving the allowance. So basically for the same work and a similar qualification they are not receiving the same pay". Fintan O'Mahony, Waterford, in seconding the motion, said: "This motion goes to the heart of what trade unionism should be about". He quoted the EPSN Act implementation report, which, he said, "tells the Department of Education that those who are properly qualified should be given a central role in special education. It naturally follows that the same department should pay those teachers properly".

The motion was carried.

Retirement strands

Kevin Brogan, Drogheda Sean Higgins Branch, proposed a motion in relation to early retirement, "that the ASTI seek to maintain that Strands 1, 2 and 3 be maintained permanently and improved". He said these strands have been a great help to many of his colleagues who have retired over the last while and told delegates that as the Department of Education and Science has made a commitment to look at early retirement, "so we need to keep our eye on the ball here over the next six months or year". He warned that these strands are "the mainstay for a lot of us". Ray Nolan, Drogheda Sean Higgins Branch, in seconding the motion, made a point echoed by many speakers to the motion; some commentators may say teachers have a great pension but "teachers do not get their pensions for free – they pay for them".

The motion was carried unanimously.

Project work

A motion "that the onus on the class teacher to sign off on project work for state examinations be discontinued" was proposed by Ed Byrne, Fingal, who spoke of the rules and regulations regarding sign off and plagiarism. He said: "All projects are plagiarised in one form or another and if I sign off on one of these projects it may have a legal implication for me professionally".

Kathlyn Hennelly, Fingal, in seconding the motion, called the necessary signing off a "paper trail". "We have been told time and time again that the most important part of our teaching job is the interaction that takes place between the student and the teacher in the classroom. Signing off on this project work is not interaction. This layer of bureaucracy adds



nothing to the quality of learning or the quality of teaching that is taking place in the school. From my point of view it is an exam administration job that we are facilitating."

The motion was carried.

Special education

Liz Crummy, Stillorgan, proposed a motion "that the ASTI: (a) supports the principle that all schools should have in place policies which actively support equality of access and participation, so that all schools cater for SEN students in their catchment area, in order to ensure that the practice of some schools 'cherry picking' their intake, and other schools bearing a disproportionate number of SEN students, would cease; and, (b) the ASTI calls on the Department of Education and Science to audit the intake of students with special educational needs and either to accord incentives to those schools who are educating these students, and/or put in place a penalty system for those schools who are effectively discouraging the enrolment of these students". She compared the situation with SEN students to the situation with newcomer student intake, and the resulting concerns over segregation and labelling of schools. "Certain schools have excelled in their inclusion of students with special educational needs. This is a policy that should be celebrated and embraced, and held up as an example for all schools to follow their lead. Instead, the pattern has begun where these schools have become victims of their own success...Alongside these schools, we have all experienced 'the high-flying school in the area', which calculatedly excludes these students either through examination or interview." She continued: "Minister Hanafin has been very vocal in her objection to this custom of 'cherry picking' that has arisen in some schools. She has been crystal clear in her objection to this practice that has crept in, which is completely contrary

to the legislation of the Education Act". However, she asked of the Minister: "On your next visit to schools, ask the question – how many students in your school have special educational needs?" She finished by asking the Minister "to please give us the added incentives we need to provide for all of our children equally". Susie Hall, Dublin North East, speaking for the motion, said that the Department of Education and Science makes inclusiveness a bureaucratic nightmare, and urged that they "give the supports first and then assume that children would follow".

The motion was carried.

Individual education plans

Proposing the motion "that this convention calls on the Department of Education and Science to: (a) clarify the position regarding the introduction of IEPs; (b) outline arrangements for the provision of a comprehensive in-service programme for all teachers; (c) proceed with the appointment of an ex-quota IEP co-ordinator for each school; and, (d) define clearly the role, if any, that the learning support/special needs co-ordinator will be expected to undertake in relation to IEPs", Ann Corrigan, Carlow, said: "In order for the IEP process to work properly, an appropriate time allocation and budget needs to be given. It cannot be done on a shoestring ... There are many factors involved in designing and reviewing of IEPs, as there may be as many as 15 or more individuals involved in one plan. This level of information gathering and collaboration takes considerable time and training to establish. In light of this, is it fair that we are to be held accountable for having IEPs up and running when the Act does come into effect, even though we have not as yet had any training?" She said: "IEPs are an organic process and need regular review", but yet "schools are left in the dark". John O'Donovan, Carlow, in seconding the motion, made it clear that the motion was not in any way

opposed to the introduction of IEPs: "Any and every measure that is aimed at improving the service that we give to our students with special educational needs is to be welcomed". He said: "The teaching profession over the years has been flexible and accommodating in the introduction of many new programmes and revised syllabi. However, the implementation of IEPs requires a commitment from the DES that has to date not been forthcoming". Frank Killilea, Desmond, who spoke for the motion, made the point that this is not an issue solely for SEN co-ordinators: "This is going to land on every teacher's door ... and teachers are overworked as it is".

The motion was carried.

English language students

A motion "that the ASTI vigorously engages with the Department of Education and Science to establish an appropriate school-based facility to ensure adequate competency in the English language for each newcomer student prior to their inclusion in mainstream classes" was proposed by Christina Henahan, West Mayo. She reported: "The problem is that in some schools, where there are less than 14 students, there is merely an ad hoc system. Theoretically, each child is supposed to receive two hours of tuition in English. Many small voluntary secondary schools do not have anybody qualified to teach English as a foreign language". She urged that "some proactive planning to deal with a new situation be made mandatory in our school system", and said: "Economics have not changed, they are not going to change ... The situation is going to increase, it is not going to go away". Seconding the motion, Greta Harrison, West Mayo, added: "It is a long-term problem and it is unfair to park somebody in a classroom where they do not understand what is being addressed to them. They are not being taught, they are merely

being babysat, and that is no advantage to them, to the other children, to the teacher or to us as a nation".

The motion was carried unanimously.

CID hours

One motion that received a lot of attention at Convention was the motion that was first on the bill on Thursday morning. Justin Mc Gree, Tipperary, proposed "that the ASTI would make as the one issue in future pay discussions with the Department of Education and Science the bringing of non-permanent teachers and existing CID holders up to full teaching hours". He spoke of his personal experience as a teacher on nine hours 45 minutes after nine years of teaching and pointed out that "permanent and CID mean the same, but part-time means part-time ... Like my colleagues I work hard, I am in school every day and all day. Unlike my colleagues, my hours vary greatly from week to week...I chose a career in teaching, not a part-time job. The students I teach have part-time jobs, I have a profession". Joe Moran, Tipperary, seconded the motion and said that many teachers' professional lives would be transformed by the implementation of this motion. "We must have a process to bring this salary disadvantage of CID holders into full salary parity ... Looking at this issue in the broader perspective, the employment of teachers into permanent disadvantage is a very dangerous precedent...an insecure salary creates insecurity in a teacher's life and is therefore not in the interests of our students or schools ... The growing culture of employment by hours rather than posts is damaging."

The motion was carried.

ASTI Gay and Lesbian Network

Who? The ASTI Gay and Lesbian Network is a group of gay and lesbian members of the ASTI who meet regularly in ASTI Head Office.

Why? To identify what the ASTI needs to do to promote equal treatment for all teachers.

What? Regular meetings to:

- gather experiences: and,
- identify policies, procedures and agreements needed to reflect members' truly equal status and entitlement to equal treatment as employees, union members and citizens.

How to contact us: Tel: 087-6297727; email: gayandlesbiannetwork@asti.ie.



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- Maoiniú PFN de €252 milliún leithdháilte do TFC i scoileanna
- Forbairt Ghairmiúil Múinteoirí
- Riachtanais tacaíochta agus cothabhála teicniúla

Vox pops

For this year's vox pops, ASTIR asked teachers what motivated them as teachers, and what their impressions were of Convention. Their responses demonstrate the enthusiasm that so many teachers bring to their work, and their dedication to developing their profession, as well as encouraging more teachers to attend Convention.



Laoise O'Boyle teaches Spanish and English as a foreign language at St Raphaela's Secondary School, Stillorgan.

What do you like about teaching?

Mainly I like that I teach my favourite subject – Spanish. I studied Spanish, and lived in Spain for nine years. I really like that I can speak the language every day and teach it to others. Also, I enjoy teaching young people about Spanish culture – food, music and traditions. With languages there is a great scope in the classroom for games and different activities. You don't have to stick to learning from a book; there are lots of opportunities for fun. Every day is different, and Spanish is gaining a lot in popularity.

Why did you go into teaching?

I didn't plan it, although I had thought about it when I left school. I went to college, studied a language, took a year off to go to Spain, came back, did my finals, went back to Spain and ended up staying there for nine years. I worked in a completely different area in Spain and when I came back I wanted to get into something steady. I wasn't interested in business. We had a teaching tradition in the family and it seemed quite an attractive option.

What did you think of your first Convention?

It's really good, but it is tiring. It's completely different from what I had thought. I didn't think there would be so much debate. I definitely feel that younger teachers do not know what goes on at Convention and the important things that are being discussed. The things we talk about in the staffroom are being discussed and voted on at Convention.



Jo Ann O'Connor teaches music, Irish and religion at St Mary's Secondary School, Mallow.

What do you like about teaching?

The variety in teaching is great. In one day you could be rehearsing for a

concert in the morning, practising conversation in Irish class later and meditating in religion class later again. You meet so many people every day, between colleagues and students, so no two days are ever the same. I love the fact that even though we collaborate a lot with our teaching colleagues, especially within subject departments, everyone has the opportunity to be individually creative in their own class. As music is an option subject, students who choose it usually enjoy it. There's such a big practical aspect to it; it's great seeing them develop the confidence to perform. I really enjoy music myself and so it's nice to be surrounded by music every day. The students get a great buzz from performing, and we as music teachers get to be involved in that.

How did you get into teaching?

After completing a BA/B Mus in Music and Irish, I did the HDip in Education followed by the HDip in Religious Education.

What did you think of Convention?

It's my first time at Convention and I'm enjoying it. I find many of the motions very interesting. You can read the handbooks in advance and see what is interesting to you. Some motions are very specific but you learn more when you talk to other delegates. It's a great opportunity to meet teachers from all over the country.



John Banville teaches woodwork and technical graphics at St Peter's College, Wexford.

What do you like about teaching?

I like mixing with young people – it keeps me young! I think teaching is an important profession, I like doing it and I

do think we have a contribution to make. I teach a practical subject so it's easy to get the students interested and I don't have to keep 30 guys sitting quietly in front of me for an hour – that's an advantage. Having a nice staffroom to come into and nice colleagues to work with is a bonus.

Why did you go into teaching?

I always wanted to be a woodwork teacher, never anything else. The teachers I had in secondary school influenced me a lot.

What did you think of Convention?

Convention is very interesting. This year I thought the motion on pensions was very enlightening. I have a very long way to go to pension, but I found it was a very interesting discussion. The debate on contracts and part-time teachers was another thing I was very interested in. The social life is good too; you make a lot of new friends and can learn a lot from that too.



John Galligan teaches biology, agricultural science, maths and science at The Royal School, Cavan.

What do you like about teaching?

I think one of the best things about teaching is the staffroom atmosphere; you get to meet

different types of people from all different subject areas. In every school I have taught in the atmosphere in the classroom and the staffroom has been positive and I've taught at both ends of the scale. In teaching, every day is different. There are different classes and different age groups and I have a mix of subjects too. It's nice to have that variety. It is a very worthwhile job; you are putting something back into the system that produced you. You influence the kids and you can have a very positive effect on their lives. It is very rewarding, especially when you meet students a few years on and realise the work you did for them.

Why did you go into teaching?

I kind of fell into teaching about eight or nine years ago. I had finished my degree and got a job subbing in a school in Cavan town. I never thought I would be a teacher but I enjoyed the experience and decided to go and do the HDip.

What did you think of Convention?

This is my first time at Convention and it's brilliant. It's not what I expected; it is surprisingly relaxed, yet there is a lot of important work going on and it's nice to see the process and how decisions are made. It's very fair and everybody can have a say. I have to say I'm very impressed, so I will be back!



Patricia Dwan teaches maths, science and physics at Ursuline Secondary School, Thurles.

What do you like about teaching?

I enjoy being in the classroom and I love the variety of the job.

It is hard work but I do enjoy it. There is variety in teaching and the courses are changing all the time. It's great interacting with the students and seeing them develop, grow and change.

I teach science and it's great because there is a lot of project work and the

students come in with their own ideas. I enjoy passing on my enthusiasm and love for the subjects.

Why did you go into teaching?

Teaching was something I always wanted to do. I studied science with the intention of becoming a science teacher and went straight into teaching after college. As long as I keep getting the buzz out of the classroom, I'll stay doing what I'm doing.

What did you think of Convention?

It's great. I find I am learning a lot and there is great camaraderie; you realise you're not the only one with problems. Every time I go to union meetings I learn more about what's going on. There is more going on than you might think: people are doing work on our behalf that we may not realise.



Cathal O'Gara teaches history, English and religion at St Peter's College, Wexford.

What do you like about teaching?

I like the challenge and the variety of students we meet, and I like the interaction. I have great colleagues; we have a very good staff in my

school and there is a great sense of collegiality and a good social life, though that is getting increasingly difficult with a decrease in downtime for teachers.

The students that opt to take my classes seem to be committed to them, so that makes it interesting and enjoyable to teach. Religion has evolved as a subject in recent times, and that is interesting too.

Why did you go into teaching?

I never really thought of doing anything else, I always wanted to be a teacher...once my professional golf career faltered at an early stage! I

went to Mater Dei and did the four-year teacher training course there.

What did you think of Convention?

Convention is excellent; I have met loads of colourful characters. It's very enjoyable and I think the debate is very important. I thought the motion on CIDs was crucial and I enjoyed our General Secretary's report.



Patrick Andrews teaches Irish and maths at Colaiste Chríost Rí in Cork City.

What do you like about teaching?

Being at Convention I hear a lot about how influential teachers are in students' lives, and that is true. I like that and I like building friendships with my students, influencing them and gaining their respect. I like dealing with people, interacting. It's simple but it's the truth.

I coach sport in the school

and I find that that helps you to get to know students on another level. The whole school is like a team and I like being part of that and being involved in a whole school community.

Why did you go into teaching?

I didn't always want to be a teacher, but I liked the challenge of teaching and helping kids. I would always have been heavily involved in coaching kids in sport so when I finished my degree I decided to go for it.

What did you think of Convention?

I have been coming to Convention for a few years now and I like it. Every year I come I learn things about my profession and my union and what is going on. The class size motion was very interesting and I was interested in the bullying of teachers report. I think most teachers have gone through that experience and I thought it was very important.

Resolutions adopted

ASTI Annual Convention 2008

1. Motion 56: Class size

That the ASTI establishes a policy of maximum class size of 20 for all subjects.

2. Motion 71: Section 29 of the Education Act

That the ASTI negotiate with the Department of Education and Science to amend Section 29 of the Education Act to place the emphasis on the right of the majority of pupils to be taught, and the teacher to teach, without disruption.

3. Motion 2: Length of teachers' salary scale

That the ASTI adopt as a key priority the achievement of a significant reduction in the length of the teachers' basic salary scale in any future pay negotiations with the Department of Education and Science, e.g., a new national pay deal, benchmarking exercise or negotiations held under the terms of free collective bargaining.

4. Motion 8: Special needs qualification/allowance

That the ASTI campaign that the current diploma allowance in special education needs payable to qualified teachers working as special needs teachers also be made available to teachers who have:

- (a) a graduate diploma in learning support;
- (b) equivalent qualifications in special education, acquired in third-level institutions either within or outside of Ireland; or
- (c) undergone comprehensive training organised by the Department of Education and Science prior to such training being accredited by third-level colleges or institutions.

5. Motion 13: Posts of responsibility/teaching hours

That, in view of the increased responsibility and burden of accountability which arise as a result of recent legislation, the ASTI, through negotiation with the Department of Education and Science

and the managerial authorities, seeks to ensure that the teaching hours of assistant principals in all schools are reduced to 18 per week, and the teaching hours of special duties teachers are reduced to 20 per week, and that schools are compensated for this with an extra staffing allocation.

6. Motion 18: Retirement strands

That the ASTI seek to maintain that Strands 1, 2 and 3 be maintained permanently and improved.

7. Motion 34: Inspections

That the ASTI seek an undertaking from the Department of Education and Science that inspectors will not carry out inspections of schools in the final term of the school year due to the unnecessary disruption of the exam preparation.

8. Motion 77: Project work

That the onus on the class teacher to sign off on project work for state examinations be discontinued.

9. Motion 67: Special educational needs

That the ASTI:

- (a) support the principle that all schools should have in place policies which actively support equality of access and participation so that all schools cater for SEN students in their catchment area, in order to ensure that the practice of some schools 'cherry picking' their intake and other schools bearing a disproportionate number of SEN students would cease; and,
- (b) call on the Department of Education and Science to audit the intake of students with special educational needs and either to accord incentives to those schools who are educating these students, and/or to put in place a penalty system for those schools who are effectively

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discouraging the enrolment of these students.

10. Motion 74: IEPs

That this Convention calls on the Department of Education and Science to:

- (a) clarify the position regarding the introduction of IEPs;
- (b) outline arrangements for the provision of a comprehensive in-service programme for all teachers;
- (c) proceed with the appointment of an ex-quota IEP co-ordinator for each school; and,
- (d) define clearly the role, if any, that the learning support/special needs co-ordinator will be expected to undertake in relation to IEPs.

11. Motion 72: English language for newcomer students

That the ASTI vigorously engages with the Department of Education and Science to establish an appropriate school-based facility to ensure an adequate competency in the English language for each newcomer student prior to their inclusion in mainstream classes.

12. Motion 46: CID teaching hours

That the ASTI would make as the number one issue in future pay discussions with the Department of Education and Science the bringing of non-permanent teachers and existing CID holders up to full teaching hours.

13. Motion re. convention elections

That this Convention elect a sub-committee to examine, review and make recommendations on the organisation, procedures and conduct of elections at ASTI Conventions and report to CEC in January 2009.

14. Motion 50: Teacher absences

That the ASTI negotiate with the Department of Education and Science that, at the end of each school year, they will automatically issue all teachers with a detailed list of their absences for that particular year and that a system be put in place to rectify any inaccuracies that may show up.

15. Motion 31: Parent-teacher meetings

That ASTI undertake a review of parent-teacher meetings outside school hours on the grounds of health and safety, also to take into account parity of arrangement as pertains for primary teachers.

16. Motion 62: Home school liaison teacher allocation

That all schools be allocated an ex-quota home school liaison teacher.

17. Motion 86: Rule 14(b) – Emeritus members

Amend Rule 14(b)(i) by inserting the words “as a member of Standing Committee” immediately before the word “or”. Rule 14(b) to read as follows:

“Emeritus members shall have the power to exercise all the rights and privileges of all members except the right:

- (i) to act as a Branch Officer, as a member of Standing Committee, or as a representative on the Central Executive Council: and,
- (ii) to vote on any ballot on industrial action or to be a candidate in any election for Trusteeship of the Association.”

18. Motion 92: ASTI principals and deputy principals

That this Convention elects a sub-committee to investigate and report on the role of principals and deputy principals within the ASTI, this sub-committee to report back to CEC in January 2009.

19. Motion 108: Vetting of teachers

That the information provided from the vetting of teachers should be contained within the structures of the Teaching Council accreditation system.

Election results Convention 2008



Pat Hurley
President-Elect



Joe Moran
Vice-President



Ray St John
Honorary Treasurer

President-Elect	Pat Hurley	
Vice-President	Joe Moran	
Honorary Treasurer	Ray St John	
Trustees	Tom Gilligan Michael Kilbride Niamh Walker	
Sickness Benefit Committee	Diarmuid Cashman PJ Sheehy Roisin Doyle	
Rules Committee	Diarmuid Cashman Pat Deery Martha Goggin Fintan O'Mahony Sheila Parsons	
Investment Committee	John Byrne Justin McGree	Patrick Collins Áine Ní Cheidigh
Steering Committee	Lilly Cronin Pat Deery Susie Hall Máire Ní Laoire Sheila Parsons	
Pensions Sub Committee	Jane Craig-Elliott Dan Healy Denis O'Boyle Louis O'Flaherty Bernadine O'Sullivan	
Business of CEC Sub Committee	Caitriona McGrath	Ellis Casey
Convention Ballots Committee	Philip Irwin Lily Cronin Gretta Harrison Mary Lysaght Christy Maginn	

Leadership Development for Schools

MARY NIHILL explains the ethos behind Leadership Development for Schools, and describes the programmes available to teachers.



Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) was established in 2001 by the Department of Education and Science and was charged with providing quality professional development for Irish school leaders. LDS is concerned with enabling people to lead others and with strengthening leadership influence throughout the school as an organisation. It seeks to develop school leadership by using a wide range of programme delivery strategies. LDS focuses on the development of leadership as a process, and acknowledges the wealth of experience and expertise among teachers. It aims to develop the capacity of school leaders through the enhancement of their knowledge, skills and competencies, as well as attitudes, values and behaviours.

Focus on leading learning

The overall aims of LDS are to provide professional development and to build leadership capacity in schools. Our central focus is on leading learning. Courses include work on team building, communication, working with parents, curriculum and timetabling, as well as other managerial and administrative functions in schools. The programme operates on the theory that a well-run school leads to a positive environment for learning, where

staff and students are productive and motivated.

The LDS team are aware of the difficulty involved in training for sustained behavioural change in the workplace, and practical application is central to our approach. We use a variety of methodologies at our sessions. We encourage active participation through discussion and feedback. We find role play, case studies and the use of real scenarios very effective. Our post-primary team of 33 experienced principals, deputy principals and middle leaders (nine of whom are on full-time secondment) has a wealth of knowledge and experience that we can draw on. The success in uptake of LDS programmes can in part be attributed to the positive relationship that LDS has with stakeholders such as unions, management bodies and professional associations.

Misneach – a programme for newly-appointed principals

The need to provide training for newly-appointed principals was seen as a priority when LDS was established in 2001. 'Misneach' was offered to an initial group of newly-appointed principals in February 2002 and remains a central part of the LDS programme, with an estimated 90% of all newly-

appointed principals now taking the course. The Misneach programme, which runs over two years, aims to prepare and support newly-appointed principals in leading their schools effectively.

Tánaiste – a programme for newly-appointed deputy principals

'Tánaiste' was the second programme run by LDS, and 56 newly-appointed deputy principals are participating in the Tánaiste course this year. The leadership role of the deputy principal requires the development of skills in team management, conflict resolution, timetabling, and communication, among others. The programme runs over two years and focuses on a combination of practical issues, as well as on the role of the deputy principal as a school leader.

Forbairt – a programme for established principals and deputy principals

The pivotal role of the principal and deputy principal functioning as a senior management team is recognised as an ongoing area of development for schools. LDS offers a programme called 'Forbairt' for experienced principals and deputy principals from the same school.

LDS feels that there is a need for experienced school leaders to take time out to reflect, and we are aware of the need for leaders to analyse their leadership practice on an ongoing basis. 'Forbairt' is an invitation to principals and deputy principals to come out of schools for a certain number of days over a two-year period and to reflect on how they are working as a team. It is often difficult to find the time for this type of reflection in the school.

Schools have changed dramatically over the last few years and everybody accepts the fact that no principal can run an entire school; it is just not possible, and teachers do not want that old style of management. Teachers are professionals, and developing leadership is a way of acknowledging their professionalism. There is a need for an enlightened management structure and a more collective approach to managing the school. This collective approach starts with the principal and deputy principal working together with a shared vision for the future of the school.

Cumasú – supporting leaders who are leading in challenging circumstances

The Cumasú programme aims to provide leadership support to school leaders working in schools facing significant levels of disadvantage. This residential programme involves the use of case studies and exemplars of best practice from within this group of school leaders, as well as external input in areas such as legislation and multiculturalism.

Middle leaders – a key group in any school

LDS's guiding document, 'A Framework for the Professional Development of Irish School Leaders', recognises that best practice in schools will embrace the whole school and encompass people in a wide range of roles, including middle-level leaders such as assistant principals. Our middle leadership programme involves taking out a group of middle

leaders from the school, along with the principal and/or deputy principal. The groups work on school-based projects that they choose, such as subject department planning, assessment for learning or gender balance in a particular subject. Lack of time allocated to middle leaders is a difficulty but the concept of leadership is there and even given that restriction, we have met hundreds of middle leaders who are really anxious to be involved in the running of their schools.

Tóraíocht – a programme for leaders of the future

LDS aims to develop leaders throughout the school. We want a two-pronged approach; we want to train current leaders, and to deepen and broaden the base of people who will apply for principalship in the future. When I was appointed principal in 1994, the concept of leaving the classroom in June and moving into the principal's office in August was quite common, but when you think of the complex organisation that a principal has to manage – the pupils, the parents, the wider community – it is not feasible that one would move into that position without any training.

LDS is offering a new programme called 'Tóraíocht'. This is a postgraduate diploma course in educational leadership for future leaders. Offered in conjunction with NUI Maynooth, the course will begin in August 2008. It is expected that this programme will encourage more people to apply for senior leadership positions such as principal and deputy principal in the future.

Effective leadership is informed and guided by the personal attributes, convictions and values of the individual. It requires a range of skills and competencies that are necessary in the execution of what is a complex role. I am confident that LDS is playing a role in preparing and sustaining teachers in a variety of these leadership roles.

Leadership Development for Schools is administered through Clare Education Centre, Kilrush Road, Ennis. For more information on Leadership Development for Schools and the courses on offer visit www.lids21.ie or call 065-6845505. Application for the 'Tóraíocht' programme is via the LDS or NUI Maynooth website only – www.nuim.ie or www.lids21.ie. The closing date is May 1, 2008.



Mary Nihill is principal of St Paul's Secondary School, Oughterard, Co. Galway, and is currently on secondment to Leadership Development for Schools as an assistant national co-ordinator.



Gaisce – The President's Award

ASTIR spoke to two ASTI members who volunteer as president's award leaders with Gaisce.

Gaisce – The President's Award is a personal challenge and development award patronised by the President of Ireland and open to young people aged 15 to 25. Founded in 1985, it is a voluntary programme rather than a competition; it involves agreeing a number of specific challenges and goals and following these through to completion. The aim of the programme is to enhance participants' self-confidence, motivation, independence, sense of responsibility and connection to the broader community. The award operates at three levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold – and there are four different categories of activity that must be completed at each level:

- community involvement;
- development of personal skills;
- taking part in physical recreation; and,
- adventure – carrying out a challenging expedition.

The duration of the challenge depends on the level at which a person takes part. Bronze level participants, for example, engage in personal skills development for one hour per week for 26 weeks, while Silver level participants continue for 39 weeks and Gold level for 52 weeks. The activities chosen as part of each category are determined by the participant themselves and agreed with a president's award leader (PAL), who supervises participants and checks their progress throughout the challenge.

Teachers' contributions

The programme is extra curricular but is intended to run parallel to and in support of the formal education system. Many teachers get involved as PALs and PG Callaghan, Chief Executive of Gaisce, praises the contribution made by teachers and schools to the success of the programme. "Young people engaged with the Award are mentored and supported by over 1,000 volunteer president's award leaders, without whom the Award would not exist. A significant proportion of PALs are teachers and many teachers have received their Civic Merit Award from the President for their services to Gaisce and the young people we serve. The important development work that Gaisce does would not be possible without the support of the very many ASTI members who both promote the Award in their schools and volunteer to become PALs. I have become aware of some of the tremendous

work done in schools and of the exceptional individual commitment teachers make to the development of young people. I am conscious of the difficulty and complexity of this voluntary work, particularly with so many calls on teachers' time. It is through this generosity of spirit and commitment that we are increasing the numbers participating in Gaisce at the various levels each year."

Two volunteer teachers

ASTI members Mick O'Brien, Deerpark CBS, Cork, and Niamh Doohan, De La Salle College, Wicklow, are involved in the Gaisce Award as PALs.

Both agree that while there is work involved in co-ordinating Gaisce in their schools, not only is the programme enjoyable and worthwhile for their students, but it is also rewarding for them.

Niamh was awarded the Silver Gaisce Award when she was in school and was instrumental in setting up the programme in De La Salle College two years ago. Mick got involved seven years ago, having been impressed by the mission statement of the organisation, which is about providing opportunity. "One of the reasons I got involved in the first place is because the approach is rather different from my curricular work. The Gaisce scheme gives students an opportunity to experience and value things at a personal level. It's non-competitive and active by its very nature."

In terms of the level of work involved, Mick says that while it takes a couple of weeks to get things off the ground each year, after the initial set up everything generally runs smoothly. PALs introduce the programme to students through talks or presentations, register interested students and agree suitable challenges with them. Following that, it is a case of monitoring the students' progress and answering any queries or concerns. According to Niamh, if students are interested enough in the first place, they will work hard at it and it helps that they choose activities that they are genuinely interested in.

Uptake depends on individual students and class groups, and their level of interest or willingness to get involved. Mick acknowledges that there is often a considerable drop-out rate, but he is at ease with that: "It is challenging and it's meant to be that way; the drop out shows that there is a standard there".



Activities and goals

Among the activities the students in Deerpark and De La Salle get involved in as part of the four challenges are:

- helping to run the school shop and library;
- coaching younger students or helping them with their homework;
- working with organisations like the Simon Community or the St Vincent de Paul;
- taking lifesaving or first aid courses;
- learning sign language, computer skills or a musical instrument;
- taking up a new sport; or,
- developing their current skills in a particular area.

It's all about the challenge and having clear goals.

Both Niamh and Mick agree that goals are a very important part of the programme, both in terms of individual achievement and of overall encouragement. According to Niamh: "Students decide themselves what they are going to do and it is up to them to stick to it. If a student fills all their criteria, they get the medal the same as all other participants. It gives everyone a level playing field; they can go at their own pace and know that once they put in the effort they will be rewarded". The Bronze award can be completed within a year and as well as achieving the medal itself, students often acquire other specific and useful skills while completing the programme.

Mick notes that autonomy and self-determination are key to the success of the award. "Through these challenges, students experience their own talents and strengths, and learn what it is to endure and to make a difference. They are active in their own personal development; their strengths and talents come to the fore in the various challenges and they experience a feeling of having completed something worthwhile. They must have determination and the stamina to see their goals right through to the end."

Benefits for teachers

Benefits are not restricted to the student participants, however. Mick considers that being involved improves his own self awareness and that he, like the students, is on a learning curve. He enjoys the feeling of creating memorable and life-changing experiences for the students. Both Niamh and Mick agree that the adventure is the most enjoyable element of the programme as it offers a chance to bond with students and get to know them on another level. Both also recommend that other teachers get involved, saying the experience is fun, relaxing and enjoyable. For teachers who are thinking of getting involved in something in their school but are not sure quite what would suit their skills, the Gaisce programme is, according to Niamh, "something anyone can do and it is great to get involved!"

If you would like to respond to this article, email feedback@asti.ie.



Pictured at the Gaisce Gold Award ceremony in Dublin Castle, held in March (from left): Rita Downes, St Angela's College, Sligo (award leader); Mary Hurley, Gold Awardee; Dr Martin McAleese; Inga Hutchinson, Gold Awardee; President Mary McAleese, Patron of Gaisce; John White, ASTI General Secretary; and Marie Carroll, Gold Awardee. A total of 73 Gold Awards were presented on the day.



From left: PG Callaghan, Chief Executive of Gaisce – The President's Award, with John White, ASTI General Secretary.

Multi-component assessment

The NCCA is developing proposals for the extension of second and multi-component assessment across the majority of subjects. JERRY MCCARTHY, De La Salle College, Macroom, considers some of the issues.



Multi-component assessment has been part of the state examination system for many years. Languages are assessed using oral, aural and written components. Construction studies has skills, project and written components. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) has portfolio and terminal examination paper components. Second assessment components have been introduced into Leaving Certificate history and geography, and Junior Certificate science, in recent years.

At the ASTI Education Conference, 'Continuity and Change', in November 2007, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) presented a bulletin for schools, which stated: 'Expect changes to the way in which subjects are assessed in examinations. A broader range of assessment methods and an improved match between the aims of the syllabus and what is assessed will support more effective learning. Most subjects will have a second assessment component, like a practical examination or a field study'. Given the likelihood of an increase in the practice of dividing examinations into a number of different parts (components), it is worthwhile considering a number of implications.

A. The effect each component has on overall marks and grades

Components will be assigned a certain number of marks out of total marks available for a subject. For example, of the total 400 marks in the LCVP, 240 marks are allocated to the portfolio and 160 marks to the terminal examination paper. It would seem that the portfolio is one and a half times more important than the terminal examination paper. However, it can be shown that a component with a large spread of marks, when compared

with the other component(s), will have a greater effect on the rank ordering of students in the aggregate (final) mark and grade. This point can be illustrated in the following example:

Marks in LCVP components

Candidate	Portfolio (240)	Terminal exam (160)	Total marks (400)
A	200	122	322
B	202	118	320
C	204	114	318
D	206	110	316

Range: $206 - 200 = 6$

Range: $122 - 110 = 12$

The above table shows the marks for four candidates in two parts of the examination – the portfolio (assembled over two years in school), which is assigned 240 marks, and the terminal examination paper (two-and-a-half-hour examination taken at the end of sixth year), which is assigned 160 marks. The total marks (the sum of the two parts) are also shown. If candidates were ranked on the basis of the portfolio, which carried 60% of marks, the order would be D, C, B, A. However, the total marks determine the grades achieved and so, here, the order is A, B, C, D. The order of the candidates as determined by the total marks is inverted by comparison with the order as per the portfolio. Thus, the terminal examination paper



(assigned only 40% of the marks) determined the order of these candidates. (It should be noted that, in this example, the marks in the terminal examination paper are constructed in such a way that they reverse exactly the order of the marks of the portfolio.)

The reason that some examination components can achieve greater weight than is intended is because of the way marks are distributed within components. Referring to the LCVP example above, the spread (variance) of marks in the terminal examination paper component is twice the spread of marks in the portfolio component.

In 2006, Millar, Kellaghan and Mac Aogain¹ published a study of six Leaving Certificate examination subjects that have component parts (Irish, French, music, construction studies, art, and agricultural science). They compared the achieved weight (contribution to variance in total marks) with intended weight (marks assigned to that component). They found that written examination papers tend to achieve greater weight than intended, as greater variance in marks is more a characteristic of written examination papers than non-examination paper components.

In Millar *et al's* review of the literature on this topic, they concluded that: "The studies confirm that it is dispersion of marks (or variance) on each component, rather than actual marks, that determines achieved weights. Components will not have equal weights if their variances are unequal. A component with a large spread of marks with respect to other components will have a greater effect on aggregated marks and, in turn, a greater impact on rankings based on total marks when marks are used to rank candidates (e.g., for selection to third-level education programmes)."¹

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B. Higher grades (grade inflation) may be facilitated by the introduction of more components

Millar *et al*¹ found that the Leaving Certificate non-examination paper components tend to be associated with limited variance in the range of marks, and also that the mean (average) mark achieved tends to be higher than the mean (average) mark achieved on examination paper components. Thus, the introduction of a new component with a high mean mark into an examination previously assessed as a single written paper will tend to increase the mean (average) total mark and reduce the range of scores. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that in some subjects the State Examination Commission (SEC) is finding it difficult to keep the failure rates (E, F, and NG) at acceptably low levels. If these subjects had components with high mean (average) marks, the SEC would find their task easier.

C. The effect of a common component at higher and ordinary level on overall marks and grades

Common level components are a feature of a number of subjects in the state examinations. The fact that higher and ordinary level examinations have a common component put ordinary level candidates at a disadvantage in terms of their final grades as a certain proportion of the marks available to them are awarded on a component that is more difficult for them than for higher level candidates.

In the 2006 study by Millar *et al*, it was found that the mean marks awarded to higher level candidates on the common component were substantially higher than those awarded to ordinary level candidates. "As a result, ordinary level candidates were awarded an overall mark (and grade) that is lower than the overall mark (and grade) awarded to higher level candidates. When this fact is considered in conjunction with the Central Applications Office (CAO) practice of assigning fewer points to ordinary level examination grades than to higher level grades (e.g., A1 on a higher level paper, 100 points; A1 on an ordinary level, 60 points), ordinary level candidates would appear to be doubly disadvantaged." A separate marking scheme for higher and ordinary level would solve this problem.

Conclusion

Millar *et al*¹ summarised the implications of their findings as follows: "In particular, the work of students in preparing for non-written (practical, project, oral and aural) components is not adequately rewarded in the grades they are awarded. Performance on written papers maintains its dominance in determining composite marks, despite the fact that the objective of dividing examinations into components is often precisely to address the criticism that candidates' performance in written tests provides an inadequate reflection of the many objectives of syllabi. Thus, the aspirations of examination designers to represent a greater range of the dimensions of learning are to some extent negated."

Reference

1. Millar, D., Kellaghan, T., Mac Aogain, E. A Study of the Intended and Achieved Weights of Components in the Leaving Certificate Examination. Dublin, Educational Research Centre, 2006: viii + 110pp – ISBN 9780900440 23 6.

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Jerry McCarthy is a teacher in De La Salle College, Macroom.



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The school chaplain

AOIFE DALY is chaplain at Boyne Community School, Trim, Co. Meath. She is also PRO of the School Chaplains' Association of Ireland.



Aoife Daly, chaplain, Boyne Community School, Trim, Co. Meath.

What is a school chaplain?

A school chaplain is a faith presence in the school community, who is available to all students and staff of the school. We journey with members of the school community through their lives and are there as a support through the good times and especially the difficult ones. The chaplain has a non-disciplinary role in the school, and this allows us to build a relationship of trust with students, staff and parents. Our primary role is to meet the spiritual and religious needs of all students and the whole school community, keeping in mind the different faiths and beliefs of everyone in the school community. The chaplain receives a mandate that is both educational and ecclesial. As an extension of the principal, the chaplain puts flesh on the holistic aims of the Education Act (1998), which obliges schools to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students. Chaplains are a crucial part of the pastoral care team in a school, and work closely with all the staff to promote the well-being and development of the school community.

How did you get involved in chaplaincy?

I always knew that I wanted to work with young people and to help them develop an understanding of God and to deepen their relationship with God. It seemed logical to go into religion teaching, but having a full timetable as a teacher meant that I had less time to meet the students and respond to their day-to-day pastoral needs. I decided to get my qualification in school chaplaincy so that I would be able to get an appointment as a school chaplain, give more time to students and become more involved in supporting them. I did a Masters in School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care in Mater Dei. Being a full-time chaplain allows me to work with the students on a different level and gives me the freedom to give the students the time that they need.



Aoife Daly with students at Boyne Community School.

What would a typical working week be like for you?

There isn't really a typical week for a chaplain but there are certain things that I must do every week. I have a certain amount of religion classes to teach, and I plan for other important activities such as organising liturgies, charity events, rainbows groups, fifth-year mentors or guest speakers. I speak to small class groups, meet students on a one-to-one basis, meet parents, etc. But you never know what will crop up each week and every day is certainly different. Chaplaincy is not like teaching; often at the end of the week I wouldn't know what I have done except that I was very busy. Chaplaincy is exciting and interesting; you work with young people who are not predictable so that means my job is not predictable!

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

I suppose the main challenge a chaplain faces is being able to leave work at school and not take it home with you. Chaplains deal with very difficult cases on a weekly basis and so it is important that you have a healthy work-life balance.

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

I love being available for students on a one-to-one basis. It is a privilege to be trusted with their secrets, thoughts, hopes and dreams, and also with their frustrations and heartaches. I love preparing liturgies and taking students to the prayer room for 'time-out', particularly at the significant times of year like Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. I enjoy working with the students on fundraising activities. I actually love most of my work – I'm very lucky. My job is made easier by the tremendous support I get from my staff. They recognise the work I do and make my job easier by working with me.

Cork South Branch



Cork South Branch Officers Caitriona McGrath; John Hurley; Ann Piggott; and, John Byrne.

Officers

The branch officers for 2007-'08 are:

Chairperson	John Mulcahy
Vice Chairperson	Caitriona McGrath
Secretary	John Byrne
Treasurer	Kevin Murphy
Branch Organiser	Paddy Andrews
Equality Officer	Dave Costello

General information

If all of the 750-plus members of ASTI Cork South decided to attend a branch meeting, it would be a challenge to find a hall large enough to accommodate them. However, this is unlikely to happen, since the largest branch in the ASTI is no different from other branches in the difficulties it experiences in getting its members actively involved. Even before the current national campaign to revitalise branches, branch officers had organised various functions aimed at increasing members' involvement, and results to date are quite encouraging.

Cork South is perceived by many ASTI members as a city branch; in fact, it stretches from south of the south channel of the River Lee east to the harbour towns of Passage West, Carrigaline and Crosshaven, south to Kinsale and west to the satellite town of Ballincollig, giving a balanced urban-rural mix. The range of schools is also extensive, including single-sex and co-educational secondary schools, community schools, a community college, and a comprehensive school, under Catholic, Church of Ireland and lay patronage. The mix of management models generates interesting discussions at meetings, as employment conditions can differ from school to school.

History

Cork has always played a prominent role in ASTI history; the union's second ever public meeting was held in Cork, Cork has given the union many of its presidents and the first ever ASTI strike was in Cork schools. When, in 1979, it was felt that the Cork Branch was too large to function efficiently, the decision was taken that two branches were needed. Since then, membership of Cork South has continued to grow through expansion of existing schools, the establishment of new schools, and the amalgamation of schools into community schools. Since its foundation, Cork South has hosted Annual Convention on two



Cork South Branch delegates pictured during Convention proceedings (from left): Caitriona McGrath; Maria Kelly; John Byrne; Paddy Mulcahy; and, John Mulcahy.

occasions, in 1988 and, more recently, in 2006, which coincided with the city's tenure as European Capital of Culture.

Branch business

Five branch meetings are normally held during the school year. Agendas are structured to feature specific topics of concern to members and guest speakers are occasionally invited. Pensions, the Teaching Council and CIDs have all got recent billing and have attracted larger than usual attendances. Keen interest in current issues is maintained with briefings from Standing Committee via Maria Kelly, Paddy Mulcahy, and now Ann Piggott.

Education is another permanent topic on the agenda, with Caitriona McGrath contributing up-to-date reports from the Education Committee. Recently, the branch organised an education seminar on senior cycle change. Speakers included Dr Tom Mullins, UCC, Dr Anne Looney, NCCA, and John White, ASTI General Secretary. The large attendance included not only our own branch members, but also invited representatives from other Cork branches and educational partners.

Retired members were honoured at a special function attended by Past President Michael Freeley and the General Secretary. The large turnout of teaching colleagues contributed hugely to the enjoyment of the occasion. Our branch secretary, Ann Piggott, recently stepped down to contest the election for regional representative of Standing Committee. Ann was subsequently elected, thanks to a turnout of 286 members who voted in the election.

Into the future

School stewards play a pivotal role in the organisation of the branch. At the beginning of each year school stewards are invited to a training seminar, which concludes with a meal. This investment is well repaid through increased attendance at meetings, turnout at ballots and elections, and competition for convention delegates.

The officers and members recognise the need to attract younger members to active involvement in the union and to attract more to branch meetings. In the past, the branch has held special meetings for new members and it is hoped in the near future to extend a special invitation to members who have never attended a branch meeting.

The centenary of the ASTI is eagerly anticipated and an appropriate local commemoration is being planned in association with the national celebrations.

Obituary

Denis A. Burke Cork South Branch – Trustee and Honorary Life Member



An island man is distinctive, stands out in a crowd. Tony Burke was a proud island man. He was born on Oileán Cléire, proud of the island traditions and, most of all, proud of the Gaeilge in which he was reared, and which he used throughout his life. It was entirely fitting that when he died suddenly in September, his final wish was to be brought back to his roots for burial.

Tony spent most of his teaching career in Ashton Comprehensive and earlier in the old Cork Grammar School, from which he transferred on its amalgamation with Rochelle Girls School. He was a superb teacher of Irish and Geography, revered by staff and students alike. Having joined the ASTI in his first year of teaching, he ensured that all his colleagues and thereafter every new staff member or trainee teacher was presented with the opportunity of ASTI membership.

Tony was elected branch treasurer of Cork South in 1983 and continued to hold office until his retirement. He was totally scrupulous about branch accounts; the business of one memorable AGM was suspended until Tony finally announced that he could now account for a missing penny! He took a personal interest in members' welfare and any deserving case saw Tony promptly submitting an application to the Benevolent Fund to ease hardship. Tony loved attending Convention and usually ensured that his car boot was well filled with dictionaries and reference books in order to crack the crossword and quiz. He played the role of minder to perfection; always up at an early hour to secure the best seats for the branch, even though he might have vacated the dance floor only a few hours before. Whoever ran for election from Cork South was always assured of Tony's service as a most persuasive canvasser. His affable ease and courtesy, together with his total dedication to the ASTI, was recognised when he was elected to the post of Trustee. His delight at being entrusted with this responsibility was only surpassed by the honour of being awarded Honorary Life Membership when he finally retired.

His energy in his retirement was devoted to helping the school bank, working with his local credit union and involvement with the Retired Secondary Teachers Association, that is, when Noreen and himself weren't touring Europe by car and caravan. He retained his interest in ASTI activities, and voted in a branch election shortly before his death.

Tony would have approved of the huge turnout of his former colleagues, students of Ashton, branch officers, members of his credit union and Fianna Fáil cumann, but he would have especially appreciated the presence of ASTI President Patricia Wroe, who made the long journey in recognition of his devotion and service. Like the other great islandman, *ní bheidh a leithéad ann arís.*

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Teaching Council meetings

As a follow-up to the series of regional meetings for teachers that took place in 2006 and 2007, the Teaching Council is currently planning a second series of information meetings in counties that were not covered in the first series. The meetings, which will take place during May, will provide an opportunity for discussion on the work of the Council, including the establishment of the register of teachers and, in particular, the Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers. See www.teachingcouncil.ie for further information.

Human rights documentary

What in the World is a six-part documentary series due to be shown on RTÉ 1 on Thursday nights during June and July. It is the third such series and aims to raise awareness of global economic inequalities and human rights violations. Filmed on locations in Africa, South America and Asia, it may be of interest to teachers and students of geography.

Stress management course

Bernadette McPhillips, a social worker and registered teacher of holistic energy care, offers courses in stress management and energy care. Teaching is provided in small groups and courses are held over days, half days or weekends to suit the needs of participants. The courses look at the causes and effects of stress, and ways in which these can be managed more effectively. For more details contact Bernadette McPhillips, Tel: 01-2145964 or 087-132 8579.

Stereotyping resource

A resource pack on 'Stereotyping of Young People' was launched by the Equality Authority and the National Youth Council of Ireland in March. It was developed to encourage and support young people and young people's organisations to challenge the stereotyping of young people. This resource might be useful to CSPE classes or student councils. It is available for download on www.youth.ie.

Volunteers wanted

Each year the St Vincent de Paul Sunshine Fund takes children from disadvantaged areas on a week's summer holiday. The group is looking for volunteers to accompany the children on these holidays during the summer months. For each volunteer that signs up, eight more children will get to go on holiday. If you are interested, please call 01-8198431 or visit www.sunshinefund.ie.

Just Forests

Just Forests is an Irish NGO working on forest-related matters from an education for sustainable development and development education perspective. The organisation is running a travelling exhibition throughout 2008/2009. Information on venues and shows can be accessed at www.justforests.org. Just Forests is also organising a Sound of Wood concert tour for 2008/2009 to highlight the decline of timber species often used in the production of musical instruments. More information is available on www.thesoundofwood.com.

INTO Separated Teachers' Support Group

The INTO Separated Teachers' Support Group is holding a summer social on June 21 in Club na Múinteoirí, Parnell Square, Dublin 1. There will be a quiz, supper, music and dancing. New members and ASTI members are welcome. For more information, contact Maura Killackey, Chairperson, Tel: 0505-21694/087-1233456, or Christina Henry, Secretary, Tel: 01-8481405/087-6201153.

Recently published

Former teacher and ASTI member Judith Harford has recently published *The Opening of University Education to Women in Ireland*. The book locates the discussion of university education for women within the wider social, political and cultural context of 19th Century Irish society, and offers an analysis of the ideological arguments behind providing women with an education in an exclusively female domain and granting them full and equal access to the universities under the coeducational model. Judith currently lectures in education at UCD. Copies of the book can be ordered from Irish Academic Press at www.iap.ie.

Holocaust Educational Trust of Ireland – Holocaust Memorial Lectures 2008

The Holocaust Educational Trust of Ireland is running a number of seminar programmes throughout 2008. Programme 1: 'Learning from the Holocaust' is a five-day programme including a three-day visit to Krakow. Programme 2: 'Teaching the Holocaust' is a three-day intensive course for teachers. Programme 3: 'Clergy and School Chaplains' is an expenses-paid one-week seminar in Israel. Information can be obtained from the Holocaust Educational Trust of Ireland, Clifton House, Lower Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin 2, Tel. 01-6690593/Email: info@hetireland.org.

Involving parents from minority communities

The INTO is organising a seminar on involving parents from minority communities. The seminar hopes to feature Joanna Browne, a US education organiser with Logan Square Neighbourhood Association in Chicago, which is nationally known in the US for its successful efforts to involve immigrant parents in their local schools. The seminar will take place between May 19 and 22, and will be of interest to all members of the education sector. Further details will be published on the INTO website. Contact Joanna O'Byrne on jobyrne@into.ie with expressions of interest and requests for further details.

CIDs/fixed-term/permanent contracts



I have been teaching in my current school for over four years. Am I entitled to a contract of indefinite duration (CID)?

If you have been working in a school on four continuous one-year fixed-term contracts, you may be entitled to a CID. However, if your post will not be viable within a reasonable period, and where such a ground was set out as an objective in writing in your previous contract, you will not be entitled to a CID. The viability of your post and sustained need for hours going forward must be demonstrated.

CIDs are governed by the Protection of Employees Fixed-Term Work Act, 2003, and the Transitional Agreement – September 2005, as set out in Departmental Circular 0010/2006.

If you are qualified and have been teaching continuously but have not received a written contract setting out objective grounds for a fixed-term contract since September 2001, your employer is obliged under the Transitional Agreement to award a CID. If you are replacing a teacher who is on approved leave (e.g., a career break), and if you have been informed in writing that this is the case, you may not be entitled to a CID.

The hours of the CID will be the hours for which you were engaged in the year prior to getting a CID.

If I am refused a CID, can I appeal the decision?

You can be refused a CID on the basis that your post will not be viable within a reasonable period but this must have been noted in your current contract. Similarly, if you are covering for a teacher who is on leave and this is specified to you in writing as part of your fixed-term contract, you may not be awarded a CID.

If you are not awarded a CID and you consider it to be a breach of the legislation, you can lodge an appeal through the adjudication process

and/or with the Rights Commissioner Service.

It is critically important that you lodge a Rights Commissioner claim within six months of the alleged breach.

Before taking any action, you should contact your industrial relations official in ASTI Head Office.

Is a CID a permanent contract?

Yes. CID holders have the same entitlements as other permanent employees. A CID means that, subject to the normal date of retirement, a teacher will be retained in employment and will not be dismissed without there being good reason, such as misconduct or unfitness for their position, or other compelling or unavoidable circumstances. Traditional permanent contracts are generated based on the pupil:teacher ratio as determined by the Department of Education and Science. This is currently set at 18:1. CIDs are determined outside of that ratio and are awarded if the teacher meets the criteria set out above. Once awarded, however, CIDs are counted as permanent positions for the purpose of determining the pupil:teacher ratio within the school.

Does a CID mean I am entitled to full-time hours?

No, a CID does not entitle you to full-time hours. Your CID will be based on the hours you had in your last fixed-term contract.

What constitutes a fixed-term contract?

Fixed-term contracts are awarded to temporary teachers, e.g., where a vacancy is generated by concessionary hours or a teacher being on a career break. Fixed-term teachers are entitled to the same treatment and working conditions as permanent teachers for the duration of their contract.

Fixed-term contracts are governed by the Fixed-Term Work Act, 2003, and guarantee a position for a specific period of time. The contract must specify the length of the contract, the purpose for which you are employed, and why and where your hours originated.

Where an employer proposes to renew a fixed-term contract, the teacher must be informed in writing of the reasons for the renewal of the contract and the reasons why a CID is not being offered.

Classifieds

Irish Folk Tours requires confident, entertaining people to present evening talks on Irish folklore to tourists in Dublin venue over summer period. Ph Johnny on 01-4922543. Please see www.irishfolktours.com.

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Name

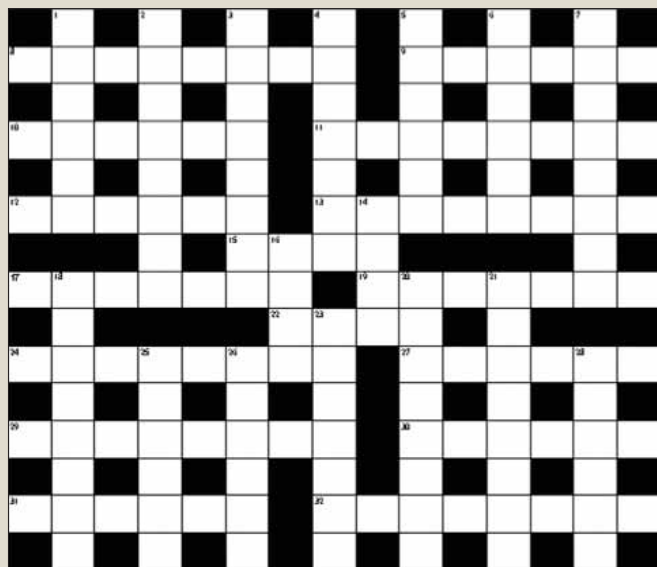
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ASTI Branch

Entries to: Astir Crossword No. 0803, Think Media,
The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, May 30, 2008



CLUES ACROSS

- 8 A fragrant shrubby Mediterranean herb (8)
- 9 Up to or remove (6)
- 10 Prim Senior Counsel could be stingy in providing for (6)
- 11 A computer scam by which an email user is duped into revealing confidential information (8)
- 12 Could be decoration with small pieces of coloured glass or stone (6)
- 13 Greek leader in the Trojan War (8)
- 15 across, 30 across, 17 across: Some schools could have this link with parents (4,6,7)
- 17 See 15 across
- 19 Also called windflower (7)
- 22 In a beautiful name from elbow to wrist (4)
- 24 Poor pies for a dolphin (8)
- 27 As slim as a prayer book (6)
- 29 Richard Brinsley Sheridan was the creator of this character who frequently misspoke to great comic effect (8)
- 30 See 15 across
- 31 Cereus could set free (6)
- 32 Small containers into which you might have dipped your pens in the past! (8)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Spanish cape (6)
- 2 Japanese dish of marinated meat or fish (8)
- 3 A spicy soup served cold, Spanish in origin (8)
- 4 A slight indication (7)
- 5 "... that should move
The stones of Rome to rise in –"
(Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar*) (6)
- 6 German composer famous for his Hungarian Dances (6)

- 7 A word applied to our business and economic activity at the moment (8)
- 14 Enda could be the doyen of a faculty in a university, etc. (4)
- 16 Put a burden on us (4)
- 18 Solitary or single (8)
- 20 I am as keen to have the same entity as another (8)
- 21 Chimes if a cause or source of harm, evil or irritation (8)
- 23 It became one of the major cities of the German Democratic Republic (7)
- 25 Sounds like a location for flatfish (6)
- 26 The world's only Jewish state (6)
- 28 The god of sunlight, prophecy and poetry (6)

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 0802:

Ann Goold, 7 Kenley Avenue, Model Farm Road, Cork.

Solution to ASTIR crossword No. 0802

Across

1. Imbibe
4. Bullying
9. Ocelot
10. Screamer
12. Eased
13. Gathering
14. Omega
15. Sudoku
20. Addict
21. Lairs
24. Sequences
27. Addle
28. Tailspin
29. Intact
30. Eternity
31. Nymphs

Down

1. I love you
2. Breasted
3. Broadband
5. Uncut
6. Liege
7. Iambic
8. Garage
11. Agassi
16. Detest
17. Killarney
18. Windharp
19. Asbestos
22. Tsetse
23. Squire
25. EPSN
26. Ceist



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