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Annual Convention 2022

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CONTENTS

4	From the President's desk <i>Representing all members</i>
4	General Secretary's update <i>Listen to teachers on Senior Cycle</i>
5	News
8	News features
8	<i>ASTI survey highlights recruitment crisis</i>
10	<i>What's happening with Senior Cycle?</i>
12	<i>Report shows high standard of teaching and learning in schools</i>
13	ASTI in the media <i>Representing membership and fighting for teachers' rights</i>
14	Feature <i>Welcoming Ukrainian students</i>
16	ASTI Convention 2022
16	<i>Key speeches</i>
22	<i>Cost of living issues must be addressed</i>
23	<i>Global solidarity</i>
24	<i>Teachers' working conditions must be protected</i>
26	<i>Teachers stand firm on Senior Cycle assessment</i>
28	<i>Vox pop – post-Covid priorities</i>
30	<i>Motions debated at Convention 2022</i>
31	<i>Elections at Annual Convention 2022</i>
32	RSTA
33	Noticeboard
34	Crossword



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

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

Representing all members

It has been a great honour for me to preside over the 100th ASTI Annual Convention. Annual Convention is the key decision-making body of our union and is made of 450 members from all over the country who come together for three days each year to listen to each other, hear about the various challenges facing second-level teachers in their working lives, and decide how best the ASTI can work to serve teachers and our education system.

Convention 2022 included contributions from second-level teachers at all stages of their careers: new teachers on precarious contracts; those who have been teaching for 10 years and still experience unequal pay; those in the system 20 years and more who feel they have no prospect of having a post of responsibility, and feel undervalued; and, those who have a post of responsibility and also feel undervalued due to the level of work involved. We also heard from LGBTQI+ teachers about their fears and experiences. A watershed moment for the ASTI was a spontaneous standing ovation for one such teacher, and it really confirmed for me that the ASTI is here to support and represent all of our members as they go through their careers.

The ASTI has taken the decision to forego a general 1% pay increase for all members (due from February 2022) and instead prioritise the restoration of the Professional Masters in Education allowance for those teachers who have never received it. This discriminatory treatment of our younger teachers is unacceptable and has resulted in a significant decline in the attractiveness of teaching as a career and teacher shortages across the country. It is hugely regrettable that it is teachers themselves who are left to undo this ill-considered policy, and demonstrates a Government out of touch with the lives of working teachers.

Throughout my year as ASTI President, I have continued to emphasise the need to tackle decades of underinvestment in second-level education in Ireland. The additional funding and resources made available for Covid-19 reasons must become permanent. Teachers will rise to whatever national or international crisis is on their doorstep so that young people can access a quality education. But teachers are human and the consequences of continued under-resourcing and increased work intensity can be extremely harmful – low morale, high stress, burnout. It always amazes me that teachers and schools must endure a high level of public scrutiny whether via the Department Inspectorate, the Teaching Council, Government, and media, yet the fact that Ireland continues to fail to invest adequately in schools is so often brushed over. The ASTI will continue to repeat the facts of this at every opportunity.

The surprise announcement by the Minister of her plans to redevelop Senior Cycle raised many eyebrows in the profession, not least because teachers and teacher unions first heard of these plans via the media. ASTI Convention has been firm in its position that ASTI members will not assess their students for the Leaving Cert. An engagement process between the ASTI and its members will begin shortly and I urge all members to participate. We will have a voice.



Eamon Dennehy

ASTI President

Listen to teachers on Senior Cycle

On March 29, the Minister for Education set a very high bar. The press statement accompanying the announcement of plans for the redevelopment of Senior Cycle was peppered with talk of a “vision”. The dictionary on my desk defines vision in this context as “the ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom”. However, even visionaries need to ground their plans in reality. Successful curricular change the world over tends to eschew visionary notions in favour of painstaking and careful research. As far back as 2016, the ASTI agitated for and secured a commitment from the Department of Education to conduct a longitudinal study of the Framework for Junior Cycle, to be undertaken over the following years, in anticipation that it would inform policy-making for Senior Cycle redevelopment. Had that commitment not been reneged upon, we would be in a far better place now.

It will be recalled that we reported in the March edition of *ASTIR* that a recent survey of ASTI members revealed that most teachers do not believe that the Framework for Junior Cycle supports progression to Senior Cycle.

The ASTI has long held the view that Leaving Certificate redevelopment should be off the agenda until a full, open and transparent study of the Junior Cycle has been conducted and its findings made public. For teachers, the idea that a new Leaving Certificate edifice can be built upon the tried but largely untested Framework for Junior Cycle is counter intuitive.

The Minister acknowledged that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) produced a Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report in advance of the announcement. The press release stated that the report “is based on extensive research, conducted over four years. It captures the views of education partners across every aspect of Senior Cycle, giving real weight to the student voice and experience, the learnings of educators, the international experience”. It was claimed that the reform programme has been informed by this report. However, nowhere in its report does the NCCA recommend teacher-based assessment. Visionary perspectives tend to be lonely places.

I would also point out that despite evasions and obfuscations on the part of the Minister on the question in interviews, which might have led one to form a different impression, there was no prior consultation or negotiations with the teacher unions on the contents of the announcement.

The ASTI supports the principle of evidence-based change in education. We have consistently argued that curriculum change should be incremental rather than radical. Achieving change that is deep, lasting and worthwhile takes time. Teachers need to be convinced of the rationale for change, feel that their views and experiences are listened to, trust that adequate resources will be provided and, most importantly, believe that change will deliver better learning outcomes for students. Abandoning a system of assessment that enjoys a high level of public trust, serves as a valid and objective statement of students’ academic achievement, and has fairness, impartiality and transparency at its heart, far from visionary, might just end up as the stuff of bad dreams.



Kieran Christie

ASTI General Secretary

Update your bank account details with the Department

Members who have opened a new bank account are required to advise the Department of Education that they wish their salary or pension payments to be made to their new account.

This may be because they have opened a new bank account, or because their existing account is closing, and payments are required to be made to a new account.

On the February 19, 2021, Ulster Bank announced that it was proceeding with a phased withdrawal of banking activity and associated services within the Republic of Ireland. Ulster Bank has advised customers that they will have six months to close their accounts in 2022. KBC Bank has also advised that it will leave the Irish market this year.

Therefore, if your salary or pension payment is currently paid to an Ulster Bank or KBC Bank account, you should notify the Department of Education of your new bank account details as soon as possible. Details of how to do this, using the Change of Bank Account Details form, are available on <https://www.gov.ie/en/form/48283-change-of-bank-details/>

Coffee morning to fundraise for Ukraine

The ASTI is encouraging members to fundraise for the Red Cross in Ukraine. While mindful that staff in many schools have already undertaken fundraising, the ASTI is encouraging its members in every staffroom to choose a day in May to organise a coffee morning to raise funds in support of the Red Cross humanitarian effort in Ukraine.

A poster for the event that can be printed for the school noticeboard has been sent by email to school stewards.

School stewards/coffee morning organisers can recoup costs (coffee, tea, cakes, etc.) by **submitting receipts directly to the Branch Treasurer**. Donations should be made directly to the Irish Red Cross.

Banking details:

Account holder's name: Irish Red Cross

Account holder's address: 16 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, Ireland

Bank: Bank of Ireland

Bank address: College Green, Dublin 2, Ireland

Account number: 16305917

Sort code: 90-00-17

IBAN: IE15 BOFI 9000 1716 3059 17

BIC: BOFIE2D

SWIFT: BOFIE2D



Digital Strategy for Schools 2027



The Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 builds on the achievements of the previous strategy and the experience of schools during the pandemic. The aim of the Strategy is to ensure that all students have the skills and knowledge to live and learn in a rapidly changing digital environment, including how to engage safely and ethically with digital technologies.

During the pandemic, the ASTI consistently highlighted the huge inequalities among students in terms of access to digital devices and broadband. Indeed, teachers also experienced significant variations in terms of their access to appropriate digital devices and broadband. The new Strategy funding stream must prioritise resolving these fundamental issues.

The high-level objectives of the Strategy are set out under three pillars, which aim to ensure that the school system is prepared for and continues to progress the embedding of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment. They also address inclusion, supporting curricular reform, online safety, and technical support, as well as looking to the future with a focus on emerging technologies and how they could impact on teaching, learning and other aspects of school life.

Pillar 1: Supporting the embedding of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment

Pillar 2: Digital technology infrastructure

Pillar 3: Looking to the future: policy, research and digital leadership

Each pillar will be supported by a detailed implementation plan to be issued in the coming months.

The Strategy will also provide for the establishment of relevant groups to provide oversight and inform ongoing implementation over its lifetime. The Strategy will be supported through a capital investment of some €200 million over its lifetime under the National Development Plan 2018-2030. Schools will continue to have autonomy and flexibility in how they invest this funding, given the significance of each school's own context. Expenditure must continue to be aligned to the identified aims and objectives of the school's Digital Learning Plan and School Self-Evaluation processes. In addition to this funding, the Department funds the School Broadband Programme at an annual cost of €13m to provide broadband connectivity to schools.

The leading democratic assembly



The ASTI has produced a new publication to celebrate its 100th Annual Convention, written by Dr John Cunningham, Irish labour historian and guest speaker at ASTI Convention 2022. *"The Leading Democratic Assembly": Celebrating the ASTI's 100th Annual Convention* describes how ASTI Conventions – by facilitating communication, participation and activism on the issues that have mattered most to second-level teachers – became a vital life force of the union. This publication looks at the history of the ASTI with a particular focus on Convention. Dr Cunningham divides the history of the ASTI into four periods: (i) Foundation – from 1909 to the early Free State years; (ii) Accommodation – from the 1920s to the 1960s; (iii) Transformation – from the 1960s to the 1980s; and, (iv) Consolidation – the period from 1990 to the present day. This commemorative publication was distributed to delegates at ASTI Convention 2022 and copies have also been posted to schools. Additional copies are available from ASTI Head Office and/or can be downloaded from www.asti.ie

Celebrating 100 ASTI conventions

A reception was held to celebrate the ASTI's 100th Annual Convention at Annual Convention 2022 in Cork. Delegates came together to celebrate the union's achievements, and the role of Convention in its history.



From left: Waterford Branch members Nora Donovan, Barry Musgrave, Joan Glasheen, Ray Scott, Brideen Kirwan, and Henry Collins.



From left: Dungarvan Branch members Padraig MacCraith, Margo McGann, Anna Maria O'Dwyer, and Michael McGrath (ASTI Honorary National Organiser).



From left: Ann Piggott (Cork South Paddy Mulcahy), Donal Coughlan (Tipperary), Anne Taylor (Cork South Paddy Mulcahy), and John Byrne (Cork South Paddy Mulcahy).



From left: Niall Duddy (Galway), Jennifer Walsh (Cork South Paddy Mulcahy), Edel Farrell (Cork South Paddy Mulcahy), and Peter Mannion (Cork South Paddy Mulcahy).



From left: Dublin North West Branch members Keith Purcell, Mary Wall, Keith Rooney, Adrienne Healy, Daniel Howard, and Philip Synnott.



From left: Kildare Branch members Eamon Ryan, Cian Carthy, Derek O'Donoghue, and Padraig Murphy (ASTI Honorary Treasurer).

What is your financial backup plan?

In 2021, the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme paid out **almost €1 million*** to members who were ill or injured and couldn't work.



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*Based on ASTI Salary Protection Scheme Claims paid out in 2021. Source: New Ireland, March 2022.

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ASTI SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS RECRUITMENT CRISIS

An ASTI Red C survey of teachers and principals has revealed the depth of the teacher recruitment crisis and how the Government is failing to make teaching an attractive career choice.

Teacher recruitment stands out as one of the main issues facing the Irish education system, according to an ASTI/Red C survey carried out among ASTI teachers and principals. The crisis is two pronged: the lack of immediate availability of certain subject teachers to schools; and, the declining attractiveness of teaching as a profession. Almost all principals (93%) reported that their school had experienced difficulties in recruiting staff since August 2021. A total of 84% reported that there have been situations where no teacher applied for an advertised teaching post (Figure 1).

The survey was carried out by online questionnaire in March 2022, and had a response rate of 18.6%, which provided a good sample size of 2,565 respondents. Over half of all principals – 55% – reported that their school currently has unfilled vacancies due to recruitment difficulties. The top three subjects with recruitment difficulties are Irish, maths and home economics.

There is an inadequate number of teachers graduating in certain subjects and this, coupled with the high cost of the two-year master's degree teaching qualification, are the main causes for teacher shortages. In the current school year, almost nine out of ten principals stated that situations had arisen in their school where no substitute teacher cover was available.

Well-being

More teachers rated their well-being as poor (34%) compared to good (28%). Teachers identified workload and work intensity as having a negative impact on their well-being. Over seven out of ten teachers identified workload (74%) and work intensity (73%) as the main factors negatively impacting on well-being (Figure 2).

The right to disconnect from school e-communications after the school day was the main priority to improve well-being (60%), followed by more professional time. Teacher job satisfaction has significantly declined in the past year, with just

50% of teachers indicating satisfaction in their job compared to last year's 63%.

Keeping schools safe

The key recommendation from teachers for a safe working environment is smaller classes (77%; Figure 3). Adequate workspace for teachers – as distinct from using the staffroom for class preparation, etc. – is also important (71%), followed by a strong cleaning regime in the school (67%). Improvement to the air conditioning/ventilation systems is also important (58%). Less than half of teachers (43%) stated that their schools had installed HEPA-quality air filters to help prevent the spread of Covid-19.

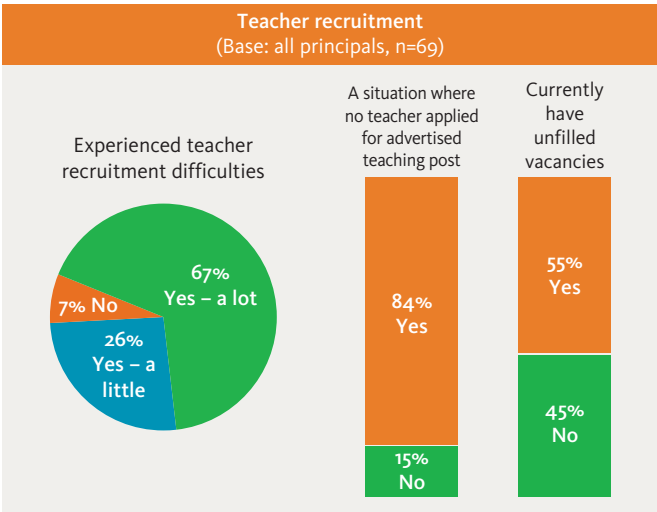


FIGURE 1: Principals report widespread recruitment difficulties.

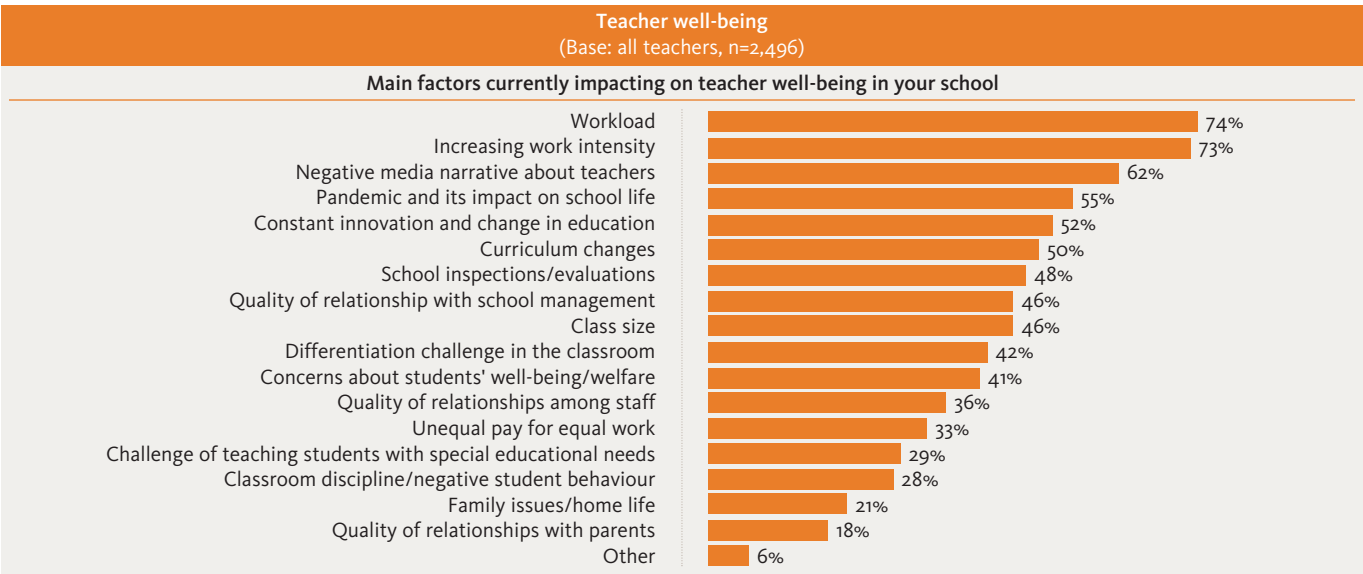


FIGURE 2: Factors impacting on teacher well-being.

Open section

The survey provided an open section for teachers and principals to address the question: "Looking to the future, what changes would you like to see in your school to improve the quality of your working life?"

Almost all teachers identified reducing workload as essential. Large class sizes are deeply problematic, as by definition they mean higher workload (e.g., correcting work). Many teachers are concerned that teaching is no longer seen

as an attractive profession. Several factors are referenced as negatively impacting on perceptions of the profession. Workload is perhaps the most damaging factor. Teachers stated that the quality of working life is a paramount concern among younger teachers and many long-serving teachers felt that younger teachers were less likely to remain in the profession if this was further eroded. Another key factor damaging the attractiveness of the profession is unequal pay.

The survey is available at <https://www.asti.ie/news-campaigns/research>

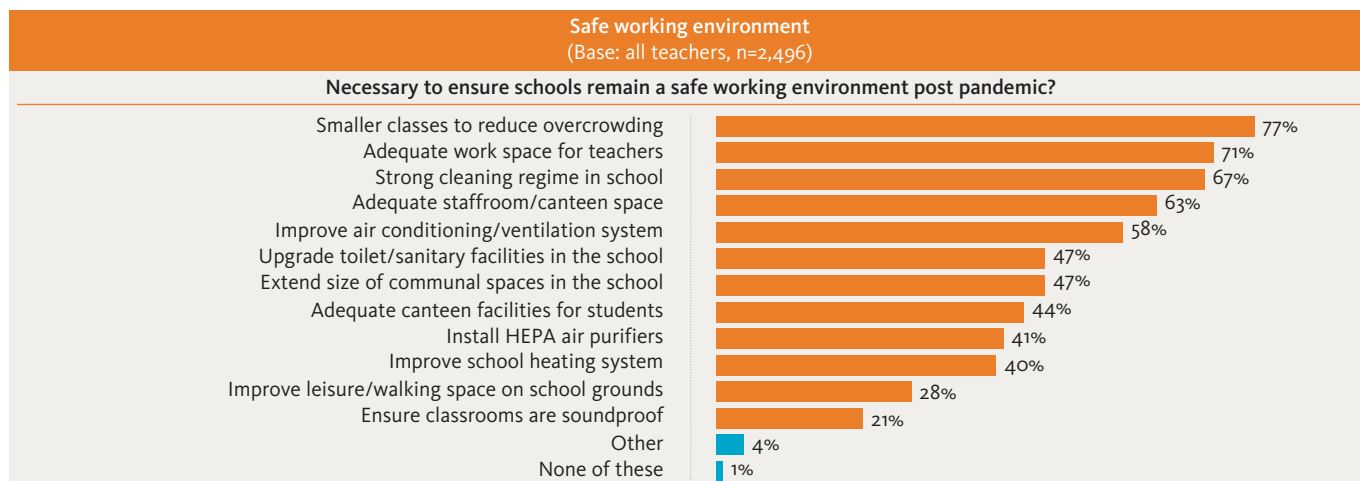


FIGURE 3: Key factors in creating a safe working environment in schools.

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- Master of Education (M Ed)
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- M Ed in Education for Sustainability and Global Citizenship ****NEW****
- M Ed in Religious Education
- M Ed in Educational Leadership and Management
- M Ed in Leadership of Wellbeing in Education
- M Oid san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta
- MA in Education and the Arts (META)
- MA in STEM Education
- MA in Music Education
- Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Adult and Further Education
- Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Information and Communication Technologies in Primary Education
- Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Special Education Needs
- Graduate Diploma in Mentoring and Leadership in Schools
- Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Middle Leadership and Mentoring in Primary and Post-Primary Settings
- An Teastas Iarchéime i dTeagasc Ábharbhunaithe (TTA) san Iarbhunscolaíocht Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta
- Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice
- Graduate Certificate/Diploma in Autism Studies

LIBERAL ARTS POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

- Structured PhD in Applied Linguistics
- Structured PhD in Contemporary Irish Studies
- MA in Applied Linguistics (online/on-campus/blended)
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- MA in History
- MA in Local History (with UL)
- MA in Media Studies
- MA in Modern English Literature
- Certificate/MA in Christian Leadership in Education

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PHD & MA BY RESEARCH AND THESIS IN THE FOLLOWING LIBERAL ARTS DEPARTMENTS

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WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH SENIOR CYCLE?

ASTI members made their views on proposed Senior Cycle change clear at Annual Convention 2022.

The topic of Senior Cycle and Leaving Certificate change dominated ASTI Annual Convention 2022 following the surprise announcement three weeks earlier by Minister for Education Norma Foley TD. On March 29, the Minister issued her plans for a re-developed Senior Cycle to the media. These plans include:

- revised curricula for all existing Leaving Cert subjects
- revised Leaving Cert subjects will have assessment components (in addition to written exams) worth 40% of the total Leaving Cert grade
- introduction of teacher-based assessment components
- updated curriculum and assessment models in chemistry, physics, biology and business will be available for fifth-year students in network schools* in September 2024
- Leaving Cert Established students entering Senior Cycle in September 2023 will sit Paper 1 in English and Irish at the end of fifth year
- introduction of two new subjects: drama, film and theatre studies; and, climate action and sustainable development – these subjects will be available to network schools* in 2024
- oral examinations and the music practical performance will take place during the first week of the Easter break
- new Level 1 and Level 2 qualification (National Qualifications Framework) will be introduced for some students with special educational needs
- Leaving Cert Applied students will have improved access to maths and foreign languages from September 2022, and
- Transition Year Programme will be revised.

*The NCCA will invite a selection of schools to become “network” schools. These schools will participate at an early stage in revised curriculum and assessment arrangements.

ASTI response

On the day of the Minister’s announcement, ASTI President Eamon Dennehy stated that external assessment of the State exams must be retained in any development of Senior Cycle and the Leaving Cert. He added that the mistakes made in the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle in recent years, which sidelined the voice of teachers, must not be repeated.

At ASTI Annual Convention 2022, a motion was adopted reaffirming that ASTI members do not assess their students for State certification purposes. The motion also commits the ASTI to undertaking a comprehensive consultation with members on all aspects of the Minister’s plans.

Separately, a number of motions were adopted relating to Senior Cycle change, including a motion condemning the announcement by the Minister that oral and practical examinations will be held during the Easter break and at weekends. Another motion demands that the Department of Education arrange comprehensive research into the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle (see pages 26-27 for the ASTI Annual Convention 2022 report).

Timeline of Senior Cycle review

The review of the Senior Cycle curriculum was initiated in 2016/17 by the NCCA following a decision by the then Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton TD.

In 2017/18 the NCCA engaged with students, teachers and parents in 41 network schools. Eight regional seminars discussed issues emerging from these schools.

In 2018/19 the NCCA hosted a national conference on Senior Cycle and published a report from the consultation process to date.

In May 2021 the NCCA submitted an Advisory Report to the Minister for Education.

In March 2022, the Minister announced her plans for the redevelopment of Senior Cycle. The Minister stated that in formulating these plans she had considered the NCCA Advisory Report, the experiences of the Leaving Certificates 2020 and 2021, and the views of other experts, including the OECD.

Teachers’ voice

The ASTI has been active at every stage of the Senior Cycle review and consultation processes to date. ASTI representatives on the NCCA Council, NCCA Board for Senior Cycle and other NCCA committees have continuously articulated the views of ASTI members, particularly in relation to assessment for State exams. The ASTI was also represented at all seminars and conferences during the review and consultation period.

In 2019 the ASTI published *Making Education Policy Work*, containing research into the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle undertaken by Dr Brian Fleming: <https://www.asti.ie/document-library/making-education-policy-work-by-dr-brian-fleming/>.

In 2022 the ASTI published *Teachers’ Experience of the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle*, based on a survey of ASTI members.

The ASTI is currently planning a comprehensive membership-wide consultation on all aspects of the Minister’s plans.

Make sure you participate in the ASTI’s consultation with members on the redevelopment of Senior Cycle. Details of this consultation with ASTI members will be posted on www.asti.ie

EDCO 2022 NEW PUBLICATIONS

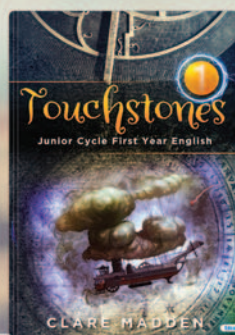
JUNIOR CYCLE



JC Spanish



JC French

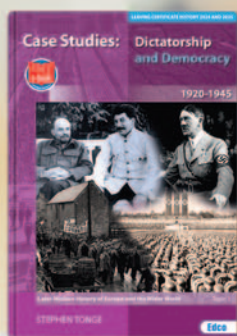


JC English

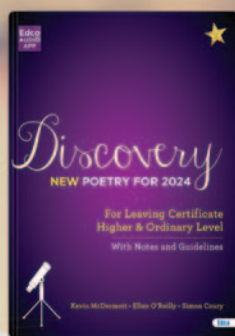


JC Irish

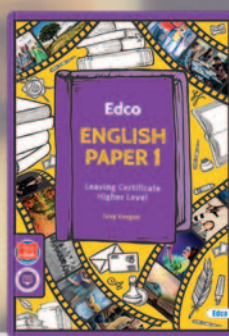
LEAVING CERTIFICATE



LC History



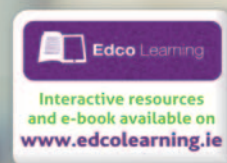
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REPORT SHOWS HIGH STANDARD OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

The Chief Inspector's Report 2016-2020 has found that despite poor investment, Irish school communities are performing well.

The Chief Inspector's Report 2016-2020 has found that school communities are performing well. This is despite inadequate investment in education in Ireland. The high standard of teaching and learning in second-level schools is recognised in the report. The overall quality of teaching was rated as good or very good in 92% of school inspections (inspections use a quality continuum of very good, good, satisfactory, fair, weak). Teaching approaches were also rated as good or very good in the majority of inspections, and a broad range of teaching methodologies was acknowledged.

The report also notes Irish students' high performance in international assessments in reading, mathematics and science. Ireland was ranked 4th out of 36 OECD countries in reading literacy in PISA 2018, and was the top-performing EU country in second-year mathematics in TIMSS 2019.

This is despite the fact that Ireland was ranked in last place out of the 36 OECD countries for investment in second-level education as a percentage of GDP in the Education at a Glance 2021 report.

Commenting on the Chief Inspector's Report 2016-2020, ASTI President Eamon Dennehy said: "Despite unacceptably low investment in second-level education, schools and teachers continue to perform at a high standard. This is testament to the commitment and professionalism of our teachers. The report finds that students experienced many challenges during the pandemic, including negative impacts on their mental health, well-being and education. As a baseline, the additional funding and resources provided to schools due to the pandemic must be maintained, and substantial further investment must be provided, so that young people are provided with the opportunities they need to thrive".

Impact of Covid-19

The huge impact of Covid-19 on schools is acknowledged in the report. Teachers responded quickly and agilely to the challenges created by the pandemic. In order for teachers to continue teaching and to communicate with parents while school buildings were closed, use of digital technologies increased considerably. The report notes that restrictions on teaching methodologies necessitated by Covid-19 increased teachers' recognition of the value of collaborative learning.

This finding is reinforced by ASTI research during and after the initial Covid-19 restrictions, which found that teachers prioritise smaller class sizes as the way forward. ASTI research has also found that remote teaching has led to a huge amount of learning for teachers about the diversity of learning styles, motivation



and home supports of their students, and that teachers want to continue using teaching strategies that acknowledge this diversity. The ASTI believes smaller classes are the optimum means of deepening the quality of teaching and learning post pandemic.

Guidance and counselling

The Chief Inspector's report also acknowledges that while additional guidance and counselling resources provided in response to Covid-19 were welcome, further system supports in guidance and counselling will be required. The ASTI absolutely supports the Report's conclusion in this regard. The recent report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science on the impact of Covid-19 on the education system had as one of its key recommendations that emotional counselling and therapeutic supports should be provided in all primary and secondary schools as an urgent priority.

The high standard of teaching and learning in second-level schools is recognised in the report.

The overall quality of teaching was rated as good or very good in 92% of school inspections.

Teaching approaches were found to be good or very good in 74% of the lessons observed during unannounced inspections and in 76% of lessons observed during announced inspections.

During the period of school closures, schools reported considerable success in engaging with the majority of pupils and students in mainstream schools and demonstrated high levels of adaptability.

REPRESENTING MEMBERSHIP AND FIGHTING FOR TEACHERS' RIGHTS

Senior Cycle change and the barriers to entry to teaching were central to the ASTI's media interactions during Convention 2022.

"The Minister hasn't explained her announcement where she said her proposals were designed to reduce stress and pressure. It's very difficult to see how spreading more assessments across a longer period of time right across the two years is going to reduce pressure on students...We think it's very important to protect the integrity and validity of what is a highly regarded State certification process. We would point out that the Minister brought forward proposals based on a report that was provided by the NCCA, her advisory body, who did not advise her to go the route she has chosen."

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary
Morning Ireland, RTÉ Radio One, April 19, 2022

"This year has been marked, dare I say scarred, by the horrors associated with violence in society and in particular violence against women and members of the LGBTQI+ community. We will not relent on this because everyone is entitled to work in a safe environment and when issues arise, victims should be treated with proper care and respect."

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary
GCN (Gay Community News), April 20, 2022

"These [Convention motions] are motions brought in by our membership and we are very much a democratic organisation. We certainly do represent our membership and we will fight for their rights. What we are doing now is fighting for the right of every child to have a quality education because to have education you need good teachers and you need the profession to attract them. The key message to the Minister for Education will be that our voices need to be heard in our profession. We do want to be included in any negotiations when it comes to changing our working conditions or indeed when it comes to changing the education system; our students deserve a quality education."

Eamon Dennehy, ASTI President
Newstalk Breakfast, Newstalk, April 19, 2022

"One of the topics that had come up at the ASTI Convention was actually the fact that one of the biggest barriers for enticing people into teaching is actually the cost of the training programmes, the Professional Master's in Education. Depending on where you do it, it can cost between €12,000 and €14,000 for two years and while student teachers are undertaking their placement in a school, they don't receive any payment. So, they are in full-time education and they have this huge expense. This also only allows for a certain type of person to go into teaching, which is one who is predominantly middle class and has financial support. My school where I teach is probably one of the most multicultural schools in the country yet the teaching staff doesn't really represent the students and one of the barriers to that really is the sheer cost of the training that comes with teaching."

Daniel Howard, ASTI member
Brendan O'Connor Show, RTÉ Radio 1, April 24, 2022

"There's a lot of research showing that certain groups and certain students will be treated more fairly in an external anonymous system and, having worked as an external examiner and as an advising examiner for the SEC, people have a lot of very justified faith in it. Right now, I'm able to say to students they will be assessed fairly and treated the same as anyone else in the country, and I'm able to act as their advocate and coach, and if this [teachers assessing their own students for State certification] was to happen, it would be a fundamental change in the role of teachers in school and in society."

Kate Barry, ASTI member and Convention delegate
The Irish Times, April 21, 2022

"Tá a fhios againn ón suirbhé a rinneamar le déanaí go bhfuil fadhb an-mhór ag príomhoidí chun folúntais a líonadh agus tá ábhair ar leith ann nach féidir duine ar bith a fháil dóibh, cuir i gcás, an Ghaeilge agus mata agus tíos."

Anne Loughnane, ASTI Standing Committee member and Convention delegate
Nuacht, TG4, April 19, 2022



Artwork in support of Ukraine by students in Coláiste Éamann Rís in Cork City.

WELCOMING UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

With more Ukrainians arriving in Ireland by the day, many of them of school age, it is certain that ASTI members will be welcoming these students into their schools.

Many schools have experience of students coming from war situations, but there are plenty that don't. To address what to do (and what not to do), the ASTI hosted a webinar with a plethora of speakers who are experienced in this area, and spoke to one teacher who has recently welcomed a Ukrainian girl into her school.

For children coming directly from a war zone, not all require counselling, but the routine of school is very beneficial, as is a psychosocial approach. Speaking at the ASTI webinar, Michelle McCarthy of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) said it's about putting in place calmness, connectedness, safety, self and community efficacy, and hope, which will promote resilience and recovery.

Michelle said: "It's really important that children get back into the normal routine. Albeit in a foreign country, the routine of school is really helpful and helps to counteract what may have occurred for them".

Michelle also explained that although children from war backgrounds come from trauma, it is important not to forget that they can be very resilient and to offer them a normalised experience and time to settle into a new country.

An inclusive school

Aaron Wolfe, Principal of Coláiste Éamann Rís in Cork City, spoke at the webinar about what his school is doing to welcome its new Ukrainian students, and what it has done for other students from foreign backgrounds over the years. As part of his presentation, Aaron explained that the OECD said in 2017 that: "Education is a key factor in the integration process for immigrant children, as it can play a key role in economic and social outcomes".

There are currently students from 26 different countries in the school and Aaron talked through some of the strategies that are used to welcome them

in Coláiste Éamann Rís. The school was involved in a successful campaign to protect three of its students from Pakistan from deportation.

One of the things that they do in the school is, when children born in another country come to Coláiste Éamann Rís, their national flag is displayed in the school: "That evokes a great sense of pride in the student. It's such a small thing to do but it really gives a welcome straight from the offset".

Of course, there are differences between Ireland and Ukraine. Also, these new students may be adjusting to rather different social circumstances. Aaron said that the first thing one Ukrainian student asked on his first day was where the swimming pool was.

Aaron said an accessible way of communicating with students whose



Coláiste Éamann Rís students at an anti-war protest in Cork.

English is not great is Google Translate. He says that when he first met a Ukrainian student, they just passed Aaron's phone back and forth to each other.

He also explained that the school has used interpreters in parent-teacher meetings and in other situations: "We've had to bring in interpreters during the enrolment process".

Cultural displays on noticeboards are very important, said Aaron, and the school invites students from abroad to be representatives on the student council, the Peace and Justice Committee, and Worldwide Global Schools.

Another important factor with refugee students is trauma-responsive education. Young people who have experienced trauma can struggle to concentrate in school, be seen as disruptive, or find learning difficult. Aaron recommended becoming a trauma-informed school: "Obviously, these students coming to us have experienced trauma. We have students coming to us as refugees, they come to us from Direct Provision, and with some of them you're told very, very little about where they come from".

Aaron also recommended getting the support services in the school ready for Ukrainian students. The Department of Education has announced that schools that have one to four students coming from Ukraine can access five hours of English as an additional language (EAL) instruction. That goes up to about 50 hours for 40 students.

The last point Aaron makes is that it's all hands on deck: "I'd be lost if it wasn't for the teaching staff here because some very serious incidents have arisen with our students who have come from other countries. There are some very significant problems that come when you're dealing with students from backgrounds that you don't know anything about".

Learning from experience

Another speaker at the webinar was Jessica Farnan, Manager, City of Dublin ETB Youth and Education Service for Refugees and Migrants, whose talk was entitled 'Refugee children in Irish schools: learning from past experience to support Ukrainian children'.

Up until now, Jessica's team has mainly had experience with refugees from Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria. There are lessons from working with these students for schools working with Ukrainians, but also some important differences. In Ukraine, there is an almost complete literacy rate, with mixed levels of English proficiency. These are things that were not normally seen with some of the other refugee and migrant groups. When teaching



Coláiste Éamann Rís caretakers John Neville and Pat Breen flying the Ukrainian flag in the school.

Ukrainian refugees, there is hope that teachers can utilise prior knowledge of schooling and English.

Some of the students may be 'false beginners', meaning they may not reveal that they have a good standard of English and go through a silent period. This might change quite rapidly over the first couple of weeks as they settle in.

Adjustments needed

Jean-Marie Ward is Deputy Principal in Malahide Community School and spoke to *ASTIR* separately from the webinar. So far, the school has only had one Ukrainian student join them.

Jean-Marie said: "Like many schools in north Dublin, we are heavily oversubscribed and, depending on the age of students approaching the school for enrolment, there is a strong possibility that we won't be able to accommodate them. We have placed our current student into TY although she should really be placed into third year given her age (15). We decided that her social and emotional well-being was a priority and it's not realistic to expect her to drop into the final months of a three-year Junior Cycle programme. If she is still with us in September, she will stay in TY with her peers".

So far, the school has undertaken a number of measures to help their new student settle into school. She has been buddied up with a group of students. All her teachers have been informed that she is joining, and that she has come from the conflict in Ukraine. She has been provided with a uniform, a sports uniform, and an iPad free of charge.

Jean-Marie raised an important point that will be relevant to many schools: "We expect to receive more applications over the coming weeks, but unless there is some emergency resolution, we will not be able to offer any places in first to third year, or for first year 2022-23. We are completely full and have a number of outstanding applications – if we do not follow our published enrolment policy, we would be leaving ourselves open to Section 29 applications, which would inevitably be successful in those circumstances. We would urge the Minister to include some sort of 'emergency' measure, which would allow us to accept refugees without impacting on our enrolment policy or Section 29 vulnerability".



Malahide Community School recently welcomed its first student from Ukraine.

KEY SPEECHES

Proposed Senior Cycle change, continued pay inequality, the crisis in recruitment and retention of teachers, and continued underinvestment in education dominated the speeches at Convention 2022, while guest speaker Dr John Cunningham marked the ASTI's 100th Convention by reflecting on the history of this important event.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Rebuilding teachers' trust ahead of any Senior Cycle change, as well as addressing pay inequality and underinvestment in education, were central to Eamon Dennehy's speech.

A Aire, ardmheara, a aoimna agus a cháirde Gael. Cuirim fáilte mhór romhaibh cuig an ceadú comhdáil de Cumann na Mean Mhúinteoirí Éireann, agus an céad teacht le chéile le trí bliain anús. Is ócaid stairiúil í dar noigh.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought fear, suffering and disruption to the world. Teachers proved themselves to be resourceful and committed to their students, doing all in their power to ensure that teaching and learning continued to the greatest extent possible. From the beginning the ASTI insisted that if schools were to reopen, every possible measure would have to be taken to prevent the spread of the virus in schools and protect students and staff. The ASTI (as part of the ICTU Health and Safety Committee) insisted that Lead Worker Representatives be required in the Government Protocol for the safe return to work. I would like to pay tribute to our Lead Workers, school stewards and all those who worked in schools to keep them safe.

Trust and the Leaving Certificate

In 2020 the State exams were cancelled and teachers demonstrated great flexibility and commitment to their Leaving Cert students by taking part in the calculated grades process. In 2021, teachers were asked to take part in a similar process. The ASTI position was that this should only be done as a contingency measure in the event that the externally assessed June exams could not go ahead. Our advice was not heeded and a hybrid system was put in place. This did not work out for all students, some of whom received very good results but found that the points for the courses they had applied for had increased. The experience of the last two years has shown the value and strength of our externally-assessed State examinations system.

Research and analysis of how well the Senior Cycle and Leaving Cert are working is welcome. Education must continually evolve. Change must be based on sound, objective evidence and not on untested ideas or imported parts of systems. A key lesson from the pandemic must be that changes to



ASTI President Eamon Dennehy.

education policy can have unintended consequences, particularly for students. The current Leaving Cert maintains a high degree of trust and this must be maintained in any change process.

The introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle came at a time when major cuts were being made to spending in education. This was hardly the most opportune moment to begin radical change, but it was done anyway. It was also done without any heed to the concerns raised by teachers. On March 29, just weeks after schools emerged from pandemic restrictions, the Minister announced an ambitious programme for Senior Cycle change. I welcome the acknowledgement that the standard of Senior Cycle education provision has been high. We too wish to maintain this. We are extremely concerned about the impact of the Framework for Junior Cycle on Senior Cycle. The ASTI is on record in calling for ongoing research into aspects of curriculum design at Junior Cycle. During the pandemic, flexibility was asked for and given in areas such as assessment of State examinations and the arrangements for music practical and oral exams. The ASTI sought and secured assurances that these were one-off changes needed to overcome exceptional circumstances and would not form a precedent for future change. We regard any attempt to go back on these commitments as unacceptable and counter-productive. There can be no change to our working conditions without negotiation.

A key lesson from the pandemic must be that changes to education policy can have unintended consequences, particularly for students.



ASTI President Eamon Dennehy speaking to RTÉ News.

From left: Clare Branch members Peter Quinn, Mairead Bergin, Jacinta McGarry, Geraldine O'Brien, Michael Horgan, and Kate Minogue.

Attractiveness of teaching

The introduction of the FEMPI measures in 2009 marked the beginning of a dark and challenging period for all public service unions. The treatment of the education sector was particularly severe. An inferior pay scale was created, new teachers were placed at the first point of this new scale, and entitlements to allowances were abolished.

In an effort to push back some of the most destructive and unfair austerity measures, the ASTI took industrial action in 2016. The reaction from the Government was ruthless and perhaps even vindictive. Pay and increments were frozen, payment for supervision and substitution work was withheld, and young ASTI members were denied CIDs. Today we still have pay discrimination against second-level teachers who joined the profession after 2010 and, perhaps even more shocking, the retention of a delayed increment date for all ASTI members.

In the 2022 sectoral bargaining process, the ASTI was asked to decide if it wanted all ASTI members to get a 1% general pay increase or if it wanted an equivalent financial amount to be given in another way. The ASTI has decided to prioritise reducing the pay gap for post-2010 entrants to teaching. It is deplorable that ordinary teachers have to use their pay to rectify a reckless Government decision that has left schools unable to recruit teachers.

Valuing education

Investment in schools really matters. In recent weeks many schools have received an influx of Ukrainian refugee students. Once again, teachers will pull out all the stops, despite working in underfunded, under-resourced schools. We acknowledge the work of the Department of Education in providing resources and advice to schools in recent weeks. Much more must be provided, even after the initial glare of the media has gone.

It is extremely concerning to the ASTI that the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill appears to step over the issue of investment in schools, and instead moves to transfer accountability for “improving” education to schools and teachers. ASTI research carried out in 2021 by Dr Caitríona Fitzgerald found that charter-type models used in education are largely based on market-led mechanisms. These mechanisms treat schools as measurable entities with outputs that can be used for evaluation, ranking and comparison. Such models shrink the State’s role and redefine the citizen as a consumer and parents as customers.

We acknowledge the Minister’s statement that the name of the Bill will be changed to the Education (School Community Charter) Bill. However, we need much more to convince us that this legislation is based on a whole-school-community approach that values the professional role and contribution of teachers, and acknowledges the State’s responsibilities in supporting schools and education.

Teachers too are ambitious for education. No education plan can succeed without the trust of teachers. *Agus sinn ag teacht amach as Covid, tá seans ann anois muinín agus co-oibru a chothú le muinteoirí trí comhrá ciallmhar. Táimid ag súil le sin.*

Teachers too are ambitious for education. No education plan can succeed without the trust of teachers.

Read the full speech at www.asti.ie

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Kieran Christie's report to Convention set out the ASTI's commitment to fight for teachers on pay, working conditions, and Senior Cycle in the coming years.

Pandemic

As we look back at all that transpired throughout the pandemic, we come to realise that the ASTI stood up well in difficult times. We sought to balance the overriding importance of keeping school communities safe while protecting the right of our teachers to teach and their students to learn. I want to pay tribute to our members who endured all the travails that came their way. They deserve the gratitude of the nation for their efforts.

At certain moments, the ASTI made key interventions. These included ensuring that a proper indemnity be put in place to allow members to engage in the calculated grades process, and our effective closure of schools in January 2021 because returning to the classroom was too dangerous.

The withdrawal from the discussions on the examinations in 2021 by then President Ann Piggott and myself, to ensure that the established Leaving Certificate should be protected, coupled with our insistence that there be no calculated or SEC-accredited grades in 2022, could be all important in the years to come. We led the way in insisting and ensuring that substantial increased investment in the day-to-day running of our schools would be necessary if a successful and sustained reopening could be maintained.

Ukraine

ASTI members will not be found wanting in welcoming and settling Ukrainian students into our schools. We in the ASTI have already sought to reach out to and engage with our colleague teacher unions in Ukraine. It is incumbent upon us as educators and trade unionists to stand in solidarity with our colleagues, their students and communities. However, it is also clear that the war will present challenges for the Irish school system on a scale that we have never seen before. The ASTI, as a participant in a stakeholder group that has been convened, has sought to ensure that the impacts on an already heavily oversubscribed and underfunded system will be addressed.

Occupational stress crisis

Working during a global pandemic further compounded the longstanding issues around teacher workload. Inadequate CPD, limited staffing and inadequate resources, and teaching overcrowded classes, are some of the factors that have sapped the morale and energy of our members. The ASTI has been advocating for some years for the establishment of an Integrated Workplace Health Management Initiative with the aim of promoting health and well-being, illness prevention and support initiatives, where necessary, for return to work after illness. It is imperative that this is actioned soon.

Investment

The OECD publication *Education at a Glance 2021* reported that once again Ireland ranks in last place out of 36 countries for investment in second-level education. The consistent underfunding of second-level schools in Ireland needs to stop. The ASTI has insisted that the increased resources provided regarding Covid-19 arrangements must only be considered a baseline for increased future funding. Smaller classes, improved buildings, technology investment, extra guidance counsellor appointments and the restoration of



ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie.

middle management posts are the centrepieces of the list of needs. Investment in the recruitment and retention of staff will have to happen. There must be no retrenchment.

Violence in society

This year has been marked by the horrors associated with violence in society and in particular violence against women and members of the LGBTQI+ community. We have been pushing the Department of Education for some time to revise and enhance the Assault Leave Circular for Schools to drag it into the modern age and make it fit for purpose. We will not relent on this.

Leaving Certificate – Minister's announcement

The recent announcement by the Minister for Education of plans for the future of the Leaving Certificate have been uppermost in our thoughts. The ASTI will consider these proposals, some of which have merit, and in keeping with our longstanding traditions of democracy and inclusion, will consult widely across our membership.

Minister Foley has stated that the changes aim to reduce stress on students. However, it has been a popular commentary for many years that the big problem with the Leaving Certificate is not the examinations per se, but the fact that they are tethered to progression to third level. How adding to the number of examinations and spreading them out across a two-year period will lessen the stress, has not been explained by Minister Foley.

There are also many credible voices from the world of academia who argue that continuous assessment tends to exacerbate inequality in the education system. Teachers assessing their students for State certification is simply a bad idea.

On March 29, Minister Foley announced changes to working arrangements for every second-level teacher in the country without consultation or negotiation of any kind with their union. If this is the manner in which she



ASTI President Eamon Dennehy, and President Elect Miriam Duggan.

intends to proceed, she will find that we in the ASTI can be a strong adversary. ASTI members cannot and will not be taken for granted. The ASTI has never shied away from change. If we have been sticklers, it's because we have always insisted that the change must be founded on clear and established research and underpinned by a coherent strategy that is properly resourced.

Building Momentum Agreement

The rapid growth of inflation has substantially undermined the living standards of all workers, including teachers. No one need apologise for the submission of a claim for a substantial pay rise at this juncture to match inflation. To that end, and following advocacy by the ASTI, the ICTU Public Services Committee recently moved to activate the review clause in the Building Momentum Agreement. The Government has announced that it will engage in that context.

On the basis of the motions that we are and will be debating at this Convention, it is clear where the ASTI's priorities will lie in those discussions. The leadership of the ASTI is listening, and will do everything in our power to advance those issues. We will also continue to fight for the full restoration of the increments that were delayed for ASTI members when we were the sole union from across the public sector to take industrial action in 2016 to stand up for education and lesser-paid teachers.

Convention, the coming period is going to be very difficult for all members on the industrial relations front. We will do all we can to deal with the challenges that are sure to emerge. The future is uncertain as always, but the ASTI and its members faced and surmounted the challenges that the pandemic threw at us. We will face the future with the same character and determination.

Read the full speech at www.asti.ie



Guest speaker Dr John Cunningham of NUI Galway.

DR JOHN CUNNINGHAM, NUI GALWAY – GUEST SPEAKER

On the occasion of the ASTI's 100th Convention, historian John Cunningham spoke of the role of Conventions past and present.

Convention is when the ASTI and the wider profession is most visible, when it is scrutinised by the media and all interested in education. Critically also, it has long been the core of the robust internal democracy of the Association – a forum for the frank exchange of views and the testing out of ideas. It has fostered camaraderie among active members, and acted as a two-way communication channel right through the Association, with branch minutes showing Convention-related business arising regularly.

So why have there been only 100 Conventions in the 113 years since 1909? Well, the ASTI was a small body in its early years, and its members could all fit in a middling-sized room. Prior to 1923, the key decision-making body was the AGM, the venue for which was the Mansion House.

The earliest ASTI Convention, held in UCD on April 3, 1923, was a modest affair with about 20 delegates and some non-delegates in attendance. Poor attendances at AGMs seemingly prompted the move to Conventions. Only one delegate in 1923 was a woman. This set the pattern for most of the 1920s Conventions – small, predominantly male gatherings in UCD. The Association moved out of the capital to Cork in 1929 and 1933, to Galway in 1935, to Limerick in 1936, and to Waterford in 1937. Growing

membership was reflected at these Conventions – the 37 delegates in Waterford included 16 women, and by the late 1930s, the Convention was regularly a two-day event. In 1957 Convention met in a hotel for the first time – the Warwick Hotel in Galway. In 1958, the venue was the International Hotel in Bray, and in 1959, the Yeats County in Sligo. Donogh O'Malley's announcement of free education in 1966 is well remembered, but it was only one of a number of wide-reaching reforms of the 1960s and early 1970s, including the establishment of comprehensive and community schools. Arising from the expansion of post-primary education, the ASTI trebled in membership to 3,000 during the 1960s, and again to 9,000 during the 1970s. Radical and impatient, younger members shook up branch meetings and Conventions.

The earliest ASTI Convention, held in UCD on April 3, 1923, was a modest affair with about 20 delegates and some non-delegates in attendance. Poor attendances at AGMs seemingly prompted the move to Conventions.

An element of the reform process was the introduction of a common school salary. Among ASTI members, accustomed to higher salaries, there was a wariness, which hardened into indignation on the publication of the Ryan Tribunal report in 1968. Younger members were critical of ASTI negotiators. One indicator of unrest was that there were no fewer than four Conventions in 1968: the scheduled Easter gathering in Galway and, driven by the dynamic Cork branch, Special Conventions in July, October, and November.

Internal democracy was imperfect in one important respect: the electoral culture favoured men. The ICTU's emphasis on equality prompted the Association to provide training for female CEC members in 1984, and out of that came a fully fledged ASTI Equality Committee by decision of the 1988 Convention. Improvement in female representation ensued from the 1993 Convention decision that elections for Standing Committee be held on a regional basis rather than at Convention.

Moving closer to the present, we reach a period of consolidation, a characterisation we might justify on the basis of the opening of the purpose-built headquarters in Winetavern Street in 1992, the solidification of a full-time apparatus of industrial relations, educational, and media professionals, and the settling of membership at around 18,000.

For one hundred years, ASTI Convention has been a channel through which the whole of Irish education has passed. After two years of meeting online, there is no need to remind delegates that Convention has been an adaptable forum. Convention has remained the vital life force of the ASTI, facilitating communication, connection, and common purpose between post-primary teachers throughout Ireland. Long may it continue.

Read the full speech at www.asti.ie



Minister for Education Norma Foley TD.

NORMA FOLEY TD, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Minister Foley set out her agenda for Senior Cycle change, more digitally aware schools, strengthening and supporting school leadership, and building inclusive school communities.

It has been a challenging, difficult and demanding two years for everyone. However, what became apparent very quickly was the central role that schools play in families' lives. Social and emotional health and well-being are inextricably tied up with access to school for children and young people. Your members responded to the crisis with energy, commitment and professionalism, and I thank you. I am mindful of your co-operation in a time of adversity and I commit to engaging with you as we now seek to meet the challenges of the 21st century in Irish education.

Senior Cycle change

Delegates have reflected on the announcement I made at the end of March for a re-imagined Senior Cycle. In introducing significant change at Senior Cycle, it is essential that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), State Examinations Commission (SEC), the teacher support services, the Department, schools, and you as teachers, can work through the changes together over a period of time. We must also make sure that the conditions for change are in place. It is essential for teachers to be involved in co-designing our curricular and assessment approach, and I will facilitate the allocation of time and professional development to enable this to happen.



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Bernie McNally (Secretary General, Department of Education), Norma Foley TD (Minister for Education), and Eamon Dennehy (ASTI President).

I know that in moving to externally moderated teacher-based forms of assessment, some teachers will have concerns or indeed reservations. The NCCA and the SEC will have extensive engagement with teachers and other stakeholders as this work progresses, and we will rely on the use of a network schools approach to introduce this aspect of Senior Cycle development, which will allow space for each element of the curriculum to be carefully worked through.

Digital Strategy for Schools

Given that the further development of digital skills for students, teachers and school leaders continues to be a priority for my Department, as well as the improvement of broadband connectivity, last week I launched the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027. There is €200 million in capital investment underpinning it, and €50 million in ICT grant funding has already issued to all schools. We will also ensure that all schools, regardless of location, are provided with appropriate broadband connectivity. By combining the continued commitment shown by teachers and school leaders with the effective use of digital technologies in their teaching practice, I am confident we can equip young people with the key digital skills they need for life.

School leadership and teacher development

The kind of fundamental change that I have described will not come about without investment, and the strengthening of leadership and professional supports in our schools. The Department is continuing to fund the provision of a wide range of supports for school leaders, including the Professional Development Services for Teachers and the Centre for School Leadership. The NCCA relationship and sexuality education (RSE) review report in 2019 highlighted that professional development of educators is a critical factor in supporting an improvement in the quality of relationships and sexuality

education. I am pleased to announce that I am putting in place a new postgraduate course for teachers and post-primary schools teaching social, personal and health education (SPHE), and RSE. Schools and teachers will be supported to access the programme and course fees will be covered by Department funding.

The Department also promotes the quality of teaching and learning through the provision of continuing professional development and supports for teachers and school leaders. The integration of four different support services into one single service is now underway.

I acknowledge the issues, exacerbated by Covid-19 substitution pressures, that have faced schools in filling posts. This is a combination of various factors being addressed by the Teacher Supply Action Plan and a recognised need to increase the attractiveness and value of the profession. There are positive signs, with an increased interest in the CAO for post-primary teaching this year. I will continue to work with the ASTI and other unions to implement pragmatic ways of addressing this issue.

Inclusive schools

I believe it is important that children with special educational needs should be included, where possible and appropriate, in mainstream settings. But this should go hand in hand with coherent strategies and resourcing. My Department this year will spend over €2 billion, or over 25% of its total educational budget, on additional supports. The EPSEN Act is being reviewed to help ensure that our laws reflect current policy and international norms.

Last month, I announced a major expansion of the DEIS programme to an additional 310 schools at a cost of €32 million. As a result, almost 1,200 schools will be included in the programme, serving over 240,000 students. Since its introduction, the gap in retention rates to Leaving Certificate between DEIS and non-DEIS schools has narrowed from 16.8% for the 2001 entry cohort to approximately 8.6% for the 2014 cohort. I hope to build on these measures in future years.

Ukraine

We are now faced with another challenge as a consequence of the war in Ukraine. My Department is working to ensure that Ukrainian children of school-going age are provided with access to appropriate supports. The Department has moved to source a number of immediate resources to support linguistically and culturally diverse communities in Ireland, and these are being centralised for easy access. The Department is working with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to finalise arrangements with ETBs to put in place measures after Easter for the recruitment of tutors for panels to support English for speakers of other language tuition. Panels will be in place in every ETB area to support all post-primary schools where the needs arise.

Cost of living and pay

You have an enormous range of motions reflecting the concerns of delegates and the wider membership today about the cost of living and the pressures on families. In terms of public service pay, Building Momentum has provided opportunities through sectoral bargaining to address some of the outstanding issues being pursued by your unions throughout some of the last number of years. Minister McGrath has indicated that negotiations for a new agreement, or extension of Building Momentum, will begin shortly.

Read the full speech at www.asti.ie

COST OF LIVING INCREASES MUST BE ADDRESSED

Pay and conditions for teachers at all stages of their careers were addressed by several motions at Convention 2022.

Motion 1 called on the union to ballot members on industrial action on a range of measures to end pay inequality and address cost of living increases. Cost of living was also the focus of Motion 5, which asked the union to demand pay increases in line with inflation. Motions also dealt with the situation of those training to be second-level teachers, with Motion 42 asking the ASTI to campaign for a one-year postgraduate qualification for post-primary teaching, rather than the current two-year master's, and Motion 41 demanding that Professional Master of Education (PME) students be paid for teaching hours worked throughout the academic year. The issue of pensions was raised by Motion 14, which called on the union to commission a report into contributions made under the different pension schemes in order to better inform members and promote equity. Finally, Motion 12 addressed serious concerns about the processes around posts of responsibility appointments, asking that the union negotiate with the Department of Education to revisit the criteria for selection of candidates to recognise teaching experience/years of service.

Pay

"We as teachers have answered the call of our nation time and again over the last ten years. We've taken pay cuts. We've had our pensions changed. We taught from our living rooms, we marked our students for Junior Cycle, we were judge and jury over sending our own students to college. It's time that our work was not only rewarded but at least acknowledged by the Government. Talks are only worthwhile if they bear fruit. It's important that at the end of September, we have something to show for them."

Christopher Davey, CEC and Carlow Branch

A procedural motion "That the motion be referred to Standing Committee" was proposed. The procedural motion was carried by Convention. Therefore, no vote was taken on Motion 1 – Pay.



Seamus Keane, Fingal Branch.

Cost of living

"By supporting this motion we are signalling that a wage increase is an absolute necessity and a red line for us in negotiating a successor to Building Momentum. Our demand for wage increases will also hopefully bolster workers' demands from the private sector, who will find common cause with our demands and possibly help increase trade union density. As an immediate solution to the crippling cost of everything in this country, wage increases can do the heavy lifting in terms of protecting people from inflation, but the battle for affordability is a longer one and must be a priority for the trade union movement in Ireland."

Seamus Keane, Fingal Branch

"The next pay agreement cannot and must not come with any productivity attached. But it must also make this point clear to those who negotiate on our behalf, the Public Service Committee of ICTU. Too often in the past at these talks, the wants and needs of others have come with a cost to those of us in teaching. This must not happen again. The next deal must concentrate on cost of living increases only."

Ed Byrne, Fingal Branch

We as teachers have answered the call of our nation time and again over the last ten years.

Teacher qualifications

"There are two issues around the PME: it takes too long and it costs too much. The fees for the PME average about €12,000 and then obviously you have accommodation and living expenses. We know that ideally our classrooms

should be staffed by teachers from diverse backgrounds but becoming a teacher has become very expensive and therefore a deterrent for many. The second big issue is time. A proper one-year course, properly designed, would have no adverse effect on standards. Most of us here did the HDip and our education system has been highly rated on our watch. The current shortage of teachers is very unhealthy and is short-changing students. A one-year course would be a step in the right direction."

Mairéad Bergin, Clare Branch

PME students

"I believe student teachers should immediately be at least paid in their second year of training. If teachers could be paid after one year of teacher training in the past without adverse effects, there is no reason why it should not happen again. We need to respect our student teachers as we need to respect all members of society. Expecting education to be delivered by student teachers who must double job and live hand to mouth is not respectful, nor is such disrespect in line with the values we wish to pass on to all of our students."

Dermot Brennan, Carbery Branch

"The PME is an onerous commitment in terms of time, effort and expense. In effect, it means that students have to spend six years in college in order to qualify as teachers. The survey done by Red C last month reveals the huge difficulty in recruiting teaching staff. 58% of respondents stated that the cost of the two-year PME is discouraging graduates from entering the teaching profession. At the very least in these circumstances, second-year PME students should be paid for all their teaching hours."

Anne Loughnane, Carbery Branch

Posts of responsibility

"We need an appointment system which is fair, open, transparent and independent for all assistant principal positions in schools, which recognises years of service and experience. Two things at the minimum I think are needed: a panel of ASTI-agreed nominees for interview boards, and set marks to be awarded for teaching experience and years of service."

Richard Egan, Tullamore Branch

"We need to ensure that the attitude is not 'pale and stale', but rather that this is a teacher with years of experience and continuous professional development that should be acknowledged and recognised."

Catherine Dolan, Tullamore Branch



Noelle Moran, Tuam Branch.

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Motion 62 proposed that the ASTI establish a Global Solidarity Committee. Speakers discussed their hopes that an ASTI Global Solidarity Committee would allow the ASTI to bring greater attention to global humanitarian issues and to express solidarity with workers worldwide.

"We need to do all in our power to express solidarity with the people of Ukraine, of Palestine, of Colombia, to name just three countries. The most dangerous thing you can be in Colombia is a trade unionist, people are being murdered ... I'm hoping there's a feel-good factor around this motion. That as trade unionists who fight a lot for ourselves, we can come out there and pledge our support to people who need our support. In our hundredth year, if this motion passes, I think it would be a nice thing to remember this year as the year we set up the ASTI Global Solidarity committee."

Noelle Moran, Tuam Branch

"If this motion is passed it will empower our union to build links with teachers across the globe, to promote equality in education and the right to education, and ultimately will facilitate solidarity, the principle this union is founded on. As teachers in particular, we exist in a pivotal space in which we communicate with our students about the world, we educate them about the world, we open them up to new ideas. A Global Solidarity Committee would broaden our horizons as a union. I think this motion is an excellent starting point for this."

Conall Ó Dufaigh, Bray Branch

"I don't agree that we have been constrained in supporting humanitarian issues throughout the years of this association. Most recently at Standing Committee, I think in March, I recall that we gave €10,000 to the Red Cross in support of their actions in Ukraine on behalf of members. That's a regular thing."

Philip Irwin, Dublin South 1 Branch

"I want to speak in relation to the last two points of the motion, which mention the rights of workers. Norma Foley talked about 21st century skills and technology in education, and what I want to draw attention to, is that the people who are providing us with the rare earth minerals to make our laptops and our tablets are effectively slaves ... The development of our education system is dependent on what are effectively slaves, children, who dig out the cobalt with their bare hands. So, I'm delighted to see this motion, because we as teachers are very intelligent and really good with research and we have the power now to bring attention to this systemic injustice."

Sinéad Moore, Fingal Branch

TEACHERS' WORKING CONDITIONS MUST BE PROTECTED

Several motions addressed serious concerns at teachers' working conditions, including the right to a safe working environment.

Motion 33 discussed the risk of assault regularly faced by teachers – physically, verbally and now also online – and asked that the union demand a review of Department of Education policies with regard to health and safety legislation. Specifically, it asked that assault leave be extended to cover the mental trauma of online abuse. Motion 25 sought to protect teachers on sick leave from any requirement to submit work for their classes. Motions 18 and 24 both dealt with the issue of supervision and substitution. Motion 24 called for an opt-out from duties for pregnant teachers. Motion 18 called for an uncoupling of supervision and substitution, so that teachers can opt in or out of either scheme on an annual basis. Motion 26 addressed the topic of inspections, asking the union to negotiate with the Department to ensure that no classroom inspections or whole-school evaluations take place in the final weeks of the academic year. Finally, Motion 45 asked that the ASTI resist any attempt by the Department to introduce a policy of out-of-hours CPD.

Health and safety

"I stand here today as an openly gay teacher and I know what it is to endure abuse and assault, particularly homophobic in nature. While I do not bear physical scars, I do bear psychological ones. Unfortunately, Ireland is an outlier in Europe when it comes to recognising that assault can be non-physical. The Department of Education only recognises physical assault, and assault leave will only be granted if you can demonstrate scars, cuts, bruises, broken limbs. Consequently, many teachers suffering from psychological trauma are forced to use their valuable sick leave. Online abuse needs to be immediately tackled in schools. I'm calling on the Department of Education to address these issues. We've already spoken about the chronic shortage of teachers over pay, yet another major factor is working conditions. We all have the legal right to work in a safe environment, free from assault, discrimination and harassment."

Daniel Howard, Dublin North West Branch



Daniel Howard, Dublin North West Branch.

Sick leave

"This motion affirms the importance of good workplace relations and boundaries that is codified in Department circulars. Should a sick teacher be required to submit work? It will help the students, replacement teachers and the running of the school to be provided with this work from one point of view. But a sick bus driver is not asked how to get to Sallynoggin, and a nurse is not required to measure a patient's bloods from their sick bed. A sick teacher may want to submit work to help an exam class, but should they feel required to if this practice becomes the norm? MedMark is our Occupational Health Service. Its website states: 'Occupational health is an astute investment to inspire loyalty and commitment and improve morale'. This motion aims to ringfence that astute investment to protect us all when we are most vulnerable."

Dave Carolan, Drogheda Sean Higgins Branch

We all have the legal right to work in a safe environment, free from assault, discrimination and harassment.

Inspections

"This motion is not against the concept or practice of inspection, but it is against the carrying out of inspections at a time of year when teachers are under immense pressure and stress. I find it wholly unreasonable and unfair when the Department of Education decides to conduct a WSE inspection or a subject inspection at this very pressurised time of year. It is inevitable that such a situation detracts from teaching and learning in the classroom, and also hinders the final weeks of preparation for exam classes. The Department has over eight

months to conduct such inspections, from late August to the end of April. By supporting this motion and then working to make it a reality, the ASTI would take a small but important step to progress the vital issue of teacher well-being.”

Lewis Callahan, Drogheda Sean Higgins Branch

Supervision and substitution

“There are three pieces of legislation which protect pregnant employees. These call for a risk assessment to be made by employers on behalf of pregnant employees, and they identify 11 hazards which can pose health implications. Our members may work in a range of settings, but generally speaking, during their lunch hour and break times they will be outside in winter. They will be on their feet patrolling. In bad weather they're indoors, but here it's impossible to maintain social distance thanks to small communal areas and narrow corridors. Then there's the worry of supervision in classes, the real worry of catching Covid – the pandemic is still here. In calling for the adoption of this motion, we are aiming to standardise a safe work environment for our pregnant colleagues.”

Ann McGowan, Drogheda Sean Higgins Branch

“From September 2023, we want to see a supervision scheme introduced. This would give all teachers, regardless of their years of service, an annual option to partake in it, and to give their limited free time to supervise students. We also want to see a separate substitution scheme introduced whereby teachers can

annually opt to substitute for absent colleagues. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the teacher recruitment and retention crisis has been widely reported by the media. If substitution and supervision were uncoupled, and two separate, annually optional schemes were put in place instead, a small step would be taken towards improving the pay and working conditions of our profession. Such an option would go a long way to reducing the stress and improving the well-being of our teachers.”

Sinéad Corkery, Dublin South Central

Out-of-hours CPD

“We've long known about the hours culture. But what we have now is an out-of-hours culture in teaching. We have the Croke Park hours, CPD going on out of hours, and now the orals at Easter. More and more family time, more and more personal time is being eroded. What we're seeing is a creeping voluntary participation, but I think they're going to try and make this permanent – they're going to try and normalise this. It's a process that Stephen J. Ball has identified called a 'policy ratchet' – produce small changes, get people doing it, make it seem voluntary and then after a while lock it in with an agreement. The out-of-hours culture is growing and we need to resist it, because sooner or later all our family time, all our personal time, we'll just be doing school work as well as teaching. It's unsustainable.”

Mark Walshe, Dublin North East



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TEACHERS STAND FIRM ON SENIOR CYCLE ASSESSMENT

Delegates reaffirmed their commitment to an externally assessed Leaving Certificate, while calling once again for a comprehensive review of the Junior Cycle before any Senior Cycle change.

A number of motions dealt with potential changes at Senior Cycle. An urgent motion proposed by Standing Committee asked that the ASTI reaffirm its policy that members do not assess their students' work for State certification, and that the ASTI commit to a comprehensive consultation process with members regarding redevelopment of the Senior Cycle. Motion 48 asked that the ASTI insist that assessment and grading of the Leaving Certificate remain the sole remit of the State Examinations Commission. Delegates spoke about the importance of external assessment for State certification, emphasising that they do not wish to be the final judge of their students' abilities. Motion 47 asked that the ASTI refuse to engage in any discussion of Leaving Certificate change until a study of the Junior Cycle has been conducted, Motion 51 demanded that the ASTI seek that there be no more than one CBA per subject at Junior Cycle, and Motion 52 asked that the ASTI pursue a minimum review of the hours per subject at Junior Cycle. Speakers on these motions raised serious concerns about Junior Cycle and the difficulties faced by students, both during the course and when they progress to Senior Cycle. Delegates were clear that it is important that these issues are not repeated in any changes to Senior Cycle. Motion 28 insisted that teachers should maintain autonomy over the way they teach, be free to determine for themselves the best pedagogical methods for their classes, and teacher methodologies should not be used as a criterion for inspections. Delegates also discussed a second urgent motion from Standing Committee regarding the proposed holding of oral and practical exams during the Easter break. Delegates spoke passionately about the difficulties this would pose for both teachers and students.

External assessment

"We see teachers as advocates and not judges of their students. It's a key strength of the Irish education system, it underpins the integrity of the exams system and the public trust it has enjoyed. Teachers did engage with



Siobhan O'Donovan, Desmond Branch.

calculated grades in 2020 and accredited grades in 2021. These were Covid-19 pandemic conditions, in other words emergency conditions. Our involvement was only with the commitment from the Government that it did not create a precedent for continuation after the pandemic ... The Minister's proposal of 40% assessment outside of the end exam is not ground-breaking, but it must be grounded in the retention of external assessment for State certification purposes."

Philip Irwin, Dublin South 1 Branch

"The Leaving Certificate is being presented in the media as a one assessment exam, right at the end, and that is the case in some subjects. However, there are many subjects, including my own – I'm a Graphics and DCG teacher – where my students have 40% of their Leaving Certificate done in January of their Leaving Cert year for their student assignment. That is sent away to the State Exams Commission, it is corrected at the State Exams Commission level. Then their terminal exam is less pressurised; it's a 60% exam. Again, this exam is corrected by the State Exams Commission. We are not opposing change if the change is good, we are opposing change when the change is very, very bad."

Padraig Curley, Donegal Branch and Standing Committee Region 1

We see teachers as advocates and not judges of their students. It's a key strength of the Irish education system, it underpins the integrity of the exams system and the public trust it has enjoyed.

Learning from Junior Cycle implementation

"I hold in my hands here the ASTI report on the experience of teachers on the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle. I thank my colleagues for contributing to this really comprehensive report, which contains the views of almost 3,000 members. The findings raise many serious concerns that classroom teachers have with regard to both the implementation and the manner in which the Junior Cycle has been conducted. One of the key recommendations of this document is that a comprehensive independent evaluation of the implementation of the framework document for Junior Cycle needs to be conducted. I agree with that, and add that no further work should take place on Senior Cycle change until this evaluation has taken place and its findings are made known. This was originally promised to us in 2016, but subsequently reneged upon."

Siobhan O'Donovan, Desmond Branch

"Unless we insist that we go with what the NCCA is saying about creating conducive conditions for change, and unless we go with what our own research by Brian Fleming is telling us, we're going to face the same problems we had with the Junior Cycle. It will be rammed through and that will be the end of it. People are saying to me, if this goes through and we end up assessing our own students for Senior Cycle, that will be the end ... We have to take a stand now, and we do have to call for a pause, for no further discussions, to get these things right."

Mark Walshe, Dublin North East Branch

Unless we insist that we go with what the NCCA is saying about creating conducive conditions for change, and unless we go with what our own research by Brian Fleming is telling us, we're going to face the same problems we had with the Junior Cycle.

"I'm a science teacher. I used to teach and impart knowledge. I'm no longer doing that with this new Junior Cycle – my students are dabbling in the subject. It's the same in the other subjects, except for the compulsory subjects that have five classes a week. I have three classes a week – a double on a Monday and a single class on a Friday. By Friday, they've forgotten what I started on Monday. I'm teaching nothing properly ... I used to be proud of teaching. I was preparing my students, and they were getting good results. And I felt they were prepared for Leaving Cert. Now I get them into Leaving Cert biology and I have to start with the basics."

Michael McGrath, Dungarvan Branch and Honorary National Organiser

"I have absolutely no clue how to prepare my students for this new test they are going to face, none. I know we are supposed to be getting away from teaching to the test and in some ways I welcome that, because it means I can teach history ... But now my kids are facing an exam in nine weeks' time and there are students in my class who can conduct a university-level debate and there are other kids who are really going to struggle. The old ordinary-

level paper would have been taken by about 25% of my students. Now 100% of the students are going to take this common-level paper, everyone is going to be bunched in the middle, and my weaker students are really going to suffer."

Derek O'Donoghue, Kildare Branch

I'm a science teacher. I used to teach and impart knowledge. I'm no longer doing that with this new Junior Cycle.

Student well-being

"Students now have to do nine CBAs in second year and 11 CBAs in third year. In third year, along with 11 CBAs, 14-15 year olds have coursework to finish, assessment tasks in all subjects, mock exams, and a terminal State exam ... There is a significant increase in anxiety levels among adolescents in recent years, resulting in more Junior Cycle students being absent from school on stress grounds than ever before. They are overwhelmed by all the various overlapping, unrelenting deadlines, simply finding them impossible to meet. As a result, many do not come to school."

Adrienne Healy, Dublin North West and Standing Committee region 15

"This [attending oral and practical exams during the Easter break] isn't really voluntary. Teachers are not really volunteering to do this. Technically yes, but music teachers for example will feel obliged to accompany their students during musical practical, so as not to disadvantage their students who are used to their way of playing ... This decision hasn't been made to improve the welfare of students. The reason for this decision is that there is a shortage of teachers to supervise the music exams and the oral exams. That is down to the Department making teaching less attractive, by turning NQTs into LPTs. And that's why there's a shortage. Again, we're having to pick up the costs of what the Department has done."

Chris Hind, Dublin South 2 and Standing Committee Region 13

"If there is a change [to internal assessment at Senior Cycle] to take place, the whole nature of the relationship between the student and the teacher will change and it's going to be very detrimental. Brian Fleming in his report referred to the classroom as a psychic place and we all know what that means. We have to create a positive place, a place to win the trust and confidence of our students. We try to make it a healthy atmosphere where we encourage students to explore ideas. We have to allow them to express their vulnerability and show their weaknesses. We need to ensure that this remains."

Seamus Meskill, Desmond Branch

We have to create a positive place, a place to win the trust and confidence of our students.

VOX POP – POST-COVID PRIORITIES

This year we asked teachers at Convention what they thought the ASTI's priorities should be as we move into a post-pandemic world.



EAMONN DALY,
Good Counsel College, New Ross,
Co. Wexford

– teaches biology and science

The priority should be to raise the level of investment in education to at least the GDP average of the OECD countries.

According to Education at a Glance 2021, in 2018 Ireland ranked last out of 36 developed countries for investment in education. We spent 2.4% of GDP, well below the average of 4.9%. Many of the issues that the ASTI is raising have spending and investment in education as a common denominator, for example, class sizes, pupil-teacher ratios, unequal pay scales, and retention of teachers. The Croke Park, Haddington Road, and Building Momentum Agreements all sought to limit spending and investment in education, yet they increased the workload on teachers. If we invest in education, we will allow increased access to third level, for example from low-income families or disadvantaged areas. The return for the Government is that this will lead to a reduction in social inequality and will help to foster economic growth.

Many of the issues that the ASTI is raising have spending and investment in education as a common denominator.



COLIN LYNCH,
St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar
School, Dublin 8

– teaches business, maths and accounting

The main issue that I think is most important is equal pay, because we've been fighting for that for a long time now and

haven't really made any progress with it. I think it's time to really get that pay parity because it's very unfair on younger members. I also think that Leaving Cert change is very important, making sure that the Government doesn't just make it a cost-cutting exercise. We currently have one of the best education systems in the world, and one of the highest rates of third-level attendance in the world. Multinational corporations state that they're in the country based on our highly qualified, highly skilled workforce. So, although some subjects in Leaving Cert may and do need updating, we need to be careful that we don't move away from a merit-based Leaving Cert, which we currently have, and that we don't disincentivise hard work.



MARGO MCGANN,
St. Augustine's College, Dungarvan,
Co. Waterford

– TY Co-ordinator and teaches business

The big issue for me is the pupil-teacher ratio. With business, you can have 30 students in most classes. With CBAs, and

with proposals for second component pieces for Senior Cycle business, that's just going to be crazy. It will be impossible to have that amount of students in the class, even just to get around to each student. During Covid restrictions, we were down to 20 physical bodies in the classroom, and as a business teacher I really got an idea of what it's like to have only 20 students in a class. As well as that, we will soon have Ukrainian students in our classrooms, and it's a complete injustice to them if they're not getting the time and attention they need. How can they get that time and attention if our class sizes are bursting?



JACINTA MCGARRY,
Kilrush Community School,
Co. Clare

– teaches Leaving Cert chemistry and biology, and Junior Cycle science and maths

The ASTI needs to prioritise ending the two-tier pay scale, and also for increments

to be restored to teachers following our industrial action a few years ago. This will hopefully help to make teaching an attractive profession. I love teaching, and I would like to see some of our good graduates going straight into teaching in Ireland rather than going to Dubai. I would also like to see a really robust consultation process, that listens to the concerns of teachers, with regard to Leaving Cert change. I would like to see the depth of treatment for all subjects at Senior Cycle so that you know exactly how far into a topic you need to teach. I'm not against assessment at Senior Cycle, but I'm definitely against assessing my own students. If you want teachers to assess students, it should be done through the SEC. Our standard is independent, it's fair and it's really highly regarded throughout the world.

During Covid restrictions, we were down to 20 physical bodies in the classroom, and as a business teacher I really got an idea of what it's like to have only 20 students in a class.



ANNEMARIE O'MAHONY,
Carrigaline Community School,
Co. Cork

– teaches maths and geography

Pay inequality is a huge issue. The increased cost of living is currently a big concern, and with pay inequality, a lack of promotional opportunities and problems with posts of responsibility, this is feeding into a recruitment and retention crisis. I also think that internationally we have a wonderful educational reputation. We need to make sure that's not eroded. We need to protect it at all costs. That feeds into the Junior Cycle review. There has to be a study and the findings need to be made public before we drive the Senior Cycle review. Senior Cycle review is necessary, but we have to learn the lessons from the Junior Cycle. We can't just push through because they all feed into each other, and into issues of student and teacher welfare and well-being.

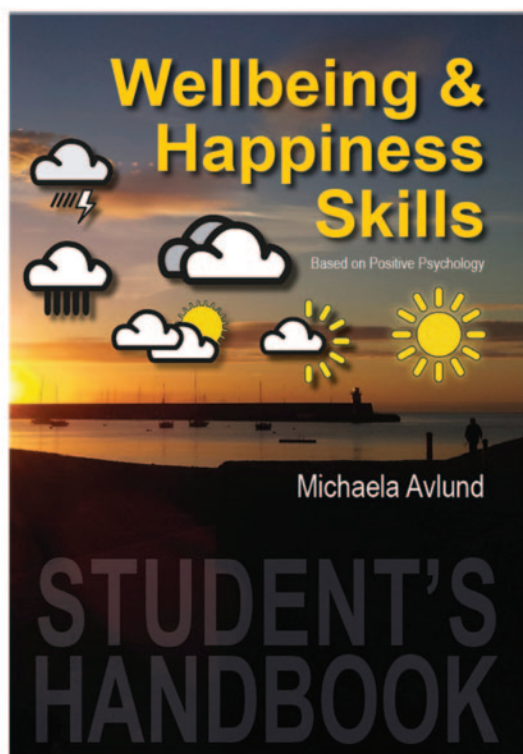
Senior Cycle review is necessary, but we have to learn the lessons from the Junior Cycle.



PHILIP SYNNOTT,
Coolmine Community School, Dublin
15

– teaches history and religion

There needs to be a proper review of the Junior Cycle before any Senior Cycle change is implemented, with proper representation of teachers in the review process, and an examination of the CAO process and the involvement of third-level colleges. I welcome reform, but reform by nature has to change things for the better. Working conditions for teachers need to be addressed to deal with the crisis of recruitment and retention. The two-tier pay and pension scales need to be dealt with. We need a safe workplace. That means we need to be free from assault and harassment, including online abuse. There needs to be increased provision for special needs education and that includes proper resourcing and training of teachers. There's great diversity in Irish society and we have an increase in different cultures and different students coming to our schools, particularly with the Ukrainian refugees, and any refugees. There need to be resources put into supporting them, and supporting teachers in their education.



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MOTIONS DEBATED AT CONVENTION 2022

Every year, hundreds of delegates attend ASTI Annual Convention to debate motions that decide the union's policies for the year to come.

The following resolutions were adopted by Annual Convention 2022:

Motion 5 – Cost of living

That the ASTI, in the negotiations on the successor to Building Momentum, demand cost of living increases in line with inflation. **(Fingal)**

Motion 42 – Teacher qualifications

In light of the current shortage of teachers at second level, that the ASTI campaign, as a matter of urgency, to have a one-year course made available to graduates, to provide them with a qualification to teach in second-level schools. **(Clare)**

Motion 33 – Health and safety

That, in light of the continuing assault of teachers, physically, verbally and online, the ASTI demand that the Department of Education review its policies to ensure the protection of teachers under health and safety legislation. **(Dublin North West)**

Motion 25 – Sick leave

That, as a matter of urgency, the ASTI seek a written assurance from the Department of Education that school management does not require teachers on sick leave to submit work for their classes. **(Drogheda Sean Higgins)**

Motion 41 – PME students

That the ASTI negotiate with the DES so that second-year PME students be paid for all teaching hours worked through the academic year. **(Carbery)**

Motion 14 – Pensions

That as a matter of urgency, the ASTI commission a comprehensive report, assessing the current contributions made under the different pension schemes, with a view to promoting equity for our members. **(Dublin North 1)**

Motion 47 – Leaving Certificate

That the ASTI refuse to engage in any discussion on Leaving Cert reform until a full, open and transparent study of the Junior Cycle has been conducted and its findings made public. **(Desmond)**

Motion 51 – Student well-being

That the ASTI seek that there be no more than one CBA per subject in Junior Cycle in the interest of student well-being. **(Dublin North West)**

Motion 52 – Junior Cycle

That the ASTI pursue a review of the minimum hours per subject at Junior



ASTI members debated a wide range of motions at Annual Convention 2022.

Cycle with the intention of increasing class contact hours to implement the specifications to satisfactory levels. **(Dungarvan)**

Motion 48 – Leaving Certificate assessment

That the ASTI insist that the assessment and grading of the Leaving Certificate remain the sole remit of the State Examinations Commission. **(Desmond)**

Motion 28 – Inspections

That the ASTI insist that teachers should maintain autonomy over the way they teach and be free to determine for themselves the best pedagogical methods for their classes. As such, teachers' methodologies should not be used as a criterion in whole-school and/or subject inspections, and should not be referenced in any subsequent written report or publication. **(Dublin North East)**

Motion 26 – Inspections

That the ASTI negotiate with the Department of Education to ensure that no WSE inspection or subject inspection takes place during the period between the 1st of May and the end of the academic year. **(Drogheda Sean Higgins)**

Motion 24 – Supervision and substitution

That the ASTI negotiate with the Department of Education to allow pregnant teachers opt out of supervision and substitution duties for the duration of their pregnancy. **(Drogheda Sean Higgins)**

Motion 62 – Global solidarity

That the ASTI establish a Global Solidarity Committee. Aims of this committee:

- To raise awareness amongst ASTI members of the challenges faced by teachers and their representative associations across the globe.
- To promote the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4:

'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.'

- To promote the principle of equality in all aspects of education and the teaching profession globally.
- To promote the right to education.
- To promote the rights of workers, especially teachers, and their unions where they are being victimised and/or denied human rights or trade union rights.
- To enable ASTI to express solidarity on humanitarian issues, in the context of global challenges such as world poverty, growing inequality, human rights abuses, denial of trade union rights and climate crisis. (Tuam)

Motion 12 – Posts of responsibility

That the ASTI begin negotiations with the Department of Education to revisit the criteria for selection of candidates for AP1 positions, specifically that some recognition be given for teaching experience/years of service. (Tullamore)

Amendment:

Amend by addition of "and AP2" after "AP1" and before the word "positions". (Tipperary)

Motion 18 – Supervision and substitution

That the ASTI insist that supervision and substitution be uncoupled so that teachers can opt in or out of supervision and/or substitution on an annual basis from September 2023. (Dublin South Central)

Motion 45 – Continuous professional development

That the ASTI resist any attempt by the Department of Education to introduce a policy of out-of-hours CPD. (Dublin North East)

Motion 44 – Vetting

That the ASTI do all in its power to have the changes to the vetting and re-vetting process for teachers reversed, so that only court convictions would be taken into account, as was previously the case. (Dublin North East)

Motion 20 – Leave

That the ASTI enter into discussions with the Department of Education to ensure that any teacher who takes leave for part of a day, only has that part of the day recorded as leave, and that any leave less than two hours be not counted. (Athlone)

Urgent Motion 1: Leaving Certificate

That the ASTI reaffirm its policy that members do not assess their students' work for State Certification purposes. Moreover, the ASTI commits to a comprehensive consultation process with members on all aspects of the announcement on 29th March, 2022, by the Minister for Education, regarding redevelopment of the Senior Cycle. (Standing Committee)

Urgent Motion 2: Leaving Certificate oral and practical examinations

That the ASTI condemn the decision to extend the holding of both oral and practical examinations during the Easter break and at weekends, which was agreed as a temporary crisis measure as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. (Standing Committee)

Motion referred to Standing Committee

Motion 1 – Pay

That the ASTI ballot members with a view to undertaking industrial action, up to and including strike action, starting in September 2022 until the following demands are met:

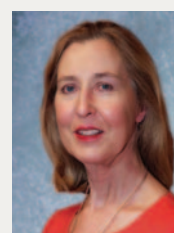
1. The elimination of the post-2011 pay scale and the establishment of one common pay scale for all teachers;
2. A pay rise for all teachers to counter the increasing costs of living within our country;
3. Full repayment of monies lost to teachers for lost and delayed increments imposed by FEMPI;
4. The end of unpaid work currently done under Croke Park and Haddington Road Agreements. (Carlow)

ELECTIONS AT ANNUAL CONVENTION 2022

OFFICERS ELECTED AT CONVENTION



President Elect
Miriam Duggan



Vice President
Geraldine O'Brien



Honorary Treasurer
Pádraig Murphy

COMMITTEES

Steering Committee

Noel Buckley
Niall Duddy
Susie Hall
Máire G. Ní Chiarba
Jimmy Staunton

Mary Lyndon
Michael McGrath
Pádraic McWeeney

Investment Committee

Patrick Collins
Nora Donovan
Tony McGennis
Peter Quinn

Business of CEC Subcommittee

John Byrne
John Conneely
Richard Egan

Global Solidarity Subcommittee

Veronica Lavin
Sinéad Moore
Noelle Moran
Andrew Phelan
Ann Piggott

Rules Committee

Richard Bell
Philip Irwin

Activities and trips resume

Activities and trips are resuming as summer approaches.

The additional light hours and nature in full blossom indicate that summer is everywhere. Waves from the Covid pandemic threaten, but fortunately, the fourth dose of the vaccine has been rolled out to the over 65s and the most vulnerable citizens.

Trips abroad

The Midlands Branch trip to Andalucia was a wonderful success. Much fun and laughter occurred when RSTA members, not part of the Midlands group, found themselves in the same hotel; it all contributed to the overall enjoyment.

Branch activities

Branches are operating following the lifting of restrictions, and forms have been submitted to meet the various deadlines in preparation for the National Conference. Plans are now in place for summer activities.

ASTI Convention

The invitation to attend the ASTI Convention at the Clayton Silver Springs Hotel was much appreciated. The RSTA President thanked the ASTI for continuous support both financially and in pay negotiations to maintain parity with serving teachers, since a teacher's pension is a deferred salary payment. An appeal was



RSTA members on the Midlands Branch trip to Andalucia (from left): Michael and Phil Moriarty (Athlone), Cathal Reynolds (Mayo), and Rosemary Kiernan, Breda Keatly and Bernie Warren (Midlands).

made to all branches to encourage retiring colleagues to join their local RSTA branch, and to participate in both the social events and administrative work.

RSTA Annual Conference AGM

The Annual Conference, which was postponed on two occasions, took place from May 3-5 at the Brehon Hotel, Killarney. Solidarity with the Ukrainian people was expressed at the start of the Conference. An Oíche Cheoil and the Waterbus tour made the occasion memorable for both members and guests.

ARPS

The RSTA is part of the Alliance of Retired Public Servants (ARPS) and part of the network working to influence the Industrial Relations Act 2021. If the next stages of the bill are passed, it will give retired teachers a voice on pension issues. The RSTA representative will endeavour to progress this matter.

Bain sult as aimsir an tSamhraidh.

RSTA membership application/renewal

Name:

Address:

Home phone:

Mobile:

Email:

RSTA branch:

Annual subscription: €24
Annual renewal date: September 1

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

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

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

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

Standing order set-up form

To: The Manager (Bank name and full address)

I hereby authorise and request you to DEBIT my account:

Account name/s:

IBAN

BIC

And to credit the account of:

RETIRED SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

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

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

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

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

Member name

Signature: Date: ____/____/20____

Childline now offering anxiety supports



Anxiety and difficulty coping were among the topics spoken about most often by young people who turned to Childline for support in 2021. To support young people, parents and carers with experience of anxiety, Childline is now offering free guided digital supports:

- the 'Space from Anxiety' programme is designed to assist young people aged 14-18 who experience low to moderate anxiety by sharing techniques and tools they can use to help them cope with any challenges that come their way, and
- the 'Supporting an Anxious Teen' programme is designed to support parents and carers of young people aged 12-18 who experience anxiety.

Developed by SilverCloud, the programmes are based on the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and incorporate mindfulness practices. They are accessible and have proven clinical outcomes. Participants have spoken of the powerful impact they have had on their well-being, or on that of their child or young person.

For more information, see <https://www.ispcc.ie/guided-digital-programmes/>

Delivery of these programmes is supported by the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention, as part of Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide and The Community Foundation for Ireland: RTÉ Does Comic Relief: Adapt and Respond Grant.

IDEA Annual Conference 2022

The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) Annual Conference 2022 will focus on the theme of 'The Future of Development Education' and will take place from June 21-23. This will be an opportunity to explore what the future of development education, also known as global citizenship education, could be, including where we are currently, what changes we need to make as a sector to respond to what is happening around us, and how we can increase the impact of development education in Ireland. Panellists will speak on issues such as development education in the broader educational context, power relations and racism, and tackling controversial issues, and a range of workshops will enable participants to explore these issues on a practical level. Participants will also have the opportunity to discuss the issues raised and reflect on what they mean for them as educators.

You can find more information about the conference here:
www.ideaonline.ie

RCSI Centre for Positive Psychology and Health

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) Centre for Positive Psychology and Health is offering a free online course on positive psychology and lifestyle medicine entitled 'The Science of Health and Happiness for Young People'. This course is tailored for 12-18 year olds and consists of 10 pre-recorded lectures and one bonus lecture.

Sessions include growth mindsets, whole person health, positive emotions and positive practices of motivation, exam management, regulating anxiety and, time management. The course also examines happiness throughout the life cycle, and shares strategies aimed at fostering health and character strength in adolescence. All of the sessions are pre-recorded, so can be delivered to students by teachers in the classroom setting. Each lecture lasts approximately 40 minutes to facilitate school timetables. To support students' learning and development, additional resources will also be provided.

Research undertaken during the pandemic has shown that young people have the capacity to leverage challenges to grow, and with support can continue to thrive in uncertain times. This programme aims to support young people to flourish and achieve their optimal potential.

The link to register your school can be found on the RCSI website at: www.rcsi.com/positivepsychology
For further information, please direct queries to Grace Guinan at CPPH@rcsi.ie



The Student Enterprise Programme is a FREE education initiative run by the Network of Local Enterprise Offices in Ireland. Over 1,300 students have taken part in the Dublin City Programme alone in recent years!

Through a series of FREE workshops, over an 8-month duration, students will experience everything a real-life entrepreneur would from coming up with their business idea, to marketing, sales and report writing.

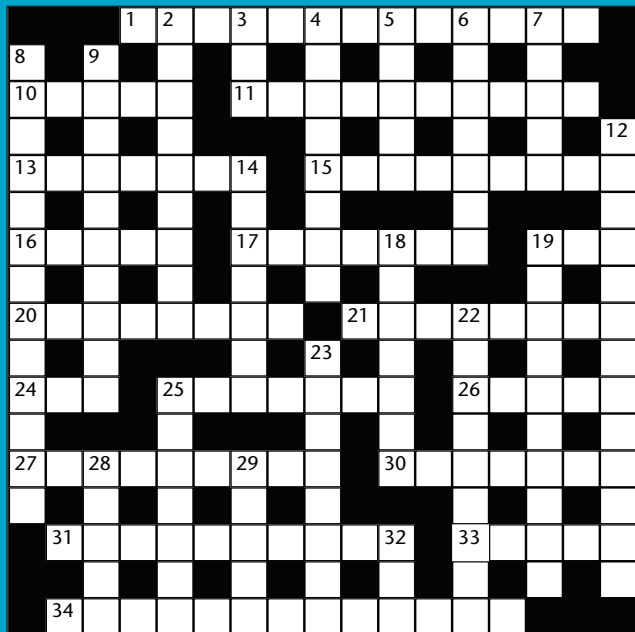
The Local Enterprise Office Dublin City wants to encourage young entrepreneurs in the Dublin City region, to plan, start and grow businesses by providing mentoring, training and networking opportunities so get in touch today!



Óifig Fiontair Áitiúil
Local Enterprise Office

Comhairle Cathrach
Bráile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

Win €250



ACROSS

1. Your height is measured thus. (4,4,2,3)
10. Overturn, flip, invert. (5)
11. Loose curls could be dull and faded. (10)
13. I'd spent the small sum of money. (7)
15. Man of the cloth. (9)
16. Western part of Hispaniola. (5)
17. Spanned a gap. (7)
19. A gentleman never asks about this. (3)
20. Release, slacken, relax. (8)
21. Fake diamante could be lively and active. (8)
24. Croak? Sounds that way, for a colour. (3)
25. Transparent sheet slid away from elasticated. (7)
26. Silent film actor Harold ... (5)
27. Surgical instrument used to hold back the edges of a wound. (9)
30. Cooking device with sense of humour. (3,4)
31. Wind instrument blown outside. (10)
33. Dead agent saying aphorism. (5)
34. A chiropodist might do this when pairing corns. (5,4,4)

DOWN

2. It's on the house and keeps out the rain. (5,4)
3. Irishman's son. (3)
4. Composed of elements drawn from various sources. (8)
5. Dunchead swaps hand for two clubs! (5)
6. Indebted, compelled, or duty bound. (7)
7. 1970s US serial killer: Son ... (2,3)
8. Meets with famous people and brushes off dandruff. (4,9)
9. 180 degrees of arc. (10)
12. Pray, or paint skirting, thus. (2,6,5)
14. Fiasco, ignominious failure. (7)
18. Chinese perennial herb. (7)
19. Style of art and decoration popular in the 1890s. (3,7)
22. Sweet drink from quivering cow! (9)
23. Method of execution formerly used in Spain. (8)
25. You could be this when Dracula's finished with you! (7)
28. Charlatan going to dance. (5)
29. Musical time. (5)
32. Participant in endless competitive daily grind. (3)

Did you miss?

ASTI response on Senior Cycle
Convention debates

10
22

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The winner will receive €250 in One4All vouchers.

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

Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: ASTIR Crossword No. 2203,
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, June 24, 2022

Réiteach do Chrosfhocal No. 2202

LEIDEANNA TRASNA

1. Detroit
5. Gangaid
9. Curaclaim
10. Dul ar
11. Barróg
12. Larnach
14. ISOI
15. Maoithneas
19. Eurotunnel
20. GCSE
21. Náisiún
24. Giotto
27. Ard-Rí
28. Bladhaire
29. Leannta
30. Horatio

LEIDEANNA SÍOS

1. Dick
2. Tarracóir
3. Oscar
4. Teanglann
5. Gamal
6. Nádúrtha
7. Allta
8. Dorchester
13. Éigeandáil
16. Imeaglach
17. Eachtaint
18. Stáisiún
22. India
23. Nabla
25. Odhar
26. Lego

COMHGHAIRDEAS

Comhghairdeas le buaitheoir
Chrosfhocail 2202:

Pádraig J. MacCormaic, Scoil Na
mBráithre, Sraid Shéamais, Cill
Chainnigh.
Cumman Cill Chainnigh



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