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Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland

Annual Convention 2023



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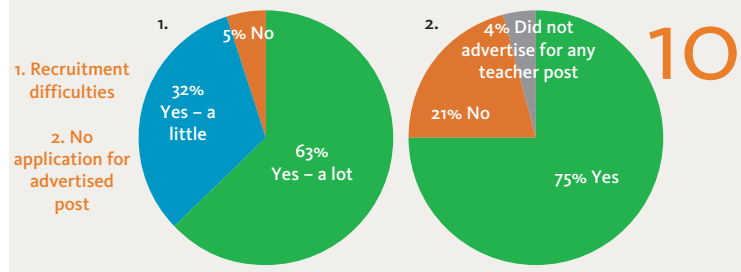
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Members can email astirfeedback@asti.ie or text 087 934 9956.

An extraordinary year

As I write my last editorial for *ASTIR*, I am reflecting on the whirlwind that this year has been. I realised early on that a key function of my presidency would be to ensure that our house was in order to face the challenges of Senior Cycle change and we achieved a lot in terms of policy development and policy affirmation during the course of the year.

We held a special CEC in October where we debated and assessed our policy direction on the proposed changes to Senior Cycle. We asked branches to hold meetings to encourage our members to express their views, informed by a special *Nuacht* on the topic. The fruits of that work were evident in the motions submitted to Convention, many of which centred on the theme of preserving standards of education.

Through our experience of Junior Cycle, we learned that we truly are stronger together and had a very positive experience of working closely with our colleagues in the TUI. We held a joint ASTI/TUI meeting for our subject representatives in November, giving members an opportunity to meet, familiarise themselves with joint policies and hopefully enable them to work well together at committee level.

We also held a joint meeting with An Gréasán and Inote, and together issued a press release on our belief that Paper 1 in both subjects ought not take place at the end of fifth year. As you know, the Minister has deferred that decision.

I don't have space to write about all that was achieved this year but must draw attention to our defence of the terms and conditions of music teachers who were expected to attend music practicals during their Easter break. The ASTI played a strong role in achieving the reversal of that decision. I must also mention our Education Conference. The selection of speakers – some with very different views from ours – showed that we don't exist in an echo chamber, but rather are willing to hear other points of view as a way of challenging our own.

Much remains to be done – on Senior Cycle, on recruitment and retention, which continue to be burning issues, and on the paucity and workload of middle management posts in schools, to say nothing of the lack of any real appeal structure. Our real challenge is the sustainability of our profession.

Yet my experience as your President this year has made me hopeful. I have always been a proud ASTI member, and the care and genuine concern I have seen our people offer each other and our passionate belief in education make me so glad to be a member of our union. I would like to thank our amazing staff in Head Office who treat achieving the impossible as a matter of course. I'd like to thank our outgoing Immediate Past President, Eamon Dennehy, our vibrant Standing Committee and welcome our new Vice-President, Donal Cremin. I would also like to say a special thanks to our President-Elect, Geraldine O'Brien, who has been a constant source of strength and support to me this year. Finally, I would like to thank you, the members, for trusting me with this position, which has been the honour of my life. I wish you all so well and know that, no matter what the challenges ahead, you will always find the help you need from our union.



Public sector pay agreement

Thoughts are now turning to the negotiation of a replacement to the extended Building Momentum public sector pay agreement, which concludes at the end of this year. It is expected that discussions on a new agreement will commence in the coming months.

The rapid growth of inflation over the past period has substantially undermined the living standards of all workers, including teachers, and this is set to be the dominant factor in the discussions.

Key ASTI objectives in such talks will include securing a pay increase for all teachers to counter the increasing cost of living, the end of unpaid work currently done under the Croke Park and Haddington Road Agreements, and maintenance of pension parity between retired teachers and serving members, among others. Several of the other issues we will pursue emanate from the motions adopted at our recent Annual Convention, an event that features prominently in this edition of *ASTIR*. Testimonies to the enormous stressors our members are enduring were aired at great length. An array of crises, be it housing shortages, recruitment and retention, or the cost of living, have generated a perfect storm of worrisome intensity. It drives at the heart of the sustainability of our profession.

Experience teaches us that the Government is likely to approach these negotiations offering a mixed bag of salary increases together with provision of budgetary supports and taxation measures, all of which public sector workers will have to consider in subsequent ballots. The ASTI will do all in our power to advance all of our objectives.

Teacher unity

The ASTI and TUI have opened discussions on the prospect of achieving teacher unity by way of amalgamating our two unions. For decades, this has been an objective of both unions but has proved elusive for a variety of reasons. Motions have been passed down the years effectively asserting that the prospect would enable the formation of a stronger, larger union, better able to protect, represent and improve the terms and conditions of all our members.

The ASTI is engaging in the discussions in good faith and in the context that both parties agree that there are no preconditions.

Scoping discussions on the issue commenced in December 2022. All that has been done to date has been to try to list the synergies that would flow from unity and the barriers that would have to be overcome if a proposal is to advance. Some of the issues include governance, electoral processes, staffing, policy alignment, due diligence, the complexion of a prospective executive structure, membership categories, the fact that the TUI has a third-level grouping among its membership, and so on. The list is extensive.

If a proposal is developed, it will require comprehensive and substantial membership consultation within both unions. Ballots of members would have to be held. The chances of success are difficult to gauge. Standing Committee and CEC will be kept abreast of any developments as they happen.



ASTI attends #Gaeilge4All protest

The ASTI attended the #Gaeilge4All protest outside Leinster House in March, alongside groups including second-level students, parents, the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Irish Second-level Students' Union (ISSU), the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI), and An Gréasán. The aim of the #Gaeilge4All campaign is to strengthen and defend the Irish language in the education system, and to ensure that every student can have a positive, meaningful, and fulfilling Irish language learning experience from preschool to third level.

The campaign states that a policy framework for Irish language education must take a holistic, big-picture view, setting out a coherent vision for Irish language teaching, learning, and assessment at each stage of the education system and beyond. Such a policy must ensure that any changes or developments in curriculum and assessment at a particular level or in a specific context are not piecemeal or disjointed, but that they are coherently aligned with the broader long-term vision.

The campaign also believes that any policy should make use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to support transparency, continuity, and progression in Irish language learning from each curricular stage to the next.



Pictured at the recent Gaeilge4All protest were (from left): Geraldine O'Brien (then ASTI Vice President), Bláthnaid Ní Ghréacháin (CEO of Gaeloideachas), and Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary).

The campaign is calling on the Minister for Education to develop and implement an integrated and coherent policy for Irish in the education system from early childhood education to third level. This policy is to be based on a consultation process that includes submissions from the public, public meetings, stakeholder meetings, etc.

For more information see <https://gaeilge4all.ie/>

Additional once-off payments to examiners of written papers

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) has announced additional once-off payments to examiners of written papers for Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied, and Junior Certificate papers in 2023.

This enhancement to the payment rates comes in the form of a 2023 Written Examiners Recruitment and Retention Incentive Payment. The additional payment amount is €900 for Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied written examiners, and an additional €700 for Junior Cycle written examiners. According to the SEC:

- based on the average assignments of scripts, Junior Cycle examiners will typically earn between €4,858 and €5,010 depending on the subject marked, and
- based on the average assignments of scripts, Leaving Certificate examiners will typically earn between €7,721 and €10,844 depending on the subject marked.

The ASTI continues to seek increases in payments and improvements in conditions for those contracted to the SEC. This work is very important in the context of pressures for teachers to correct their own students for State examination purposes. Therefore, the ASTI would encourage members to consider undertaking this work where it is practicable and attractive for them to do so.

Check the SEC recruitment website secexaminer.ie for current vacancies.

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Limerick South retirement event



The ASTI Limerick South Branch recently held a retirement event in the Clayton Hotel, Limerick. The event was attended by retirees Declan Crotty, Joe Monahan, Kathleen Sheehan, Karin Fleming, Gemma O'Donoghue, Noirin Organ, Caroline Waters, Maureen O'Brien, Nuala McGann, Orla Colgan, Noelle Cullen, Susan Garrihy, Laura O'Donoghue, Mark O'Sullivan, Philomena Enright, Yvonne McGann, Julie O'Connor, and Norma Ward. Also present on the night were Valerie O'Shea (Limerick South

Chairperson), Johanna Healy (Limerick South Hon. Secretary/Treasurer), Ger O'Donoghue (Limerick South Hon. Organiser), Tony McKernan (Limerick South Equality Officer), John Conneely (Standing Committee Representative Region 4), John Hurley (former ASTI President), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Miriam Duggan (ASTI President), Geraldine O'Brien (then ASTI Vice President), Brian Burke (Industrial Relations Official), and Pádraig Murphy (ASTI Honorary Treasurer).

Laois Branch retirement event



The Laois Branch held a retirement party in the Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise in April. Back row (from left): Joan Colbert (Laois Branch Chairperson), Eamon Dennehy (Laois Branch Secretary), Diarmaid de Paor (ASTI Deputy General Secretary), Dolores Healy, Catherine Mc Carthy, Seamus Mc Wey, Michael Scully, Ger Flanagan, Kieran Hogan, and Pádraig Murphy (ASTI Honorary Treasurer). Front row (from left): Mary Hogan, Margaret Fitzpatrick, Julie Kirwan, Mary Delaney, Margaret Keane, and Margaret Miller.

Dublin South West retirement event



Máire Collins receives flowers from Stephen Burns and John Woods of Dublin South West branch to mark her retirement.

Dublin South West Branch held an event to mark the retirement of Máire Collins from ASTI Head Office. Máire was a teacher and active member of the Dublin South West Branch for many years before taking on the role of Industrial Relations Official in Head Office. She retired from ASTI Head Office earlier this year.

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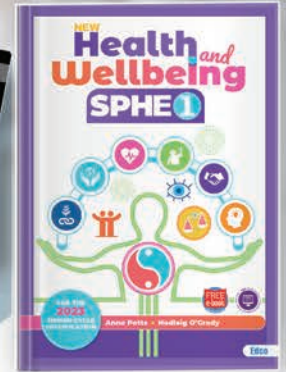
JUNIOR CYCLE



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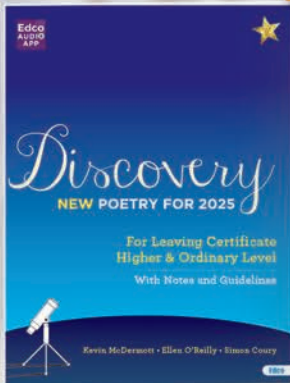


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JC SPHE

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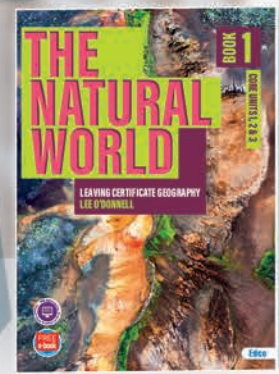
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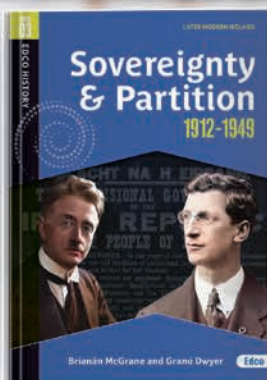


LC Irish HL



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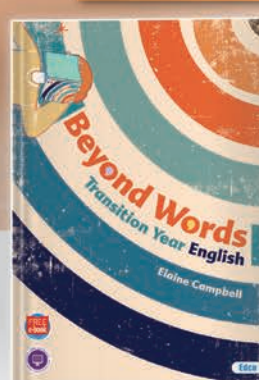
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Pink and Blue Power detects three cancer cases



The ASTI and Cornmarket's Pink and Blue Power campaign 2022 detected three cases of cancer in participating teachers. The programme assessed members of the ASTI Salary Protection

Scheme for either breast or prostate cancer. Through the programme, two cases of prostate cancer were diagnosed, along with one case of breast cancer.

Statistics recently released from the programme show that of the 4,756 people invited for an appointment, 1,158 booked one. Of those, 251 people were referred on for further examinations and 28 biopsies were taken.

Feedback from those who participated was positive, with 99% saying the programme was excellent, very good or good. As a result of the programme, 92% of women said they felt more confident checking themselves for the signs of breast cancer.

To see more about Pink and Blue Power, visit: www.cornmarket.ie/pink-blue-power/

FÉILTE 2023



FÉILTE 2023 will take place on October 7, 2023, in Holy Family School, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. FÉILTE is the teaching profession's annual festival, which celebrates the excellent


work that teachers do in their classrooms every day. Teachers from primary, post-primary, and further education gather to share their passion for teaching, engage in mutual learning, and to be inspired by colleagues and guest speakers alike.

The programme of teacher-led events includes live panel discussions, showcases, workshops, and much more. Many elements of FÉILTE will also be live-streamed on the day.

FÉILTE is a professional learning activity that can be used as part of Droichead and can also count towards Croke Park hours at your principal's discretion.

Visit www.teachingcouncil.ie and the Teaching Council social media pages for updates and to apply for a ticket.

THE RIGHT FOCUS




The Right Focus is a documentary film-making competition for students of any age in post-primary schools.

PRIZES


Prizes include individual and school awards. The overall winner, chosen at Trócaire's grand final in May 2024, will get the chance to spend the day in a real studio, creating their own global justice documentary.

For further information, please visit trocaire.org/our-work/educate/the-right-focus or contact stephen.farley@trocaire.org.

To sign up for 2023/24, including workshops from Trócaire on global justice and documentary film-making, go to: forms.gle/kgpG1z5JoUUH61D89



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Convention generations



Maths teachers and daughter and mother, Órlagh Nic Eoin (left, Dublin North East Branch) and Maureen McKeon (Carrick-on-Shannon Branch), at Convention 2023. Maureen has been coming to Convention since 1993 and is delighted to now be able to attend with her daughter.

Global solidarity



The ASTI Global Solidarity Committee held an event called 'Protecting the Right to Education' at Convention 2023. Alexander Brock, a recently returned Ecumenical Accompanier with EAPPI, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, spoke about protecting the right to education in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Dr Salome Mbugua, CEO of AkiDwA – the Migrant Women's Network Ireland – spoke about combating child labour in cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Supporting LGBTQI+ members



The ASTI LGBTQI+ group held an event at Convention that was open to all members, particularly LGBTQI+ ASTI members. If you are interested in becoming involved in the ASTI LGBTQI+ group, please email lgbtqi@asti.ie in strictest confidence. Pictured are (from left): Moira Leydon (ASTI Assistant General Secretary), Natalie Doyle-Bradley, Sarah-Beth Doyle-Bradley, John Sims, Carl Brennan, Conall Ó Dufaigh, Mark Forde, Orla O'Callaghan, John Byrne, Noelle Moran, Daniel Howard, Eamon Daly, Máire Ní Chonchubhair, Eamon Dennehy, Gloria Helen, Richard Bell, Marina Carlin, James Turbitt, Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Philip Synnott, Donal Cremin (ASTI Vice President), Maura Greaney, and Eimear Holly. Front row: Emma, Gearóid and Muireann holding the flag.

WORKLOAD, PAY IMPACTING ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION – ASTI SURVEY

A recent ASTI/REDC survey reveals the extent of the staffing and recruitment crisis in second-level schools.

Three-quarters of school principals have reported that they received no applications for an advertised teaching post or posts during the current school year, according to a survey carried out by the ASTI/REDC. The survey indicates that there are unfilled teaching vacancies in almost half of all second-level schools.

The survey of teachers and school leaders was undertaken in March. Teachers who participated in the survey identified four key drivers behind the teacher supply crisis:

- teaching is no longer viewed as an attractive profession
- better remuneration in other careers
- the legacy of unequal pay for teachers, which was introduced in 2010, and
- the housing crisis, which is causing teachers to emigrate.

Some 81% of principals/deputy principals surveyed said that they had employed at least one unqualified teacher during this school year. Other strategies used by schools to deal with teacher supply issues included delegating additional work to teachers in the school and reassigning special education needs teachers to mainstream classes. Almost one-fifth of schools were forced to remove a subject/subjects from their curriculum.

The survey also found that recruitment problems have been compounded by the non-availability of substitute teachers. Since September 2022, almost 90% of schools have had situations where no substitute teachers were available to fill teacher absences due to sick leave and other short-term absences.

Impact on students

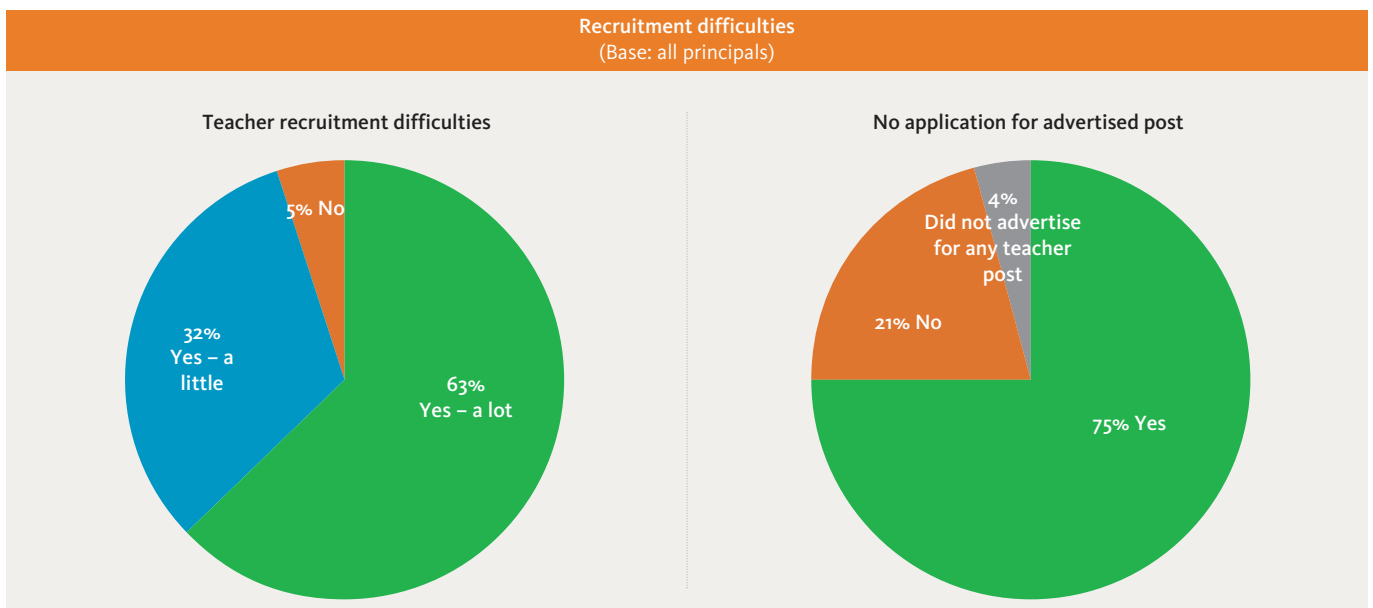
Commenting on the survey findings, ASTI President Miriam Duggan said: “We are deeply concerned about the impact of teacher shortages on our students, on their education and on their future lives. Today’s survey reveals that schools are being forced to use unqualified teachers, to divert resources away from students with special education needs, and to drop subjects from the curriculum. This is shocking. Teachers’ workload is also adversely impacted by teacher shortages. Teachers are being asked to teach subjects they are not qualified to teach, to supervise additional classes, and to change their rotas at short notice. This invariably causes extra work and stress”.

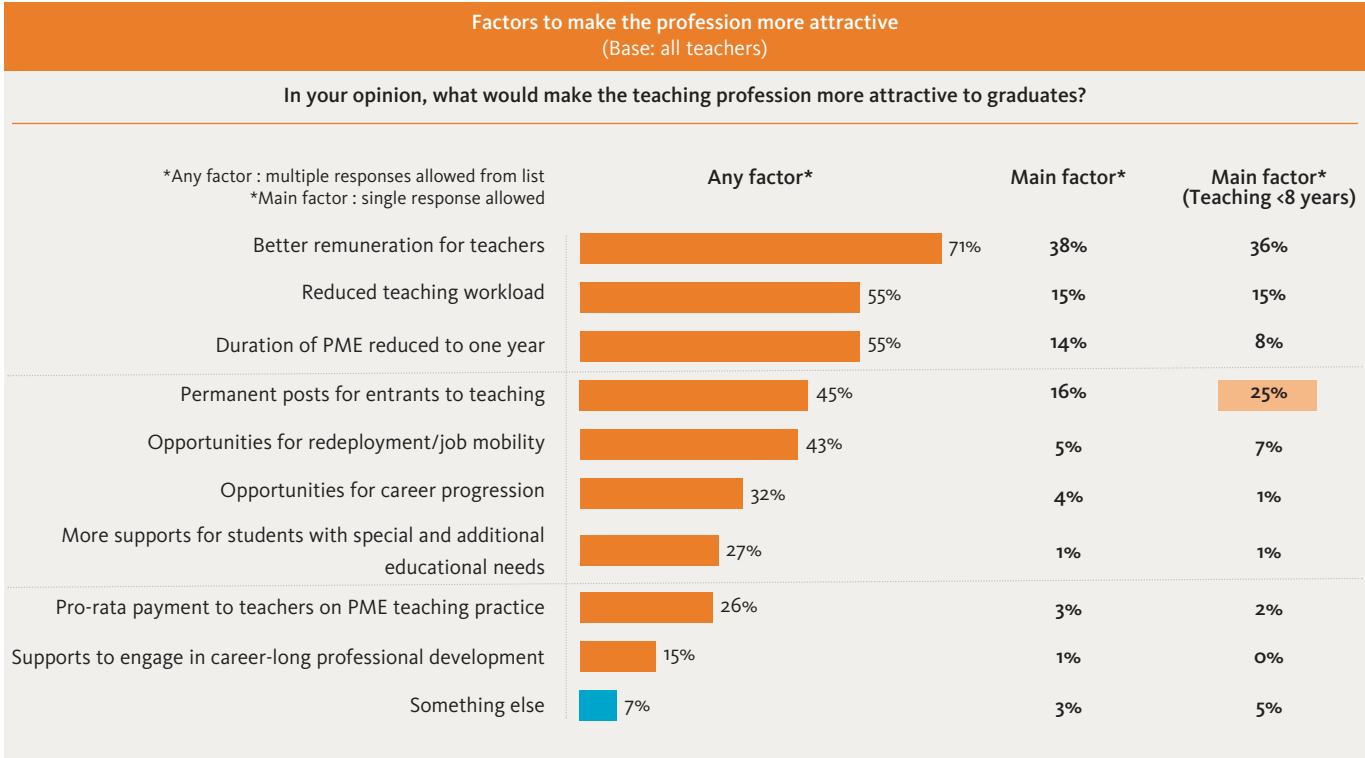
Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction among teachers continues to fall: only 44% of teachers said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their job compared to 50% in 2022 and 63% in 2021. More than three-quarters said that they have considered leaving the profession, with over one-quarter frequently considering doing so.

Teachers believe that better pay, permanent posts for recent entrants, and reduced workload are required in order to make teaching a more attractive career choice and help curb these teacher shortages.

Download the full survey at <https://www.asti.ie/document-library/asti-survey-2023/>







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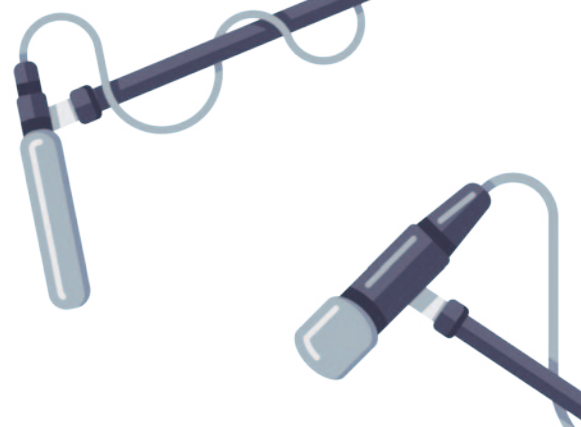


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TEACHER ISSUES



“In the past it would have been conceivable and almost expected that on my wages I would not only be able to afford a house but also to support a family. The facts on the ground are simply that that is no longer a reality. Myself and my partner have been living together for about five years. We are in a thankfully relatively affordable one-bedroom flat. When we first went for that flat our landlord was surprised to see a couple who were both professionals going for a one-bedroom apartment. It’s manageable but saving is difficult on top of everyday expenses. You’re kind of trapped in this perpetual thing as you were in your early to mid-twenties. You can pay for your rent; you can pay for your living expenses just about. After that, you try to save if you can. Most of my friends are in that situation and very few have broken out of it.”

Conall Ó Dufaigh, ASTI member and teacher in Coláiste Ráithín, Bray, Prime Time, RTÉ 1, March 30, 2023

“Ní fiú post a thabhairt do mhúinteoir má tá tú ag caint faoi b’fhéidir cúig huaire i scoil amháin agus ceithre huaire i scoil eile. Ní post lánaimseartha é sin. Is é an dearcadh atá ag an ASTI ná go gcaithfidh an tAire Oideachais barántas a thabhairt go mbeidh post ceart lánaimseartha agus post buan ag gach múinteoir.”

ASTI Assistant General Secretary Moira Leydon speaking on a pilot scheme where secondary schools will share teachers, Nuacht TG4, April 11, 2023

“We have been warning about a recruitment and retention crisis for years now. It began with unequal pay for new entrant teachers. In addition, you have a two-year qualification to do, it’s called a PME and that’s both cost and time prohibitive because it can take up to six years to become a teacher. So, that’s an issue. There’s another issue where teachers, when they join the profession, are not being offered permanent positions. In most jobs after a year, you can look at a degree of permanency. In teaching, you’d have to be in your third year. So, that’s prohibitive as well.”

Miriam Duggan, ASTI President, Morning Ireland, RTÉ Radio 1, April 11, 2023

“The survey we released last week identified that 81% of principals had been forced to use unqualified teachers in the school this year. Three-quarters of schools had no applications for advertised posts. One in five schools have dropped a subject. Special education needs teachers are being reassigned to teach mainstream classes. So, that’s the backdrop to which we will be discussing the business this week at our conference.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary, Newstalk Breakfast, Newstalk, April 11, 2023

“According to the Minister, there are a few tenets of Leaving Cert Cycle reform and these are to empower students to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, lift the students’ experience and build on what’s strong in our current system, and embed well-being and reduce stress levels for students. We would argue very strongly that any attempt to hold high-stakes examinations in fifth year would not support any of these.”

Enda Tourish, ASTI member, News, Newstalk, Northern Sound FM, April 13, 2023

“Given that mortgages are based on three-and-a-half times your salary, you’re not getting much for that at the moment...Every now and then I go and have a look at Daft.ie. Even if I wanted to move out to Ashbourne or Ratoath, it’s still not affordable. I’m in a fortunate position, living at home. I’m teaching in the same school I went to. In that sense, I am quite fortunate to have a job just five minutes around the corner. But when it comes to buying a home, it isn’t on the horizon.”

Keith Rooney, ASTI member who is living with his parents, Irish Independent, April 10, 2023



SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOL STEWARDS

School stewards are a vital contact between ASTI Head Office and the teachers in their schools.



A school steward training event held on World Teachers' Day 2022. School steward training takes place every autumn.

School stewards are elected each May by staff in their school and are an important contact between the ASTI and its members. The duties of the school steward include organising ASTI meetings for members, distributing ASTI literature and information to members, and conducting school-based ballots.

Rachael Slater was a school steward in Scoil Muire agus Padraig, Co. Mayo, for the 2022-2023 school year. Her school follows a rota system for the role, with a different member acting as school steward each year. Initially, Rachael was apprehensive about what would be required of her as school steward. She said: "To be honest, I was a bit unsure about taking on the role. Like most teachers, I have a heavy enough workload, so I wasn't sure about taking on more work".

However, with support from the previous school steward, Rachael found the role quite manageable. She said: "The previous steward went through it all with me and it wasn't too difficult really. The main things were to make sure I had the list of members in the school and to pass on relevant information to them. I organised a union meeting each term and provided support for staff when issues arose".

Recruitment is another important part of the role, as the school steward is often the first contact a new teacher will have with the ASTI. It is advised that school stewards approach newly appointed teachers as soon as possible. Rachael said: "I made sure to remind new teachers about the benefits of joining the ASTI and sent them the link so that they could join online".

Support for school stewards

Acting as school steward may seem daunting to those who worry about their level of knowledge about teachers' rights and conditions, or ASTI campaigns. However, support is available from ASTI Head Office and from elected representatives. The ASTI also holds a number of school steward training sessions each year.

Rachael said: "There is a lot of support available. When staff in my school had questions, I contacted ASTI Head Office, and Breda Lynch, Industrial Relations Official for my area, sent me back the relevant information. I also had support from Róisín Doyle, the Standing Committee representative for my region, who set up a WhatsApp group for school stewards in the region. This helped me a lot in my role as it kept me up to date about what was going on".

She continued: "This year has made me a lot more aware of the supports that are there for us. If I have any problems in the future, I know the support is there from Head Office and elected reps, and I know who to contact. I've become more involved in my branch. I've realised branch meetings are really important, to talk to teachers from other schools and find out how things are done in their schools". Reflecting on her year as school steward, Rachael said: "It's so important to have a school steward in every school. If there is no school steward in the school, it really weakens the union's position in the school. To get the most benefits out of being part of a union, we need to have a union presence in the school and so it's essential that there are people willing to take on the role".

For more information about the role of school steward see <https://www.asti.ie/about-asti/structure/school-stewards/>

THE NEED FOR A NEW TEMPLATE FOR DESIGNING SYLLABI

In this article, Dr Declan Kennedy summarises some of the main problems that have been highlighted by teachers, academics, and professional bodies about the flawed template of syllabus design being implemented by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Introduction

The need for a new template for designing syllabi in Ireland was highlighted in the Hyland report, ‘The design of Leaving Certificate science syllabi in Ireland: an international comparison’, by Prof. Áine Hyland, Emeritus Professor of Education, UCC (2014). While the Hyland Report was commissioned by the Irish Science Teachers’ Association (ISTA), the key points of the report are applicable to all subject areas.

A letter sent to the ISTA in 2013 by Dr Anne Looney, the Chief Executive of the NCCA at the time, is reproduced on page 69 of the Hyland Report. In this letter, Dr Looney states that: “We don’t intend to include ‘depth of treatment’ and/or ‘range of subject knowledge’ in the new specifications for the sciences or for other subjects in Senior Cycle”.

This statement sent shock waves through all of us with experience in studying and researching the role of learning outcomes in curriculum design. The ‘learning outcomes only’ approach is deeply flawed, as teachers need a lot more detail than a list of learning outcomes in order to successfully implement a syllabus in the classroom.

Why do teachers need a detailed syllabus for successful implementation of the syllabus in the classroom?

When designing a syllabus within a learning outcomes framework, there must be alignment between three factors: (i) the learning outcomes, (ii) the teaching and learning activities, and (iii) the assessment. Biggs (2005) referred to this as constructive alignment (**Figure 1**).

The learning outcomes only approach to syllabus design makes it impossible for teachers to successfully implement a syllabus without having details on the other two corners of the triangle shown in **Figure 1**. In other words, learning outcomes must be linked to the teaching and learning activities, as well as to the assessment. It is not the role of the teacher to interpret or unpack learning outcomes as was recommended to teachers in the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) programmes at Junior Cycle level. This interpretation is the responsibility of those who design the syllabus and must be written into the syllabus. Without detailed guidance on all three areas shown in **Figure 1**, a learning outcomes only approach results in a half-baked

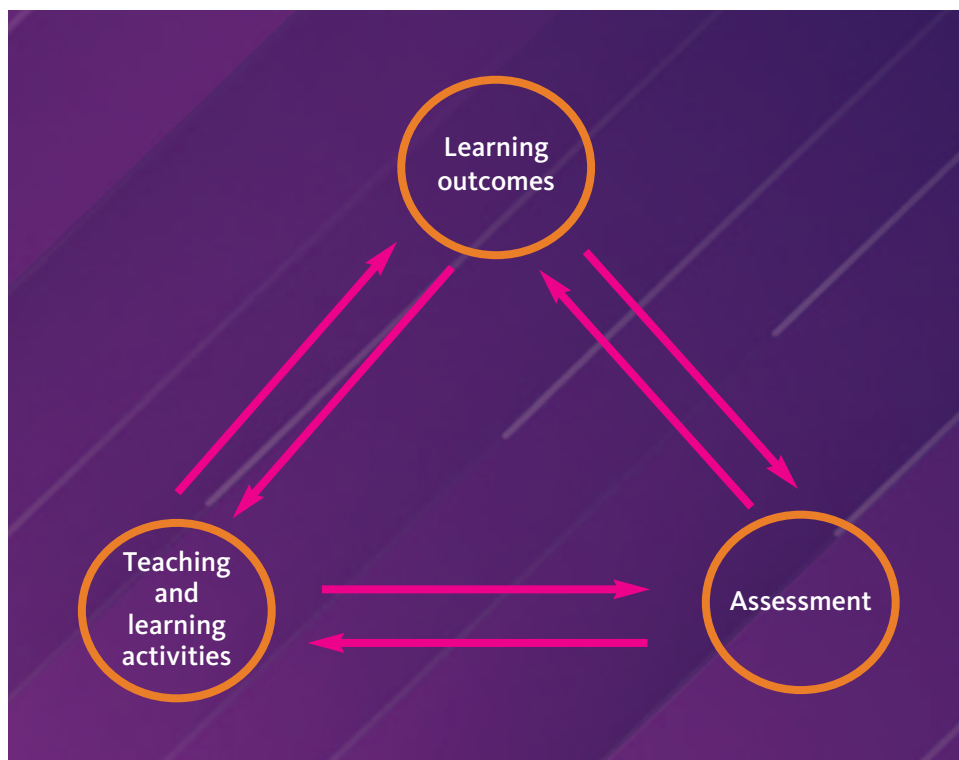


FIGURE 1: The three areas outlined here are all interlinked and must be embedded in any syllabus that is designed within a learning outcomes framework.

syllabus in which each teacher is expected to be the arbiter of the depth to which each topic is to be taught. For example, the new Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science syllabus (examined for the first time in 2021), is designed around a learning outcomes only template. Therefore, it is not surprising to find the following quotation from a teacher in the report of the Irish Agricultural Science Teachers' Association (IASTA 2021): "I am teaching a topic on the Agricultural Science specification at the moment and I don't know if I should be spending two months on the topic, two weeks, two days or two hours on it".

This problem would never have occurred if the Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science syllabus had constructive alignment.

The 'learning outcomes only' approach is deeply flawed, as teachers need a lot more detail than a list of learning outcomes in order to successfully implement a syllabus in the classroom.

What evidence has emerged that the learning outcomes only template is flawed for designing Junior Cycle syllabi and the recently introduced Leaving Certificate syllabi?

A huge body of evidence has emerged from research carried out by third-level academics (Hyland 2015, Childs 2020), professional organisations such as the ISTA (2019), the IASTA (2019, 2021), and An Gréasán (Irish language teachers' association 2021). In addition, further evidence has emerged in a report published by 14 Irish language organisations (2021), a report published by the ASTI (2022), and also a report published by the Oireachtas Committee on Education (2022). It is not possible in this short article to summarise the findings of all of the above, but a summary may be found in a more detailed article (Hyland and Kennedy, 2023).

What is the difference between a syllabus and a specification?

In this paper, the term 'syllabus' has been used instead of the term 'specification', as it has greater clarity and is the more commonly used term at international level. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2002) defines the term syllabus as "a statement or outline of the subjects covered by a course of teaching; a programme of study".

In the *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* (1995) the word specification is defined as "a detailed precise description of something (e.g., a building or car) especially in the form of a plan or proposal".

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2002) defines specification as "an explicit or detailed enumeration or statement ... a document drawn up by the applicant for a patent, describing the construction and use of his or her invention ...".

Note the use of words such as 'explicit', 'detailed', and 'precise' to describe the term specification.

In the UK, the change from using the term 'syllabus' to 'specification' took place around the Curriculum 2000 reforms. In keeping with the meaning of the term specification, the new specifications in the UK contain the syllabus with additional guidance on the scope of the content that will be assessed, clarifications on depth of treatment for teachers, and details about assessment structure.

Even a cursory glance at some specifications from exam boards in the UK such as OCR, AQA, and EdExcel show the specifications to be very detailed documents. Unfortunately, in Ireland the NCCA took the opposite meaning to specification and insisted on producing very vague documents.

In short, a specification is a detailed, precise, and explicit syllabus.

The article, 'Syllabus or Specification? Science 2018', discusses the difference between syllabus and specification (Kennedy 2018).

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2002) defines the term syllabus as "a statement or outline of the subjects covered by a course of teaching; a programme of study".

Why is 'dumbing down' a natural consequence of a learning outcomes only syllabus design?

In many of the reports in which data has been gathered from teachers, a common point made is that standards of syllabi at Junior Cycle are falling, or being 'dumbed down'. This problem was predicted as far back as 2014 in the Hyland Report. Learning outcomes are a valuable tool for identifying what students should know, understand, and be able to do at the end of a lesson, or series of lessons. However, it is not appropriate to use learning outcomes alone to define a syllabus and its assessment, especially for a nationally assessed curriculum.

Learning outcomes are statements of essential learning and they are written at minimum acceptable or threshold (pass/fail) standard (Moon – undated). If teachers focus only on learning outcomes, there is a real risk that the teaching and learning targets will be at a minimum rather than a maximum level, that the bar will not be set high enough for student learning, and that, as a result, standards will fall. Hence, this dumbing down of standards is a natural consequence of a learning outcomes only approach with no depth of treatment to challenge the students.

Learning outcomes are a valuable tool for identifying what students should know, understand, and be able to do at the end of a lesson, or series of lessons.

Is depth of treatment needed for all learning outcomes?

Bloom's Taxonomy (Figure 2) in the cognitive domain is a very useful tool to help us write learning outcomes. Some lower order thinking skills may not require depth of treatment, e.g., recall of factual knowledge as indicated by the use of action verbs such as define, name, and state. However, as one moves up Bloom's Taxonomy, particularly in the areas of the higher order thinking skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation, it becomes necessary to indicate depth of treatment to clarify the meaning of terms such as 'evaluate', 'interpret', 'justify', and 'summarise'.



FIGURE 2: Bloom's Taxonomy in the cognitive domain.

Bloom's Taxonomy (Figure 2) in the cognitive domain is a very useful tool to help us write learning outcomes.

Conclusions and recommendations

In Ireland, problems have arisen as a result of the learning outcomes only approach adopted by the NCCA in syllabus design. This approach has caused problems in the classroom due to the lack of clarity for teachers on what subject content should be taught to students and the depth at which the content should be taught. As a result, different teachers interpret the learning outcomes differently (and may have been encouraged to do so in some CPD programmes), while the interpretation of learning outcomes by the State Examinations Commission may differ from that of some teachers. This has led to a situation where for some students and teachers there is a lack of alignment between the syllabus as they interpret it, and the questions on the Junior Cycle or Leaving Certificate examination papers.

The experience of teachers should be listened to and their views treated with respect. It is clear from data collected that many Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate syllabi that have been revised to date are vague and unclear. Therefore, it is necessary that some key changes are made in the immediate future, as follows.

1. A new syllabus template needs to be developed for all syllabi at Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate level.

This template must contain more detailed information about the depth of treatment of subjects including the linking of learning outcomes, to teaching and learning activities, and to assessment. In other words, constructive alignment (Biggs 2005) needs to be embedded in all syllabi.

2. The full range of documentation must be available before implementation of the syllabi.

The full range of syllabus documentation, including teachers' notes, sample examination papers, sample marking schemes, etc., should be officially

published at the same time as the syllabus itself under the logo of the Department of Education, as has been the case in the past. This elaborated documentation should be available well before the syllabus is due to be implemented to enable teachers to become familiar with the new material and to undergo appropriate CPD and upskilling programmes.

3. Depth of treatment embedded within the syllabi.

From 1989 until recently, the Leaving Certificate syllabus included the level of detail that teachers expect and need to prepare their students for the Leaving Certificate public examinations. That level of detail has also been used and will continue to be required by the SEC to enable them to set and mark the Leaving Certificate examination papers. It is essential that the current learning outcome only template be immediately abandoned and a more appropriate template be implemented. Some examples of this detailed template have been included in a recently published paper, 'Developing a new template for designing syllabi for Irish secondary school subjects: Science' (Hyland and Kennedy 2023).

Let us hope that action will be taken by the Department of Education and the NCCA to ensure that teachers are provided with syllabi that are in keeping with international best practice in syllabus design.

References available online at: <https://www.asti.ie/member-benefits/publications/astir/>

Biographical note

Declan Kennedy graduated from UCC with an MSc in Chemistry and a HDipEd. He subsequently graduated with an MEd and a PhD in Education from the University of York, England. He spent over 20 years as a secondary school teacher and is now Senior Lecturer in Science Education in UCC. He is the author of several papers on learning outcomes in peer-reviewed journals. He is also the author of the book Writing and Using Learning Outcomes: A Practical Guide, which to date has been translated into 14 languages. The book is available for free download at the URL given in the list of references.

SPEAKING FOR TEACHERS

This year's speeches addressed the worsening recruitment and retention crisis in teaching, chronic underinvestment in education, Senior Cycle change, and the need to value education, while guest speaker Prof. Howard Stevenson made the case for strong trade unions in a time of global crises. The following pages contain excerpts from the speeches.



ASTI President Miriam Duggan.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

ASTI President Miriam Duggan gave a passionate address on the need to value education, and those who provide it.

All of us in this hall are involved in education and I believe we all would claim to value it. Perhaps the most basic way to value it and support its flourishing is through investment. The most recent 'Education at a Glance' was published in October 2022. According to the report, Ireland ranked, yet again, 36th out of the 36 countries in terms of our investment in second-level education as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP).

Let's look at the practical consequences of this underinvestment. A large number of our school buildings are in a poor state of repair. The average class size at Junior Cycle level around the EU is 21. In Ireland it can be up to 30. Underinvestment in our schools affects the whole school population in so many ways. Posts of responsibility, for example, were initially created to compensate teachers for having the longest pay scale in the public service. The jobs these post holders do are necessary to the smooth running of the school. During the economic crisis, there was a moratorium on replacing retiring post holders and although there has been some alleviation of that moratorium, we have not returned to previous levels, despite a rising school population and the fact that the work must still be done. Does this sound like we value our education system?

Curriculum change

If there has been insufficient change in the level of investment in our schools, sadly the same cannot be said for the curriculum. I cannot subscribe

to the current notion that change is always a good thing because sometimes it's not. Notwithstanding our stated reservations, we welcome the fact that a study on the Junior Cycle Framework is taking place. We await the study's findings with interest because the need to make reasoned decisions based on solid research is a pillar of the ASTI's vision of how to manage change. This is particularly the case when managing changes to high-stakes courses like the Leaving Certificate.

Teachers have been very clear on the importance of retaining the externally assessed Junior Certificate examination as a trusted and valued form of assessment. We regularly assess our students but we know that this process is complemented by assessment for State Certification being externally set and marked. We see the relationship between student and teacher as central, as professional but pastoral. When we say that we will not assess our own students for State Certification, we are not simply saying no but rather are defending a value we know to be of immeasurable worth. This is an absolute red line for our members, and is also a red line issue for our sister union, the TUI.

Perhaps the most basic way to value education and support its flourishing is through investment.

There are so many lessons to learn from the Junior Cycle Framework. I would however like to focus on this – the failure of top-down policy development. Put simply, top-down policy development doesn't work because, as every brash young manager learns, what is an excellent idea in theory can often collapse in the practical world of reality. Top-down



ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie.

policymaking alienates the practitioner, creating an 'us and them' mentality. Worse still, it is a denial of teacher agency. Any change in schools must include a real opportunity for the voice of the classroom teacher to be heard. If the voice of teachers is essential to real change, so is the ability of the Minister to listen, and Minister, you showed that ability when you announced your intention to defer and review the decision to hold Paper 1 of English and Irish in 5th year. We welcome that decision because it has provided space for discussion on how best to improve students' experience of education while protecting education standards. However, I must be clear that Paper 1 in English and Irish ought not be examined in 5th year – another policy we share with the TUI.

There are so many lessons to learn from the Junior Cycle Framework.

Worth valuing

There is much about our current situation that is worth valuing. We don't hear much about the achievements of our education system and it doesn't escape me how demoralising that is for teachers who do their best for their students every day. We are fourth in literacy in Pisa studies and above average in maths and science. If anybody is wondering how it is possible that the worst resourced country is capable of achieving such standards, the answer lies in the drive, work, and extra effort of our teachers. Minister, as you seek to introduce changes, value all that works in an education system which has served its country well. Value our students because the future is theirs. Resource their education if they are to achieve that future. And Minister – teachers are your greatest resource. Value us.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie's wide-ranging speech addressed public service pay talks, teacher unity, and the recruitment and retention crisis in teaching, among other topics.

Building Momentum

Last October, ASTI members voted to accept the proposals from the Workplace Relations Commission regarding the review and extension of the Building Momentum Agreement. There is some expectation that discussions on a new agreement will commence in the coming months. Let me be clear about three key ASTI objectives:

1. A pay rise for all teachers to counter the increasing costs of living.
2. The end of unpaid work under the Croke Park and Haddington Road Agreements.
3. Maintenance of pension parity with serving teachers.

Teacher unity

An interesting aside that developed while we were in discussions with the TUI on the sectoral bargaining issue in Building Momentum was that we should explore the prospects for unity of the two unions. It was felt that in common with the TUI, the ASTI has adopted motions over many years that have advocated for a process of discussion leading to unity. In that context, the ASTI will engage on unity discussions. Scoping discussion commenced in December and three more meetings have been held since. If there are developments, they will require massive internal consultation for both unions. Ballots of members would have to be held. Standing Committee and CEC will be kept abreast of developments.

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Presentation College, Athenry, Co. Galway

The Board of Management of Presentation College, Athenry, Co. Galway, has been refusing to release ASTI member Niall Duddy from his teaching duties to attend meetings in respect of his role on the Teaching Council. We in the ASTI and others have made representations to the Board seeking to resolve the situation but they have been met with intransigence. Accordingly, ASTI mounted a protest outside the school on October 21 and another last month outside the Teaching Council's offices. We are not done yet.

Senior Cycle

Arising from the announcement by the Minister for Education of her plans for Senior Cycle redevelopment, the ASTI has been extremely proactive in

developing our response. Thus far, the Minister has not engaged with stakeholders to any appreciable extent but that will change. The deferral of the Leaving Cert Irish and English Paper 1 decision has shown us how important stakeholder engagement and collaboration is. The lessons that history teaches us must be learned. The learning outcomes approach at Junior Cycle has been entirely discredited and does not enjoy the confidence of teachers. The downgrading of knowledge in the curriculum must also be brought to a halt. And of course, State examinations must be externally assessed. Mistakes must not be repeated. The era of the top-down curriculum imposition model is over. Curriculum development is complex; if it's going to succeed, everyone has to be on board.

Harmful online content

The ASTI has undertaken work this year on the issue of digital image rights of teachers, harmful online content, offensive posts, and the harassment, bullying and abuse that can arise. We have secured legal advice on the matter and a sub-committee of Standing Committee is working on a package of advices for members. The second National Anti-Bullying Action Plan, published in December, set out a road map on the manner in which the Irish education community can prevent and address bullying in schools. These developments present the ASTI with a unique opportunity to engage with the relevant State bodies to highlight the prevalence of bullying and/or harassment of teachers by students using online platforms, to lobby for the changes needed, and to address such incidents (and support the affected teachers) when they occur.

Recruitment and retention crisis

The recruitment and retention crisis is growing, and having a real and detrimental impact on our schools. The reality is that we have arrived at the point at which teaching as a career is not sufficiently attractive anymore. A good start to retrieve the situation would be an announcement by the Minister for Education that each of the following would be implemented in a short timeframe:

- a pay review for teachers focused on shortening teachers' pay scales
- a reduction of the Professional Masters in Education course from two years to one
- an offer of a permanent, secure teaching job on initial appointment, and
- a commitment to doubling the level of posts of responsibility in schools.

The recruitment and retention crisis is growing, and having a real and detrimental impact on our schools.

Investment in education

The most recent OECD report, 'Education at a Glance 2022', finds Ireland once again coming last out of 36 countries for investment in second-level education as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP). It is crucial that the Government commits to a significant increase in investment in education. The Irish education system is at a critical point. Failure to act on this reality in the face of overwhelming evidence demonstrates unconscionable short sightedness.



Guest speaker Prof. Howard Stevenson.

PROF. HOWARD STEVENSON, UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM – GUEST SPEAKER

Prof. Stevenson presented research on the crisis in teacher supply across Europe, making the argument that strong trade unions are crucial to resolving it.

We are living through difficult and dangerous times. In the 2008 economic crisis, across Europe, the impact on educational investment was disproportionately large, and in many countries, investment has not returned to previous levels. The Covid-19 pandemic transformed teaching. There is a war in Europe and there's an environmental crisis. All of these crises make teaching a much more complex and demanding job, which is why we shouldn't be surprised that this emerges as another crisis: the crisis of teacher supply across Europe.

The European Commission recognised that the situation relating to teacher supply across Europe is a crisis. Many European education systems are now suffering from shortages of teachers, which can significantly hinder the delivery of quality teaching and learning. In some countries it's a recruitment problem, in some countries it's a retention problem. In some countries it's a combination of the two. In a lot of countries there is an aging profile of the teaching population, so in the next five or ten years, those significant numbers will be retiring and there is very little evidence that the new generation is going to come in sufficient numbers to replace those who are retiring.

It's useful here to think about three factors. One is pay. Another is the nature of the work itself, and we know that relates very closely to levels of job satisfaction. The third dimension is working conditions. Historically, in many countries in Europe, these three elements have existed in uneasy equilibrium. Pay in most countries for teachers is poor, typically below graduate average earnings, but the work can be highly satisfying. Conditions tend to be mixed; there are some very difficult features, but there are some features that are viewed positively.

That uneasy equilibrium is now in disequilibrium. Pay continues to be a problem, but job satisfaction is also decreasing. In relation to working conditions, what has changed is the experience of the pandemic, because people discovered, and many employers discovered, that people can work from home, with more flexible hours, and productivity doesn't decrease. So what we have seen since the pandemic is that in many sectors of the economy there is a shift to much more flexible forms of working. Of course that doesn't really exist in teaching. Now there are many sectors of the economy that are offering much better working conditions. That's likely to be a long-term, potentially permanent shift, and if you can't find ways to make teaching attractive against these long-term changes in the labour market, then this crisis in teacher supply is going to become really difficult to resolve.

The Covid-19 pandemic transformed teaching. There is a war in Europe and there's an environmental crisis. All of these crises make teaching a much more complex and demanding job.

It needs a radical and bold agenda, and I don't think that will happen without the intervention and contribution of trade unions. This is born out of the conviction that the best way to defend education is to defend the conditions of the people who work in the system. I would propose the following three lessons in organising:

1. The need to organise the workplace and recognise that the most important people in your union are your school stewards.
2. Organising around ideas. In this really challenging world, we need to articulate alternatives.
3. Organise the organisers. We have to become better at helping each other draw more people into union organisation.

We live in difficult and dangerous times. That requires strong, effective trade unions, not just for teachers, but for your students, for society, and for democracy.

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Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD.

NORMA FOLEY TD, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Minister Foley outlined measures to improve teacher education and continuing professional development, and to increase recruitment and retention of teachers, and praised teachers for their work in building inclusive school communities.

The American historian and journalist Henry Adams once wrote: "A teacher affects eternity. He can never truly tell where his influence stops". We know from research and indeed from experience that teachers are trusted professionals at the very centre of what is globally considered a high-quality education experience.

Teacher education and professional development

Last month saw the publication of the Initial Teacher Education Policy Statement. The overarching objective in developing this Policy Statement is to improve the quality of initial teacher education (ITE) through practical measures. This will ensure that our newly qualified teachers have the necessary tools to support them in their aim to inspire children and prepare students to succeed in life. The professional development needs of our teachers are currently delivered by four support services. Last year, the Department initiated a project to integrate these into one single support service. On September 1, 2023, a new integrated support service will be established. The vision for this new service is to support the



A gathering of ASTI presidents past and present took place at Convention 2023. Pictured are: Back row (from left): Ger Curtin, Henry Collins, Philip Irwin, Gerry Breslin, Joe Moran, Pat Cahill, Ed Byrne, and Eamon Dennehy. Front row (from left): Ann Piggott, Máire G. Ní Chiarba, Susie Hall, Miriam Duggan (ASTI President), Deirdre Mac Donald, and Bernadine O'Sullivan. Also in attendance at Convention 2023 was past president Sally Maguire (inset).

professional learning of teachers and school leaders in Ireland through the development of high-quality, innovative and responsible professional learning that enables them to meet the educational needs of all learners in our changing world.

Senior Cycle

One of the biggest changes that will occur in post-primary schools over the coming years will be the reform of Senior Cycle. However, as your President and I discussed recently, introducing significant change at Senior Cycle needs to be worked through carefully. I consider it essential to ensure that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the State Examinations Commission, the Department of Education and schools can work through the changes with all partners over a sustained period of time. I announced earlier this year the appointment of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board, chaired by Dr Harold Hislop. The Department has also established the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Partners Forum, which includes representation from the ASTI. I know that the ASTI will play an active and proactive role as part of this Board, and I look forward to your positive engagement.

Teacher recruitment and retention

The recruitment and retention of teachers is a priority for the Department. We must ensure that teaching remains an attractive profession. ASTI representatives have highlighted in particular the need for middle management structures in schools to support leadership and development across all areas of school activity. At a policy level and subject to budgetary considerations, I have requested Department officials to explore further how the wealth of potential within the workforce can be configured to support our broader policy goals of curriculum reform, special education provision, inclusion, creativity and other ambitions. The Department is also undertaking a comprehensive programme to support the

supply of teachers. We have provided for fully funded upskilling programmes in mathematics, physics and Spanish, and a new Irish upskilling programme is planned for 2023/24. I have also asked officials to consider upskilling programmes in other subjects where there emerges a need to do so. Other measures include raising awareness among retired teachers of the opportunity to return to teaching on a substitute basis should they so wish, and increasing the number of hours that full-time post-primary teachers can provide substitute cover in the subject they are qualified to teach in from 20 to 35 hours, should they so wish.

Inclusion

I know that social justice is a very important element of education and one which drives the trade union movement and its activists. Without a doubt, it is the greatest richness of the Irish education system that so many teachers and staff are prepared to step up to the plate and provide endless opportunities for the enrichment and personal development of our students. I want to especially acknowledge the work that teachers and school leaders undertake to make sure that schools in Ireland are places where children and young people feel safe to be themselves. I was overwhelmed this year by the hugely positive and proactive commitment of schools to the launch of the new anti-bullying strategy, 'Cineáltas', or 'Kindness'. I look forward to continuing to work with you and other education partners to update the anti-bullying procedures in our schools and implement the comprehensive actions in the plan.

Finally, let me express again my appreciation for all that each one of you do to nourish and nurture the students in your care. We are all the richer with your leadership, dedication and commitment to excellence in education.

Read/watch the speeches in full at <https://www.asti.ie/member-benefits/events/annual-convention-2023/>

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS MUST NOT BE ERODED

A large number of motions at Convention 2023 addressed members' commitment to fighting for educational standards, both at Junior and Senior Cycle.

Education-related motions at Convention re-affirmed the ASTI's commitment to maintaining standards of education, and to protecting the well-being of teachers and students. Motion 43 called for the publication of detailed syllabus documentation that embeds depth of treatment and comprehensive guidelines for teachers into its design, while Motion 53 proposed the formation of a committee to develop positive proposals for Senior Cycle change, to be promoted as an alternative to the Minister's proposals. Three motions – 56, 57 and 58 – dealt with the proposal to move paper one in Irish and English to fifth year. These reaffirmed the ASTI's opposition to this proposal, and indeed to any attempt to move State exams to fifth year, and asked that the ASTI refuse to co-operate with any such move. Motions 47 and 55 demanded that State examinations (practical, oral, or written) should not be scheduled during Easter holidays, midterm breaks, or weekends.

Motion 36 asked the union to enter negotiations with the Department to reduce class sizes, while motion 39 demanded an increase in the services provided by the National Educational Psychological Service to secondary schools. Motions 44 and 50 addressed the issue of CBAs at Junior Cycle, with motion 44 asking that there be no more than 1 CBA in each subject, and motion 50 arguing for their abolition. Motion 52 asked that the ASTI insist that the State Examinations Commission continue to oversee the supervision and correction of all terminal State examinations, and that appointments for such work remain voluntary, and motion 49 asked that marks be allocated in advance for all questions in Junior Cycle final exams, and that subject teachers be informed accordingly.

Curriculum design and policy

"If this NCCA skeletal syllabus design policy is allowed to continue, it will inevitably lead to a superficial and dumbed down Leaving Certificate



Over 400 delegates attend Convention every year to set ASTI policy.

curriculum ... The present model is totally at odds with international best practice, is not evidence based in design, and lacks information on what content is to be covered and to what depth. Teachers should not have to become arbiter of the curriculum, having to second guess what is on the course, waiting for a last-minute sample paper to be published, hoping to get some indication that their interpretation of the syllabus is correctly aligned with the State exam."

John Conneely, Clare Branch and Standing Committee Region 4

"What is it going to take before this reckless destruction of the standards of our education system stops? Who is going to be held accountable for this? When is the taxpayer going to start asking questions about the public money that has been squandered on this dumbing down of our education system? All leading to ever-increasing stress for our students. Please support this motion as it is one way in which we can try to protect our teachers and students from a fatally flawed and poor-quality system of syllabus design."

Adrienne Healy, Dublin North West and Standing Committee Region 15

The present model is totally at odds with international best practice, is not evidence based in design, and lacks information on what content is to be covered and to what depth.

“When the oral exams were conducted during normal school time, it was often argued that it wasn’t fair that students were left without a teacher for a week. I would argue, there’s so much CPD going on at the moment that teachers are in and out for all sorts of different things. If a teacher happens to be out just for one single week over a course of the year, they’re getting really, really valuable CPD by being an oral examiner... I think we should treat it as CPD when teachers are going out to examine students for the oral exams. We shouldn’t see it as a negative, we should see it as a positive.”

Mark Walshe, Dublin North East Branch

“The current State Examinations Commission model commands a very high level of trust from all stakeholders – students, parents, further education and society in general. This work must continue to be carried out by well-trained examiners who can work in anonymity and are not subjected to external pressures such as parents, colleagues or school management. As a union it is our duty to prevent further erosion of teachers’ pay and conditions of work.”

Seamus Meskill, Desmond Branch

“To come out with a statement like ‘questions do not carry equal marks’ unsupported is nothing short of scandalous. We need clear advice, in advance, in relation to exam structure and the breakdown of the marks. How else are we to help our students through what is already a flawed system?”

John Byrne, Cork South Paddy Mulcahy Branch

“Student stress is being spoken about and the number of 20 CBAs over two years for students. If you take your class of 30, then that gives us 600 CBAs in one class alone. The CBAs are a box-ticking, paper-wasting, time-wasting exercise and that has been clearly outlined. They’re of no relevance long term.”

Ann Piggott, Cork South Paddy Mulcahy Branch

The current State Examinations Commission model commands a very high level of trust from all stakeholders – students, parents, further education and society in general.

Senior Cycle

“For too long, the measured, professional and expert voice of professional teachers has been side-lined in educational reform and discourse. And as we are grouped into that collective of educational partners who are consulted (to be read as ‘briefed’) on new and upcoming reforms, it’s crucial that our union is proactive and has developed a meaningful and incisive set of proposals to spearhead our vision of a fair, accessible and equitable senior cycle. As education professionals we are on the front line and we have valuable insights into the specific needs of our students and what actually works in our classrooms.”

Ciarán Kavanagh, Dublin North East Branch



Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
Trinity College Dublin

Ollscoil Átha Cliath | The University of Dublin

RECRUITMENT

An M.Oid. San Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta

Más maith leat cur le do shaineolas ar an oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge, cuir iarratas isteach ar an M.Oid. san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta

Tugann an cúrsa seo an deis do rannpháirtithe ardchaighdeán feabhais a bhaint amach ina gcleachtais oideachais agus ina n-inniúlacht teanga. Tá an cúrsa M.Oid. nua seo i gColáiste na Tríonóide á mhaoiniú ag An Roinn Oideachais, rud a fhágann nach mbíonn ach €650 in aghaidh na bliana le n-íoc ag rannpháirtithe an chúrsa.

Struchtúr

Cúrsa solúbtha páirt-aimseartha é an M.Oid. agus dearadh an sceideal le dul in oiriúint do mhúinteoirí atá ag obair go lán-aimseartha. Beidh idir léachtaí ar líne (40%) agus ar an láthair (60%) i gceist, sna tráthnóintí, ar an Satharn agus le linn laethanta saoire scoile.

Na Modúil

Bliain 1

- An tumoideachas agus an dátheangachas
- An dea-chleachtas i suíomhanna Gaeltachta agus lán-Ghaeilge
- An teagasc agus an fhoghlaim i suíomhanna scoile lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta
- An cleachtas pleanála agus measúnaithe
- An cheannasaíocht agus an bhainistíocht
- Múinteoirí lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta mar thaighdeoirí

Bliain 2

- Inniúlacht teanga sa Ghaeilge
- An tráchtas

Riachtanais iontrála faoi leith

Ní mór cáilíocht mar mhúinteoir bunskoile nó iarbunskoile a bheith ag iarrthóirí agus inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ag leibhéal B1 ar a laghad ar an bhFráma Tagartha Comónta Eorpach do Theangacha (is féidir tabhairt faoi scrúduithe Theastas Eorpach na Gaeilge i mí na Bealtaine nó i mí Lúnasa 2023).

Dáta deiridh d’iarratais

Is é Dé Luain 26 Meitheamh an dáta deiridh d’iarratais. Chun níos mó eolais a fháil ar an gcúrsa nó chun iarratas a chur isteach, téigh chuig: <https://www.tcd.ie/education/courses/postgraduate/m-oid-san-oideachas-lan-ghaeilge-agus-gaeltachta/>

“To move these exams to the end of fifth year is yet another example of an announcement by the Department without any meaningful consultation with those it will directly impact: teachers, students and parents ... Often, teachers, students and parents can have different views on issues, but this proposal seems to be something all the major stakeholders are agreed on in their opposition to it ... The syllabi in both subjects are designed to encourage student development and growth over the two years of Senior Cycle. Paper one in both subjects involves personal essays and responses. The ability to develop answers to this type of question is something teachers feel many students really only begin to grasp in 6th year, as they become more confident in their expression ... For some of the most important skills to be examined at the end of fifth year would be a very negative step.”

Eddie Noonan, Dublin South 1 Branch

“Any kind of exam in fifth year will only further damage those from disadvantaged backgrounds or students with any kind of difficulty in their lives. Students that we take care of in fifth and sixth year, and we bring them along, and they can be students that aren't looking for CAO points. They are there for the core reason why we teach, which is the idea that education is for everybody. And all these changes seem to be because of CAO pressure. And this elevation of the CAO above everything is rather damaging, I think, to the concept of education for the individual good ... Any movement of any exams to fifth year should be avoided.”

Conor Murphy, Carbery Branch

Any kind of exam in fifth year will only further damage those from disadvantaged backgrounds or students with any kind of difficulty in their lives.

“Why should we refuse to co-operate [with the proposal to move paper 1 in English and Irish to fifth year]? The answer is because you cannot intellectually disagree with something on principle and then sit by and do nothing about it. You have to take a stand. If you care about something, you have to stand up and take that stand. And this is a stand for the quality of education. And the quality of education is the quality of our future, the quality of our children's lives and their children's lives”.

Fergal Canton, Kilkenny Branch

“One of the reasons I am against exams in fifth year is because it's educationally unsound. There's another reason why we shouldn't have exams in fifth year and that's Transition Year. The ASTI fought long and hard for a standalone Transition Year programme. It allows students a chance to mature and develop. My own son is a linguist and he developed a love of the French language and went to France in Transition Year. If you had exams in fifth year, I don't think he would have been afforded that opportunity.”

Chris Hind, Dublin South 2 Branch and Standing Committee Region 13

Class size and special education

“I have been lucky enough to have the occasional class with smaller numbers, and the atmosphere in those smaller classes is often healthier and more pleasant. Students get more personal attention and feel more confident

in speaking or answering questions. It is much easier to spot who is struggling with the material or who is particularly tired or down that day. It is easier to get to know the students on a deeper, personal level. Instead of just paying lip service to student well-being, reducing class sizes is a positive and concrete step to improve student well-being and improve their educational experience.”

Pamela Conway, Fingal Branch

“We're taking away a lot of what the blind and visually impaired community have fought for generations to get, in terms of independence for their working lives, for their home lives and for equal pay. We have kids in classrooms and we're saying it's inclusive because they're sitting there, but the teachers and the SNAs around them have no experience of what skills they need to be teaching them.”

María Markey Greene, Dublin North 1 Branch and Standing Committee Region 16

We have kids in classrooms and we're saying it's inclusive because they're sitting there, but the teachers and the SNAs around them have no experience of what skills they need to be teaching them.



Niall Duddy, ASTI Teaching Council representative, Post-Primary, Voluntary Sector, Ireland North.

Defending teacher representatives

Motion 74 demanded that all ASTI-endorsed teacher representatives are facilitated to attend ASTI-endorsed meetings, including meetings of the Teaching Council. The motion authorised the ASTI to take appropriate action where teachers are impeded from attending. To read more about this issue see ww.asti.ie

TIME TO RESTORE TEACHERS' WORKING CONDITIONS

This year, Convention included a wide range of motions seeking to restore teachers' working conditions, to recognise the work done by holders of posts of responsibility, and to acknowledge the grief of teachers who experience miscarriage.

Motions at Convention 2023 strongly argued for the restoration of terms and conditions lost by teachers during the austerity years, which have not yet been restored, despite many having been restored to other public servants. Motion 28 asked that the ASTI seek significant improvements in teachers' sick leave allowance, while Motions 33 and 27 argued for a reduction or alleviation of the requirements regarding Croke Park hours and Haddington Road hours, respectively. Motion 12, meanwhile, asked that the ASTI negotiate with the relevant Government departments to change the pension arrangements for teachers paying Class A PRSI who wish to work in retirement, so that they are in line with those applying to teachers covered by the Class D scheme.

Motions 5, 6 and 9 sought to address issues around posts of responsibility. Motion 5 called for a reduction in teaching time for post holders to allow them to complete their duties. Motion 6 asked that the ASTI consider a comprehensive review of the workload associated with posts, and insist on a mandatory time allowance for post holders, and Motion 9 sought to set that time allowance at four hours per week for AP1 posts, and 2 hours per week for AP2 posts.

Motions 20, 29 and 30 dealt with the issue of supervision and substitution (S&S). Motion 20 (which was defeated, along with a proposed amendment) argued that members should be allowed to opt out of S&S after 10 years of service. Motion 29 asked that the ASTI negotiate with the Department of Education for teachers to be able to opt in or out of S&S on an annual basis.

Restoration of conditions

"This is a motion about restoration of conditions that we had in the past. It's about a small step in starting a campaign to restore these conditions – sick leave entitlements. It's a matter of security and peace of mind for teachers."

Philip Irwin, Dublin South 1 Branch



Noelle Moran, Tuam Branch

"I had a school steward meeting in my school the week before the Easter holidays and a lot of my staff members are asking: the guards and the nurses have gotten concessions for their Croke Park hours, what about teachers? There needs to be some equality and equity across all Croke Park hours, not just for guards and nurses."

Geraldine Barrett, Tipperary Branch

"We need to pursue this issue in the interest of fairness and equality. A recruitment and retention crisis will not be solved by not paying people for work done. No decent employment laws will support that ... The fact that teachers are one of the only groups of professionals and public servants not to get an alleviation in these hours is the final straw and insult for many longstanding teachers. The cracks in the system need to be properly filled in and not just papered over. We need to use every mechanism available to us to get rid of these discriminating hours once and for all."

Ian McCullough, Dublin North West Branch

"It's a disincentive to work. It's an absolute inequity, in monetary terms. One set of retirees can work away and receive their pension, and the other set are penalised and lose some of their pension if they choose to do the same work. We talk about equal pay for equal work. It's an issue here too. One might wonder why people retiring would want to stay working in retirement. Life isn't all that simple. For somebody to retire from full-time work at the age they want to, they might only be in a position to do so if they can supplement their income for the initial years of retirement."

Noelle Moran, Tuam Branch

"When Circular 42/2014 was first issued, the vast majority of schools implemented a 40-minute class period timetable. However, currently class

periods may be of 40, 45 or 60 minutes in length. Therefore, the very use of the words class period to define the time period is unacceptable and out of date. It also means that a teacher working a 60-minute class period must make themselves available for 55 additional hours of substitution a year, compared to a teacher working in a 40-minute category. This is unfair, and conflicts with fair work practices. This discrepancy can easily be corrected by properly defining the amount of time a teacher needs to be available for substitution.”

Niall Duddy, Galway Branch

I think if we're to consider well-being in schools seriously, then the well-being of teachers has to be included. And the right to opt in or out [of S&S] annually would be a fundamental part of our well-being.

Motion 29 – opt in or out of S&S

“I think we all understand why we would like that option [to opt in an out of S&S annually], but I am going to focus on one element and the phrase we will go away with this year from Convention, which is psychosocial concerns. One of the new elements at school that really seems to have an impact on people's welfare is the hour-long classes combined with split lunches. Staff are feeling more isolated. I think if we're to consider well-being in schools seriously, then the well-being of teachers has to be included. And the right to opt in or out annually would be a fundamental element of our well-being.”

John Lynch, Donegal Branch

Posts of responsibility

“I was an AP1 holder for many years. The workload just got bigger and bigger and bigger and I really didn't have the time to carry out the job. Recently a post was advertised in our school, and nobody went forward for it. I asked people why they didn't go forward for it and they said it wasn't worth the money. They hadn't the time.”

John Sims, Clare Branch

“This is a ticking timebomb – posts and workloads. There's no equality in terms of the workload in schools, in terms of what post holders have to do. You can be year head in a school of 100 pupils, and in another school that can be 300 pupils. I know a number of post holders who have resigned their post. They've done the mathematical calculation that it's not worth doing. This is one issue we need to organise around because right now the present system of posts and allocation of work and the appointment of posts on a competitive basis is destroying staff solidarity.”

Noel Buckley, Tipperary Branch

“Our motion does call for a review. I know reviews have been undertaken on this issue on many occasions in the past and I know that the feeling of some here might be: do we need another review? But I do feel the situation has deteriorated even more in recent years and that we need concrete and up-to-date data on what is going on in schools.”

Eddie Noonan, Dublin South 1 Branch



Eddie Noonan, Dublin South 1 Branch.

“This is a conditions of work issue. People are doing jobs in their lunchtimes. People are doing jobs when they should be preparing for classes. People are doing jobs that are too onerous for the time that they've been allocated, which is none. So it's a pretty simple open and shut case as far as we're concerned in terms of allocation of time. Why four hours and two hours? It will be a start. It would be a base from which to negotiate, and it would recognise the problem and make post holders who are working hard and doing their jobs feel that they're being listened to about workload. It would give postholders a fighting chance to carry out their duties and still have a work-life balance and not be taking their class preparation time and other time away from them.”

Donal McCarthy, Wexford Tony Boland Branch

Miscarriage leave

“At present we have no formal acknowledgment in our leave process for those suffering from miscarriage. The Miscarriage Association of Ireland cites that one-fifth of Irish pregnancies end in miscarriage, and despite this number, no leave is provided outside the standard sick leave in schools. Each friend group, family circle, or professional team will be visited by this whether we are aware of it or not. And it is our belief that leave equal to compassionate leave should be granted to the couples involved. A union should provide comfort, support and solidarity for the members, particularly at the most trying times. The passing of this motion is a show of support for those affected, and compassionate acknowledgment and validation of their struggle.”

Kenneth Dwyer, Bray Branch

VOX POP – IF I WERE MINISTER ...

This year we asked teachers at Convention what their priorities would be if they were Minister for Education.



Ciarán Kavanagh
Gaelcholáiste Reachrann,
Donaghmede, Dublin

– teaches English and German

I would start by recognising that there's been a fundamental breakdown in trust between teachers and the Department, and so I would immediately implement a number of policies to rebuild that relationship by engaging in meaningful dialogue. I'd hold a series of meetings with representatives of the teacher unions, and listen to their concerns. I'd establish regular channels of communication with teachers and unions, to ensure that everyone is kept informed of developments in educational policy. I'd establish a task force comprised primarily of post-primary teachers, with input from the teaching unions and educational experts, to collaborate and offer their recommendations for improving the education system. I'd address workload issues by addressing the admin burdens, reducing class sizes, and providing additional supports for teachers who work with students with additional needs. I'd conduct a comprehensive review, with teachers and unions, on the current policies and practices that have impacted on post-primary teachers, and prioritise addressing those that have generated the most concern. Finally, I would advocate for an increase in funding and resources to support post-primary education.

I would start by recognising that there's been a fundamental breakdown in trust between teachers and the Department.



Conall Ó Dufaigh
Coláiste Ráithín, Bray, Co. Wicklow

– teaches history and English

I think the first thing to tackle, if we're thinking of our students and society, is the staffing crisis. There are, as far as I can tell, two main reasons for this. One is the number of people who choose to pursue the profession. In addition to this is the broader issue of housing. Tonnes of teachers can't afford to pay rent where the work is. As far as broader points on education are concerned, the main thing we're looking at ahead of us is the Leaving Cert. Teachers' voices have to be included meaningfully from the ground up. With Junior Cycle reform, unilateral decisions were made, and an attempt was made to steamroll them over the teaching profession, which firstly was very short sighted, as teachers have valuable practitioner experience, which could have contributed to a much better Junior Cycle. Secondly, it set up an adversarial relationship between the profession and the Government. If I were Minister, I would make sure that does not happen again.



Mary Moran
St Joseph's Secondary School, Tulla,
Co. Clare

– teaches art

As Minister, what I would definitely be interested in is ensuring that the A [for art] stays in STEAM [science, technology, engineering, art, and maths]. The employment in gaming, the employment in video and film is huge. We have to think realistically about what kids will be doing in the future. I'd listen to both unions' concerns in relation to the new Leaving Cert course. I wouldn't touch it until I was fully versed on why teachers think that the new Junior Cycle is a 'mile wide and an inch deep' in content. When both unions are concerned and have united, it's a red flag for Leaving Cert. The other thing that I feel very strongly about is the impact that artificial intelligence is going to have on the curriculum, on teaching methodologies. As Minister for Education, I would immediately be training teachers on the positive side of artificial intelligence, and the dangers, so that students are prepared when they go into the workplace.

As Minister, what I would definitely be interested in is ensuring that the A [for art] stays in STEAM [science, technology, engineering, art, and maths].



Eimir Murphy
Summerhill College, Sligo

– teaches Irish and geography

If I was the Minister, I would be one very busy lady as there are many projects on my 'to do' list. I would move Irish and other language orals back into term time as I feel having them during the Easter holidays is having an adverse effect on student well-being. I would urgently source money to invest in education. I would reduce class size and I would increase the services provided by the National Educational Psychological Service. I would try to invest more money and resources to level the playing pitches for all students regardless of socioeconomic background. I would also engage with the practitioners in the classroom in relation to Senior Cycle. There's no doubt that there are aspects that need changing, but there are some aspects that work very well. Students are going to need a different skills level going out into the world. To bring about this change, I would engage in meaningful discussion and collaboration with the experts on the ground, who are the teachers.

MOTIONS ADOPTED AT CONVENTION 2023

Motions adopted at ASTI Convention become the union's policy.

The following resolutions were adopted by Annual Convention 2023:

Motion 43 – Composite motion – Assessment and certificate examinations

That the ASTI demand, that for all future Leaving Certificate syllabi (specifications), the Department of Education, the NCCA and SEC publish the full range of syllabus documentation concurrently and not less than 12 months prior to implementation of the syllabus. The syllabus documentation to include: a detailed syllabus which embeds depth of treatment and comprehensive teacher guidelines into the syllabus, sample examination papers and sample marking schemes. **(Clare, Dublin North West)**

Amendment

Amend by adding the words “rationale and researchbased evidence that underpin the changes to/or introduction of syllabi” after the words “sample marking schemes”.

The amended motion will then read as follows:

That the ASTI demand, that for all future Leaving Certificate syllabi (specifications), the Department of Education, the NCCA and SEC publish the full range of syllabus documentation concurrently and not less than 12 months prior to implementation of the syllabus. The syllabus documentation to include: a detailed syllabus which embeds depth of treatment and comprehensive teacher guidelines into the syllabus, sample examination papers, sample marking schemes, rationale and research-based evidence that underpin the changes to/for introduction of syllabi.

Motion 53 – Assessment and certificate examinations

That a committee be formed to develop a set of positive proposals for Senior Cycle reform that the ASTI can promote as an alternative to the Minister's proposals. **(Dublin North East)**

Motion 56 – Assessment and certificate examinations

That the ASTI vehemently oppose the proposal to hold English and Irish Leaving Certificate paper 1 at the end of 5th year. **(Dublin South 1)**

Motion 57 – Assessment and certificate examinations

That the ASTI refuse to co-operate with the proposal to move Paper 1 in English and Gaeilge to 5th year. **(Dublin North East)**

Motion 58 – Assessment and certificate examinations

That the ASTI oppose any attempt for students to sit a Leaving Certificate exam in 5th year. **(Fermoy)**

Motion 47 – Assessment and certificate examinations – Composite motion

That the ASTI demand that the State Examinations Commission not

schedule the oral and practical examinations during the Easter holidays. **(Carrick-on-Shannon, Dublin North East, Dublin North West, Mullingar, Tipperary)**

Motion 55 – Assessment and certificate examinations

That the ASTI demand that the Easter and Midterm breaks and weekends are not used for the sitting of State examinations. **(Dublin South 1)**

Motion 28 – Conditions of work

That in view of the deterioration of the sick leave entitlements of teachers as a result of the economic crash of 2008, the ASTI now seek significant improvements in teachers' sick leave entitlements. **(Dublin South 1)**

Motion 33 – Conditions of work

That the ASTI enter into negotiations with the Department of Education regarding the current requirement of Croke Park hours, to seek a reduction to reflect concessions made in other sectors of the public service. **(Tipperary)**

Motion 27 – Conditions of work

That the ASTI demand an alleviation in additional hours (Haddington Road Agreement) as given to other public servants outlined in the report of the Independent Hours Body established under the Building Momentum Agreement 2021-2022. **(Dublin North West)**

Motion 12 – Superannuation

That the ASTI negotiate with the relevant Government departments that changes be made to pension arrangements for teachers paying Class A PRSI who wish to work in retirement prior to reaching State Pension age, in order to bring them in line with the pension rights of retired teachers in the Class D PRSI scheme working before reaching State Pension age. **(Tuam)**

Motion 5 – Posts of responsibility – Composite motion

That the ASTI seek additional allocation of teaching hours to provide for a reduction in teaching time on a pro-rata basis, to allow AP1 and AP2 post holders to perform their duties. **(Clare, Fermoy, Mullingar)**

Motion 6 – Posts of responsibility

That the ASTI conduct a full and comprehensive review of the workload attached to AP1 and AP2 posts and insist that a time allowance for all post holders be mandatory in all schools. **(Dublin South 1)**

Motion 9 – Posts of responsibility

That the ASTI demand that, in addition to their post allowance, Assistant Principals be given a time allowance of 4 hours per week for AP1 and 2 hours a week for AP2, to enable them to fulfil their duties. **(Wexford Tony Boland)**

Motion 36 – Class size

That the ASTI enter into negotiations with the Department of Education to

reduce class size to 24 in all subjects across the board (with the current limit of 20 for Home Economics to remain in place). **(Tullamore)**

Motion 39 – Education – Composite motion

That the ASTI demand an increase in the services provided by the National Educational Psychological Service to all secondary schools to ensure sufficient SEN provision so that schools can provide inclusive education for all students. **(Dublin North West, Dungarvan)**

Motion 50 – Assessment and certificate examinations

That the ASTI engage with the Department of Education with the aim of abolishing all CBAs in Junior Cycle. **(Cork South Paddy Mulcahy)**

Motion 74 – Organisation and administration

This Convention demands that all ASTI-endorsed teacher representatives are facilitated to attend ASTI-endorsed meetings [including Teaching Council meetings]. If ASTI-endorsed teacher representatives are impeded from attending, this Convention authorises the ASTI to take action where deemed appropriate, so that teachers are facilitated to attend. **(Galway)**

Motion 18 – Conditions of work

That the ASTI demand that special leave be granted to those who experience a miscarriage or who are partners of those who experience a miscarriage; equivalent to that given for compassionate leave as is in the case of a parent, child or spouse bereavement. **(Bray)**

Motion 30 – Conditions of work

That the ASTI seek to have the wording in Circular 0042/2014, Appendix 1 Agreed arrangements for the creation of the substitution roster PRELIMINARY WORK BY PRINCIPAL (Part 1 a, b, & c) amended from the current wording:

Calculation of the number of substitution slots to be filled:

The Principal calculates the total number of substitution slots to be filled, based on the weekly class period commitment of the teachers who have not opted out of S&S duties, as set out in Circular 0006/2014:

- a. Each teacher working up to and including 12 hours class contact per week = 3 class periods
- b. Each teacher working more than 12 and up to and including 17 hours class contact per week = 4 class periods
- c. Each teacher working more than 17 hours class contact per week = 5 class periods

To the following:

- a. Each teacher working up to and including 12 hours class contact per week = 120 minutes
- b. Each teacher working more than 12 and up to and including 17 hours class contact per week = 160 minutes
- c. Each teacher working more than 17 hours class contact per week = 200 minutes **(Galway)**

Motion 29 – Conditions of work – Composite motion

That the ASTI negotiate with the Department of Education for teachers to be able to opt in and opt out annually from the Supervision and Substitution Scheme **(Donegal, Galway, New Ross) (Already Policy)**

Motion 52 – Assessment and certificate examinations

That the ASTI insist that the supervision and correction of all terminal State examinations continue to be the remit of the State Examinations Commission and that appointment for such work remain on a voluntary and contractual basis. **(Desmond)**

Motion 49 – Assessment and certificate examinations

That the ASTI engage with the SEC to ensure that marks are allocated in advance for all individual questions in all subject papers for the Junior Cycle Final Examinations, and subject teachers be informed accordingly. **(Cork South Paddy Mulcahy)**

Rules:

Amend Rule 11 by deletion of “Higher Diploma in Education lay students, final year lay students in colleges who” and substitute with “Professional Masters of Education students in colleges and others who”

Rule 11 to read as follows: Professional Masters of Education students in colleges and others who, when qualified, would be entitled to register as secondary teachers are eligible for student membership of the ASTI. Student members shall be eligible for ASTI membership rights and privileges subject to the following provisions: a student member shall not be entitled to act as an officer of a branch, as a representative on the Central Executive Council or as a member of Standing Committee.

Rules motion

Motion for new Rule: The new rule to read:

- a) A special committee, to be responsible to Standing Committee, shall be elected and known as the Safety Health & Welfare Committee.
- b) The Committee shall consist of the President, President-elect, where applicable, and Vice-President for the time being and nine members duly elected at Annual Convention every second year.
- c) The Safety Health & Welfare Committee shall advise Standing Committee on such Safety Health & Welfare matters:
 - (i) as are remitted to it by Standing Committee, or
 - (ii) on such other Safety Health & Welfare issues as the Committee itself wishes to investigate.
- d) The Committee shall remain in office for two years, shall meet not less than three and not more than seven times a year and members shall be eligible for re-election.
- e) In the event of a vacancy arising for an elected member during the period of office of the Committee the vacancy shall be filled by election at the next CEC meeting or Annual Convention, whichever is the earlier.
- f) The Committee shall meet within one month from the conclusion of Convention each year. At this meeting the Committee shall elect one of its members as Chairperson. The Chairperson shall hold office for one year and shall be eligible for re-election but shall not hold office for more than four years consecutively.
- g) The Committee shall submit an annual report to Convention, which will be published in the Convention Handbook, after that report has been submitted to and approved by Standing Committee.
- h) All activities of the Committee involving expenditure shall be subject to the approval of Standing Committee.

If passed, this motion would require as a consequence changes to rule 108 as follows:

CONVENTION 2023

Amend Rule 108 as follows:

(i) By inclusion of the words "Safety Health & Welfare Committee" after the words "Education Committee".

Rule 108 shall then read as follows: With the exception of the President and Vice-President, no member may serve on more than one of the following

committees namely, Standing Committee, Education Committee, Safety Health & Welfare Committee and Equality Committee during a concurrent term of office.

For a full list of motions debated, see <https://www.asti.ie/member-benefits/events/annual-convention-2023/>



From left: Michelle Costello and Marina Mulvihill (Kerry Branch).



From left: Bernadine O'Sullivan (Dublin North West Branch), Patrick Knightly (Dungarvan Branch and Standing Committee Region 7), Jennifer Hiney (West Mayo Branch), and Niamh Loftus (Limerick South Branch).



From left: Emer Brady, Clodagh Mackle and Vincent McGowne (Dublin North 1 Branch).



From left: Mark Walshe, Thérèse Glenmon, Órlagh Nic Eoin and Keith Howley (Dublin North East Branch)

Convention photos by Paula Malone Carty.

ELECTIONS AT ANNUAL CONVENTION 2023

OFFICERS ELECTED AT CONVENTION



President Elect
Geraldine O'Brien



Vice President
Donal Cremin



Honorary Treasurer
Pádraig Murphy

COMMITTEES

Education Committee

Richard Egan
Gerard Hanlon
Ciarán Kavanagh
Niall Mahon
Sinead Moore
Conor Murphy
Pauline Nagle
Geraldine O'Loughlin
Jennifer Walsh

Equality Committee

John Byrne
Marina Carlin
Maura Greaney
Eimear Holly
Mary Lyndon
Noelle Moran
Orla O'Callaghan
John Sims
Philip Synnott

Investment Committee

Noel Buckley
Nora Donovan

Tony McGennis
Padraic McWeeney

Non-Permanent Teachers' Advisory Committee

Helena Cunniffe
Lorraine Finn
Robert McDonnell
Michael McGrath
Aoife O'Hara
Kevin Wall

Rules Committee

Richie Bell
Anne Loughnane
Michael McGrath
Philip Irwin
Mary Lyndon

Safety, Health and Welfare Committee

Louis Callaghan
Lorraine Finn
Paul Glynn
Deirdre Mac Donald
Siobhan O'Donovan

John Sims

Steering Committee

Noel Buckley
Niall Duddy
Susie Hall
Deirdre Mac Donald
Máire G. Ní Chiarba

Pensions Sub-Committee

Daniel Howard
Padraic McWeeney
Noelle Moran
Pauline Nagle
Ger O'Donoghue

Senior Cycle Sub-Committee

Mark Walshe
Kate Barry
John Conneely
Conor Murphy
Sean O'Neill

Join the RSTA

The RSTA always needs more members to help in its work, says President SUSIE HALL.

We, in the RSTA, are delighted to resume activities after the severe restrictions of Covid-19. Our 18 branches have been enjoying meetings and outings again. Christmas lunches were celebrated by most branches and some trips abroad have already been planned.

Our officers had their usual meeting with the officers of the ASTI in the autumn and they addressed our issues of concern. We were delighted to be reassured by the General Secretary that the ASTI will continue to support parity between our pensions and the salaries of serving teachers. We are indebted to the ASTI for their generous financial support, as it would be very difficult for us to operate without it. Our members especially enjoyed the coffee morning generously hosted by the ASTI in February.

We really want to increase our membership this year and this is where you can help. If you are thinking of retiring, please feel welcome to join the RSTA. If you know of colleagues who are thinking of retiring, please encourage them to join also. Due to GDPR restrictions, schools cannot inform us of retirements, so there is no way for us to contact retiring teachers directly.



RSTA President Susie Hall (right) with ASTI President Miriam Duggan, who is a past pupil of Susie's.

The RSTA works tirelessly to protect pension parity and to further the interests and welfare of retired teachers, and the ASTI fights for the interests of serving teachers and does the same for retired members. Please help us to continue this work.

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___

Calling teachers of modern foreign languages

The inaugural Languages Connect Summit is set to take place on Saturday, October 14, 2023. Language teachers and relevant stakeholders are invited to attend this celebration of language teaching and learning. There will be an opportunity for attendees to collaborate and share with colleagues, meet with a network of MFL representatives, and learn new skills and strategies through workshops.

The Summit will take place at the Convention Centre Dublin and is being organised by Post Primary Languages Ireland as part of the delivery of Languages Connect; Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 – 2026. Working in collaboration with the Department of Education, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), and Léargas.

A programme of keynote speakers and workshops is planned for the day, with topics ranging from promoting learner engagement and interrogating new teaching methodologies, to investigating new technologies and their in-class applications. In addition, classroom inclusion, accessibility for a wider diversity of learners, and cultural awareness will be addressed.

There will be an opportunity to learn more about content and language integrated learning (CLIL), and attendees will be able to discover tools and strategies to assist with increasing the profile of languages within the school setting. A keynote speaker will address the importance of well-being for both teachers and students. A refundable deposit is required at the time of registration.

Further information, and details on how to register, can be found at ppli.ie

BLAST 2023 and Creative Clusters

Second-level schools can apply for the arts in education initiative, Bringing Live Arts to Students and Teachers (BLAST) 2023 until May 19, 2023.

The aim of BLAST is to provide pupils in schools all over the country with time and space to work with a professional artist on creative, imaginative, and fun projects. The 2023 programme will enable 425 new arts in education residencies in schools over the course of the year.

Further information on BLAST, guidelines, and the application form will be available from [Gov.ie/Blast](https://gov.ie/Blast) and from the 21 full-time education support centres' websites.

Creative Clusters

Primary and second-level schools can also apply for Creative Clusters, an initiative taking place as part of Creative Ireland and under the School's Excellence Fund until May 12, 2023. Under this scheme to support schools in building a capacity in creativity, schools in each cluster will enjoy access to a specialist facilitator, artist, or creative expertise in whatever their chosen area of interest may be. As part of this funding allocation, a cluster may receive up to €15,000 in funding, helping to bring their plans and ideas to fruition in 2023-2025.

Further information on Creative Clusters is available from the Department's website: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/fo342-schools-excellence-fund-creative-clusters/>

Foster carers needed

There are children and young people in every community who urgently need the opportunity to be cared for in a loving and caring home.

Tusla is particularly interested in reaching out to those working in the education sector whose understanding, knowledge, and insights would bring so much to a fostering role. Any teacher or staff member interested in finding out more about becoming a Tusla foster carer is invited to contact Tusla directly at tusla.fostering@tusla.ie or scan the QR code for further information.



Launch of CRAFT Maker Space at Mary Immaculate College

The CRAFT Maker Space aims to inspire the public to connect with their inner designer, engineer, scientist, mathematician, inventor, and artist through a wide range of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) activities and workshops.

The CRAFT Maker Space will primarily create opportunities for engagement in STEAM disciplines for children at primary and second-level education and their families.

The CRAFT workshops will involve collaborative engineering design projects, placing emphasis on the concept that we are all makers. The immediate outcomes of this project will involve children engaging with STEAM subject matters that are rarely explored in a classroom setting. These STEAM subject areas will include robotics, coding, science and engineering design challenges, design thinking, construction, and testing prototypes.

The CRAFT space will be a welcoming, non-threatening, informal space for families from all backgrounds to engage with STEAM.

You can find out more about the CRAFT Maker Space (BP) at <https://stemcraft.mic.ul.ie/about>

Teacher's debut novel set in Ireland

Leona Forde, an ASTI member and English and History teacher from Cork, has published her debut novel *Milly McCarthy is a Complete Catastrophe*. Milly is a ten-year-old girl from Cork who is fun-loving, rebellious, and full of ideas she simply has to try. Leona wrote the book for her daughter who wanted to read a *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*-style story that was not set in the US or UK. *Milly McCarthy is a Complete Catastrophe*, published by Gill Books, is available now from bookshops.

Classified

Are you passionate about children's and young adult literature? Do you enjoy thinking critically and creatively? Enrol for DCU's 2023/24 MA in Children's and Young Adult Literature (full or part time) now at: <https://www.dcu.ie/courses/postgraduate/school-english/ma-childrens-and-young-adult-literature>
Contact: jennifer.mooney@dcu.ie

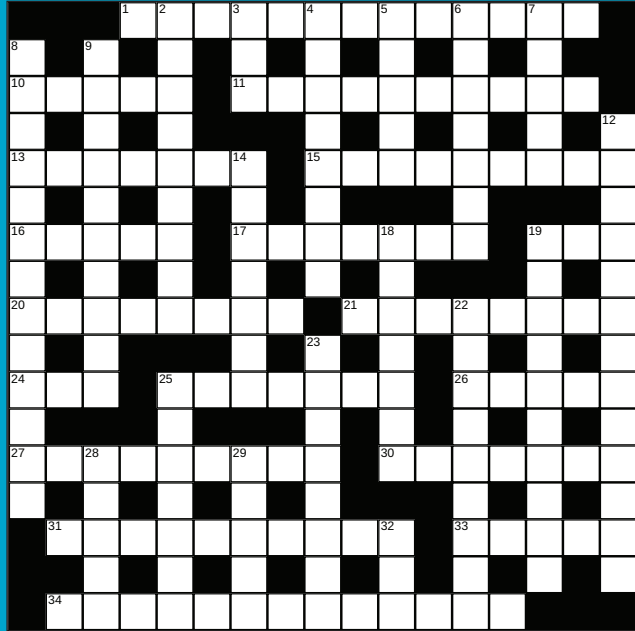


Sponsored by Cornmarket

ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 2303

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. 2303,
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, June 23, 2023.

ACROSS

1. Superficial review from ancestral gift (2,5,6)
10. Israel itemises select group (5)
11. Chattering, gabbling, prattling (10)
13. Binge, gorge, pig out (7)
15. Flannel used in domestic tasks (9)
16. Wild dog doing this (5)
17. A turnip practising a strict moral code (7)
19. Decay or putrefaction (3)
20. Robinson Crusoe might have played this card game (8)
21. Form of artwork practised by Banksy (8)
24. Kelly the bushranger (3)
25. Randolph Ingerson might provide an aquatic mammal (7)
26. Produce from farm from Maryfield (5)
27. Proposers might be involved in 18 down (9)
30. Longest river in Asia (7)
31. Person employed in taking census of population (10)
33. Leap from appliance could cause alarm (5)
34. Sinéad O'Connor wedding song from 2013 (6, 3, 4)

DOWN

2. Sounds like part of 34 across in that place (9)
3. Secret Fenian organisation (1, 1, 1)
4. Could be deviation, bearer or English (8)
5. Aggressive or insulting remarks (5)
6. Might be violet, elephant or National Congress (7)
7. Silicon goes with this 6 down river (5)
8. Seek this to be sure, to be sure (6,7)
9. Breathed in and slept soundly (10)
12. Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945 (3, 5, 5)
14. Subject of immediate relevance or applied directly to part of the body (7)
18. Authoritarianism, domination, repression (7)
19. Rock from German river could be an imitation diamond (10)
22. Cooking vessel often blamed for heart attack on plate (6,3)
23. Hotel chain or simple furniture style (8)
25. "Hey": John Spillane album and song from 2005 (7)
28. From Japan to children's entertainment (5)
29. Jessica Parker or Michelle Gellar, for example (5)
32. What short priest might do to engine (3)

Réiteach do Chrosfhocal No. 2302

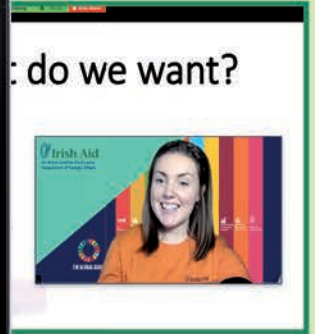
LEIDEANNA TRASNA	LEIDEANNA SÍOS
1. Sailead	1. Sach
5. Cadraíl	2. Imprisean
9. Capaillin	3. Eniac
10. Sushi	4. Dalmatach
11. Fiacla	5. Cunla
12. Amarach	6. Dushanbe
14. Abel	7. Aosta
15. Bailebreac	8. Leithsceil
19. Rangabhail	13. Cairibeach
20. Stua	16. Loitimeir
21. Bacstai	17. Eitneolai
24. Isabel	18. Castaire
27. Anrai	22. Coras
28. Pleanalai	23. Ispin
29. Hussein	25. Agnes
30. Rossini	26. Siri

Did you miss?

School stewards 13
ASTI Convention 2023 17

COMHGHAIRDEAS

Comhghairdeas le buaiteoir
Chrosfhocail 2202:
Catherine (Crena) Shevlin,
St Raphaela's Secondary,
Stillorgan, Co. Dublin
– Stillorgan Branch.



Both Virtual and In-Person Available



SCHOOL WORKSHOPS & LEARNING RESOURCES

Ireland's Role In Fighting Global Poverty And Hunger

The Irish Aid Centre

Join us for a series of engaging and interactive workshops and have a look at the new learning resources available on www.irishaid.ie. The workshops provide an insight into Irish Aid's work and how this work contributes to progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Contact us to discuss a **free workshop** to suit your students. We look forward to welcoming your school to the Irish Aid Centre at 3 Clonmel St. (off Harcourt St.) Dublin 2, very soon.

TRANSITION YEAR, CSPE, JUNIOR CYCLE & SENIOR CYCLE
POLITICS & SOCIETY

WWW.IRISHAID.IE

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[Cornmarket.ie/life-insurance](https://cornmarket.ie/life-insurance)

*Terms of the Draw: You will be entered into the prize draw when you request a life insurance quote from Cornmarket via email, webform or telephone call, or complete a Financial Health Check with a Cornmarket Consultant between 01/01/23 and 30/06/23. You can opt out of the draw by contacting us at dataprotection@cornmarket.ie before 07/07/2023. A cheque for €2,500 will be made payable to the prize winner. Prize draw is open to persons aged 18 and over who are ROI residents. This prize draw excludes any employee of Cornmarket and anyone directly or professionally associated with the draw. Entries not submitted in accordance with these rules or delayed entries will be disqualified. A winner will be drawn at random by an independent adjudicator on 07/07/2023 and will be informed by e-mail or telephone call within 3 working days of the draw. There will be one winner of the €2,500 prize. The winner's details will be available upon request. The promoter's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. The promoter, Cornmarket Group Financial Services Ltd. reserves the right to alter, amend and foreclose the promotion without prior notice.

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