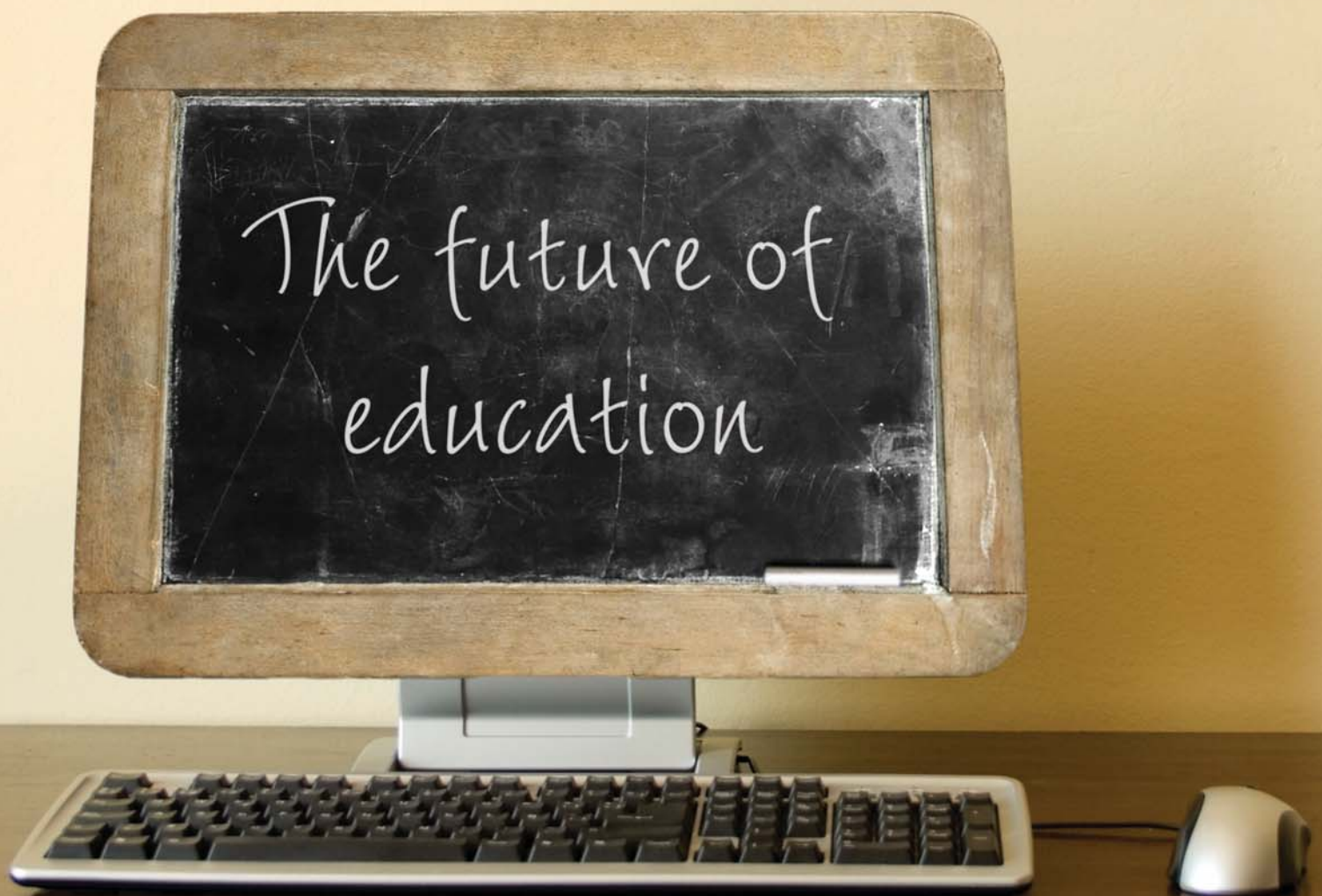


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Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland



Investment in education

Whole school evaluation
and subject inspections

Assessment

Is your school safe?

EAS Supports 100 teachers each month

Figures just released show that the new Employee Assistance Service (EAS) which provides free and confidential counselling to teachers and their families has been a resounding success since its introduction last October. On average almost 100 teachers every month call the free phone service to seek support on how to deal with stressful work and personal issues.

"Up to mid May of this year, we had supported almost 700 teachers to deal with stress and anxiety caused by a large

variety of issues, including emotional health, bereavement and relationship problems to name just a few. Some two-thirds of the cases presented as personal problems with the remaining third originating from problems in the workplace," said Sarah Walker of Vhi Corporate Solutions, the company contracted to administer the scheme to over 50,000 teachers throughout Ireland. The purpose of the EAS is to provide teachers and their immediate family members with easy access to confidential

counselling and to assist in coping with the effects of personal and work-related issues. The service, which is free and confidential, has been available since November 2006 to all teachers whose positions are funded by the Department of Education and Science, their spouses or partners, their dependents above the age of 16 and mother/father where appropriate.

According to Walker, "One in four teachers who contacted us was male, which reflects in broad terms the balance of male/female

teachers in the profession. Teaching is a demanding occupation. Coping with the ever-changing curriculum, disruptive pupils, staffroom conflict and anxiety over school inspections are just some of the difficulties that teachers face on a regular and sometimes on-going basis. Constant and cumulative pressure at work, sometimes coupled with stressful personal circumstances, can lead to emotional drain. When this goes beyond a certain point external support such as counselling can have a role to play in enabling an individual to manage a very difficult situation."

EAS staff follow strict ethical guidelines and codes of practice and are bound by the rules of the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP). This means that any contact with you remains confidential and that no information about you is available to anyone without your written consent.

One user of EAS commented, "What's really good about the service is that it is neutral and provides me with an opportunity to talk things through without fear of judgement. I found the counsellor brilliant at encouraging me to look at the real issues I need to address. I'm beginning to realise that I may not fully understand how we, I and others, act and react but what's important is that I am able to manage the situation at hand."

What kinds of services are provided?

Counselling is provided on issues such as health, relationships, addictions, bereavement, stress, conflict, critical incident and trauma. The following services are available:

- Telephone counselling
 - single sessions or short term structured counselling
- Face to face counselling
 - up to six counselling sessions

Accessing the service

Couldn't be simpler. Your Employee Assistance Service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through: Freephone 1800-411057 or Email eas@vhics.ie

For additional information on the EAS just click on to the Department of Education and Science website, www.education.ie and follow the link provided.

The three teacher unions (ASTI, INTO and TUI) wholeheartedly support the EAS.

Access to the service can also be gained by contacting your union office or logging on to www.asti.ie.

Employee Assistance Service Competition



Your EAS from Vhi Corporate Solutions provides you with access to:

- A Confidential Counselling Service - 24 hours a day / 365 days a year
- Face-to-Face Counselling
- Telephone counselling
- A tailored website for teachers. Just click on the EAS link on the www.education.ie homepage

Freephone: R.O.I. 1800 411 057 24 hours a day / 365 days a year or e-mail us at eas@vhics.ie

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- | | |
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| 2nd | Vhi Healthcare Hamper |
| 3rd | Portable DVD Player |

Simply click on the EAS link on www.education.ie and answer the question

What is the Freephone Number of the Employee Assistance Service for Teachers?

- | | |
|----|--------------|
| A: | 1800 999 888 |
| B: | 1800 411 057 |
| C: | 01-555 4444 |

You may also text your answer A, B or C to the question to 53377 followed by your name, and school i.e. "B, Joe Bloggs, St Patricks NS, Town name"
Closing date for entry is 30/11/2007.

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The ASTIR Editorial Board is interested in receiving feedback on ASTIR. Members can email astirfeedback@asti.ie or text 087-9349956.



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*Lending criteria, terms and conditions apply. A credit search will be carried out on all applicants. The repayments on a €5,000 loan over 36 months is €160.45. per month - cost of credit €776.20. APR 8.99% variable rate. This example is based on a two month payment delay. Note the fact that typically two months elapse between the time your loan repayment is set up with your employer and the time your subsequent loan repayments are received by the lender. Interest is charged from the day the loan is drawn down. For interest purposes, repayments are credited to your loan account on the day the actual payment is received by the lender and not on the date the money is deducted from your salary, which as identified above can take up to two months. An option exists to pay by Direct Debit. Should you wish to avail of this option, please contact us at the number below. Loans are arranged through permanent tsb Finance Ltd. Credit Cover is underwritten by Combined Life Assurance Company Ltd. and London General Insurance Company Ltd. Variable rates may be adjusted by permanent tsb Finance Ltd from time to time. permanent tsb Finance Limited is the consumer finance subsidiary of Irish Life & Permanent plc which is regulated by the Financial Regulator. All information is correct at 03/10/07 but is subject to change. Telephone calls may be recorded. Cornmarket Group Financial Services Ltd. is a Credit Intermediary of permanent tsb Finance Ltd and GE Capital Woodchester Finance Ltd. trading as GE Money. Cornmarket Group Financial Services Ltd. is regulated by the Financial Regulator. A member of the Irish Life & Permanent Group.

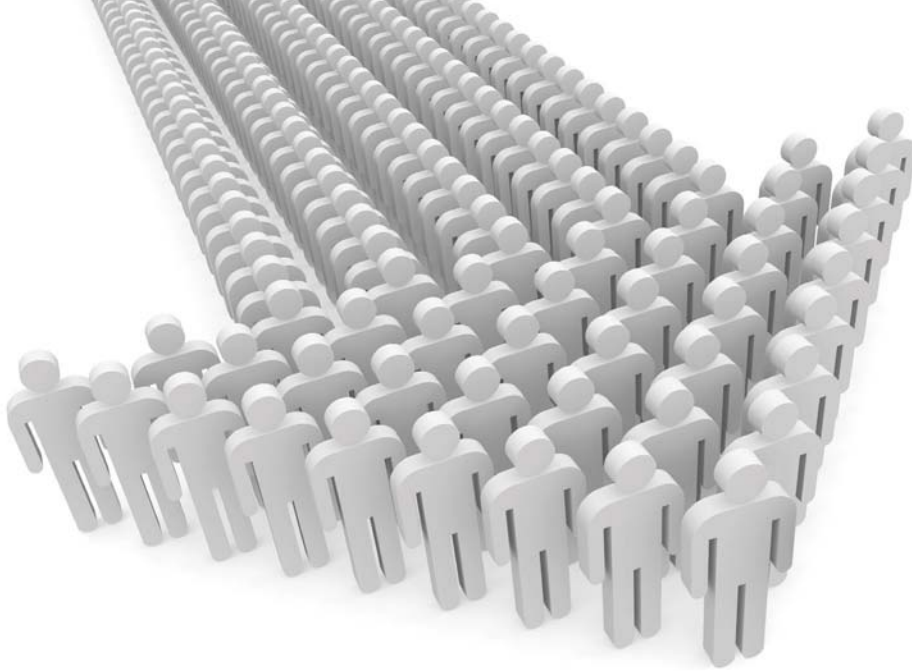


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Revitalising the branches

First off, Vice-President Pat Hurley, Honorary Treasurer Ray St John and I wish to say a big thank you to all 56 branches! In September and October we attended 13 focus group meetings nationwide. Thank you for giving us interesting, honest and forthright comments on what you believe branches need. We found it a fundamental and important exercise in our implementation of Convention's decision last Easter to adopt the recommendations of the Branch Rejuvenation Committee. This committee was tasked with re-energising and revitalising our branches and making their work more relevant and supportive. We made a short report to Central Executive Council (CEC) last month and are preparing a more detailed report for the January 26, 2008 CEC meeting; an officers' report will also be sent to all branches.

As many of you are aware, every year our industrial relations officials run a series of country-wide meetings for part-time and non-permanent members, focusing on their rights and needs, and also listening to their concerns. In attending, I learned some interesting facts.

Many of the non-permanent and part-time second-level teachers attending these meetings are young. Many others are somewhat older – in their 30s – and some are even older again. They would all like to have full-time and permanent work. But they don't.

They have the capacity and ability to be successful in other kinds of work – they could have trained to be accountants, entrepreneurs, solicitors or engineers. But they are passionate about education and learning, and committed to the young people they teach. It is to the country's advantage that they stay in teaching. Teaching needs people of their calibre.

I have met young teachers who have been temporary for a number of years, often without full hours, often without a year's work, and yet here they are, waiting, hoping for that full-time permanent job, because they love their work. It takes great determination and commitment to hang in there.

Recent EU legislation gives those who are part-time the right to permanency after four years with the same employer, subject to certain conditions and based on the number of hours worked per week in the fourth year. However, not all non-permanent teachers can benefit: if they are filling in for someone on a career break or job-sharing, there are objective grounds as to why the job will not remain vacant or viable and so the work does not provide any basis for a contract of indefinite duration. On the positive side, growing primary pupil numbers will impact on second level.

We came across teachers in schools in the last week of October who had not been paid at all since they started work in late August and were still awaiting their first pay cheque. Most amazingly of all, ASTI knew nothing about this until we held the regional meeting that they attended! If we do not know, we cannot act to help. If you have a problem, please do contact your school steward and/or your ASTI regional industrial relations officer. All cases are dealt with in confidence.

Standing Committee has decided to begin a process to revamp our website. Our website is an important resource, which plays an integral role in our plans for branch rejuvenation. The branches gave us many practical ideas, for example, providing links to useful DES circulars and forms, and setting up branch pages where each branch can post its news of events and give details of its branch officers. If you have any ideas at all on how you would like the ASTI website to serve your needs, or how you believe it could be improved, please contact me at president@asti.ie and put 'website' in the subject line.

Colleagues who attended the recent 2007 ASTI Education Conference will provide a briefing at your next branch meeting on the issues discussed. If you happen to have a colleague in your school who attended, perhaps they could give you a short coffee-break briefing. This is an important way for us to share learning in a collegiate and informal setting. Thought-provoking issues, which will undoubtedly impact on our future work, were raised.



Patricia Wroe
ASTI President

Careers in design

An information booklet for second-level students on opportunities to study design at third level was launched by the Minister for Education in September. *Why Design: A Guide to Studying Design in Ireland* provides information on the range of design disciplines available, from fashion to architecture. The guide also provides insights from working designers and contains a section on third-level design-related courses currently available. Speaking at the launch, the Minister said: "It is essential that young people whose interests and talent lie in that direction, continue to choose further study in design disciplines when they finish secondary school."

Young Science Writers winner



Laura Breslin, winner of this year's Young Science Writer competition, pictured with Mary Hanafin, Minister for Education and Science.

Laura Breslin, a student at St Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar, Co. Mayo, has been named overall winner of this year's RDS Young Science Writers Competition. Laura's report on the neuroscience behind musical appreciation was described by the judging panel as "original, informative and stimulating". Laura previously won category prizes in the 2005 and 2006 competitions.

Students overseas

Spending a year volunteering overseas has recently become very popular with Leaving Cert students in Ireland. Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), an international development charity, is advising Leaving Cert students to think carefully before taking a year out to volunteer. While the charity encourages volunteering for people of all ages, it is warning that badly planned and unsupported 'volunteer tourism' schemes may have a negative impact on young people and the communities they work with. VSO wants to ensure that volunteer placements bring value to communities overseas and advises young people to carefully research their options and to choose a development-focussed organisation. Placements should allow volunteers to learn from the experience and to share that learning when they return home. Central to this is proper training and support, and work that has a meaningful impact. Last year, VSO worked with the Irish Development Workers Association, Comhlámh, to devise a volunteer charter that encourages would-be volunteers to weigh up their options. This can be found at www.comhlamh.org.

FAI schools

The Football Association of Ireland (FAI), in conjunction with the Football Association of Ireland Schools, has launched a plan to develop schools football over the next 10 years. The programme provides a guide on how to implement football within the current education system, and was formulated in consultation with teachers who run existing competitions and teams.

Provisions of the plan include the introduction of equipment grants or subsidies, soccer skills training for students, age-appropriate participation events, training opportunities for students in teacher training college and coach education for practising teachers.

Copies of the programme have been sent to all schools.

Workers' rights campaign

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions, in conjunction with Concern, is mounting a postcard campaign to improve conditions and rights for garment workers. The campaign, 'Take a Stand on Fashion', aims to encourage chain stores to take their responsibilities to all their workers seriously and to ensure that the people making their clothes have their rights respected. These rights include the right to form an independent trade union, to bargain with their employer, to be free of child labour and forced labour, the right not to be discriminated against, and the right to be paid a living wage.

Postcards should be sent to ICTU and will be passed along to retailers. They are available for download from www.ictu.ie. Projects in conjunction with this campaign may be useful for CSPE, geography or business classes.



Pictured at a recent Desmond Branch retirement function are: retirees Willie Hallihan; Margaret Cooper; Noreen Murphy; Margaret Keating; Eleanor Magner; Frances Leo; Rita Murphy; Noreen Casey; Jim Murphy; Bridget O'Sullivan; Mary Barry; Peg O'Sullivan; PJ McNamara; Pat Galvin; Bridget Griffin; Maire O'Callaghan; and, John Meighan. Also included are: Diarmaid de Paor, ASTI Deputy General Secretary; Bernard Moynihan, ASTI Industrial Relations Official; Catherine Fitzpatrick, Branch Chairperson; and, Frank Killilea, Branch Treasurer and Standing Committee member.

Poetry against racism



Schools Against Racism Poetry Competition winners Benjamin Burns, Kerri Ward and Maria Coyle, with Chairperson of Poetry Ireland, Des Geraghty, President Mary McAleese and Chairperson of NCCRI, Anastasia Crickley.

The Schools Against Racism Poetry Competition is run annually by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) and Poetry Ireland in association with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Open to all second-level students in Ireland, north and south, the competition aims to raise awareness among young people of the need to tackle racism in all its manifestations and to promote an intercultural Ireland based on principles of mutual respect and equality.

The overall winner this year was Kerri Ward, a student at Assumption Secondary School, Walkinstown in Dublin. The senior winner was Maria Coyle, Eureka Secondary School, Kells, Co. Meath and the guest language winner was Benjamin Burns, Abbey Community College, Boyle, Co. Roscommon.

Next year the organisers hope to extend the competition to include a short story category and another guest language. Information will be available on Scoilnet in early January.

Development education – teachers volunteering to work abroad!

Irish Aid will open a state of the art Volunteering and Information Centre in O'Connell Street, Dublin in early December. With multi-media exhibition spaces, a library and information points, a visit to the Centre will form a vital aspect of a school's development education activities. It will also provide advice on how to volunteer for service in developing countries to teachers and other adults. More information on the Centre is available from www.irishaid.ie or irishaidcentre@dfa.ie.

Teachers interested in development education should check out the Ubuntu* website – www.ubuntu.ie. Ubuntu is a network of second-level educators, which aims to promote development education and education for sustainable development. The website has an excellent list of resources for teaching development education to second-level students plus ideas for joint projects and school activities.

***Ubuntu is a Zulu word which broadly refers to a Sub-Saharan philosophy and way of life that emphasises co-operation, compassion, community and concern for the interests of the collective.**

Educational disadvantage



Authors of Beyond Educational Disadvantage, Dr Paul Downes and Dr Louise Gilligan, pictured at the recent book launch.

The Institute of Public Administration recently published a book examining educational disadvantage in Ireland. Edited by Dr Paul Downes, Director of Educational Disadvantage at St Patrick's College, and Dr Louise Gilligan, *Beyond Educational Disadvantage* collects together a number of research articles on the subject. The book points out that at present Ireland spends a lower percentage of GNP on education than it did in the 1980s and recommends that the government should up its education spend by 1%. References in the book point to the fact that 18% of children in disadvantaged areas were too hungry to do their school work either "often, very often or every day", and that children in Ireland's most disadvantaged schools miss up to 11 days more school each year than their peers.

Education for sustainable development

The National Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development has implemented a consultation process for the development of a national strategy on education for sustainable development (ESD). The ASTI has made a submission to this consultation, pointing out that many key characteristics of ESD are already implemented in the second-level curriculum and that the wide range of learning that goes on in schools, through projects such as the Young Social Innovators and Young Scientist Exhibition, constitute a solid infrastructure for incorporating ESD. The submission recommends that the primary focus should be on integrating the key characteristics into existing and planned programmes and syllabi, and calls for continuing professional development to aid in this implementation. The submission also notes that well-designed curricular interventions that engage the imagination of students and enable them to develop a concrete understanding of what sustainable development means in relation to their own lives will be needed in order to integrate ESD properly.

Cancer biology programme

A new education programme for Transition Year students aimed at improving students' understanding of the genetics and molecular biology of cancer is being piloted in four schools in Cork: Douglas Community School, Colaiste Christ Ri, Christ the King and Mount Mercy.

The multimedia programme was designed by Professor Gerald O'Sullivan along with ASTI members Dr Dan O'Sullivan and Cian O'Mahony, and runs over approximately 10 lessons. It provides specifically trained teachers with a practical and relevant tool to use in biology lessons. The development of the project was funded by Science Foundation Ireland's Secondary Teacher Assistant Researcher Award (STARs) Programme and developed in the laboratories of the Cork Cancer Research Centre.

Cian O'Mahony said of the programme: "With cancer affecting one in every three Irish people during their lifetime, it is important to increase students' awareness and understanding of the disease." The programme addresses a number of key questions including how cancer grows, how it develops and how this fits into everyday genetics and biology.



Pictured at the launch of the Transition Year Cancer Biology Programme were (from left): ASTI members Cian O'Mahony and Dan O'Sullivan with a transition year student, and Science Foundation Ireland Principal Investigator Prof. Gerald O'Sullivan (centre back).

TALIS

A study affording teachers and principals the opportunity to offer input into education analysis and policy development is being conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The major focus of the first Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS) will be on the learning environment and teachers' working conditions. Some 400 teachers from 200 schools in 24 countries over four continents will be randomly selected and will receive surveys in February 2008. A pilot study of 233 Irish teachers was conducted in spring 2007 and the survey is currently being conducted in Southern Hemisphere countries. Respondents will provide information about such issues as the professional development they have received, their teaching beliefs and practices, and the review of teachers' work and the feedback received.

The initial report based on the survey feedback will be issued in mid 2009.

ASTI information leaflets

The ASTI has a number of information leaflets on a range of topics relevant to teachers' rights and work. These are continually updated and new topics added. They are available for download on the ASTI website – www.asti.ie – or members can get a copy of relevant leaflets by emailing amryan@asti.ie.

Niall Mellon Township Challenge

ASTI members Catriona Ryan and Brendan Ryan, teachers at Cashel Community School, will travel to South Africa as volunteer workers for nine days during November. They, together with four students, will build houses as part of the Niall Mellon Township Challenge. Brendan Ryan previously travelled as a volunteer tradesman in 2005 and 2006. The ASTI is glad to be associated with this charity project and has made a donation of €1,000 to help with the costs involved.



Students and teachers from Cashel Community School who are travelling to South Africa as part of the Niall Mellon Township Challenge in November. Front row (from left): Brendan Ryan; Mattie Finnerty; and, Catriona Ryan. Back row: Michael Hayes; Sarah Fogarty; Lisa Manton; and, Fionn MacCullagh.



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Amnesty International book



Former teacher Roddy Doyle signs copies of *Click* for students at the launch in Larkin Community College.

A number of well-known authors have come together to write a book for young adults in aid of Amnesty International. The book, *Click*, was launched at Larkin Community College in Dublin in October. All proceeds from the sale of the book, aimed at 11-16-year-olds, will go to Amnesty International. Among the ten authors who each contributed a chapter to the book are Irish authors Roddy Doyle and Eoin Colfer. Roddy Doyle taught at Greendale Community School in North Dublin.

ASTI Convention 2008

ASTI Convention 2008 will be held in the Malton Hotel in Killarney over the Easter break in March. Further information will be provided closer to the time in *Nuacht* and on the ASTI website, www.asti.ie. Killarney is renowned for its natural heritage, history and hospitality, and many very successful conventions have been held there in the past, so make sure to look out for the booking form in the next issue of ASTIR!

Dictionaries in state exams

Students whose first language is not English or Irish are allowed to use bilingual translation dictionaries in certain state examinations. Candidates who wish to use dictionaries must complete an application form available from the Reasonable Accommodation Section of the State Examinations Commission.



How will the Teaching Council benefit members?

This leaflet has been issued to all schools to explain to teachers the work of the Council in promoting teacher professionalism and maintaining the high standards of the profession. The leaflet is available at www.teachingcouncil.ie.

January ASTIR

The deadline for January ASTIR is December 3. Contributions should be forwarded to astir@asti.ie.

ASTI professional development courses for you



There are limited places still available on a number of ASTI professional development courses due to be held in ASTI Head Office during December and January:

Promoting Effective Student Councils

(two-day course)
on Tuesday January 22,
and Thursday February 7;

Role of the Year Head

(two-day course)
on Tuesday December 11,
and Tuesday January 29;

Vocal Fitness for Teachers

on Thursday January 24; and,

Planning for Successful Retirement

(two-day course)
on Tuesday February 5,
and Tuesday February 19.

For information or to register, email inservice@asti.ie or phone 01-6040170. Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Public-private partnership report

A report examining the running of five public-private partnership (PPP) schools was released by the Comptroller and Auditor General in September. In 2001, as part of a pilot project, a company was contracted to design and build these schools, to be responsible for the maintenance of the buildings and grounds, and to pay for all of the schools' premises services such as waste management, cleaning and security. One of the aims of the pilot was to identify problems encountered during the implementation of the projects and to use the information gathered to develop PPP policy and enhance the process. While the Department of Education and Science reported that the overall experience for PPP schools has been positive, it acknowledges that there are issues to be addressed. The report found that while the monthly Department of Education and Science payments were properly calculated and processed, maintenance and management services are often not being provided. The report also found that communication between the Department and schools on performance issues is inadequate and that there is a lack of clarity on what is to be provided in schools and what amounts may be payable to them by the PPP company. As a result, two further areas of reporting are to be strengthened and a check is to be put in place where a member of the DES technical and professional staff will visit each school on a quarterly basis to gather feedback on the operation of the school building. While there may be questions to be raised and answered about the optimal use of new schools by the community, PPP does offer a far speedier route to the construction and opening of amalgamated schools.

Four further PPP schools are currently in development and the contract for a further five schools will go out to tender in late 2007.

The four schools currently in development are: St Mary's CBS, Portlaoise; Scoil Chríost Rí, Portlaoise; Gallen Community School, Co. Offaly; and, Banagher College/Coláiste Na Sionna, Co. Offaly.



Pictured at the recent opening of Malahide Community School's new school are (from left): Susie Hall, former ASTI President and teacher at Malahide Community School; John White, ASTI General Secretary; and, Patricia Wroe, ASTI President.



Pictured at a recent school steward training day held in Mayo were (from left): Carmel Flood, Meanscoil Muire, Galway; Margaret Kenny, Jesus and Mary Secondary School, Sligo; and, Beatrice Shaughnessy, Presentation College, Athenry.

Thinking of retirement?

The ASTI is organising a series of regional retirement information seminars to be held in a number of venues during November and December. Members who intend to retire at the end of (or during) this school year are invited to attend.

Meetings will be held in:

- The Macwilliam Hotel, Claremorris, on Thursday November 22 at 4.30;
- The Silver Springs Hotel, Cork, on Tuesday November 27 at 4.30;
- The Red Cow Hotel, Dublin, on Tuesday December 4 at 4.30;
- Days Hotel, Kilkenny, on Wednesday December 5 at 4.30;
- Mullingar Park Hotel, Mullingar, on Tuesday December 11 at 4.30; and,
- South Court Hotel, Limerick, on Wednesday December 12 at 4.30.

The ASTI travel allowance will be paid for return travel from your home address to the nearest of the venues.

If you have to leave school early in order to attend one of the seminars you should make a request for leave to your school principal.

For further information contact Louise Brannelly on 01-6040173 or email lbrannelly@asti.ie.



ASTI Credit Union opens new offices



Pictured at the official opening of the new ASTI Credit Union offices are (from left): Mary O'Reilly, retired ASTI member; Tony Burke, ASTI Chairman and teacher at Our Lady's School, Templeogue; Patricia Wroe, ASTI President; and, Selina Gilleece, ASTI Credit Union Manager.

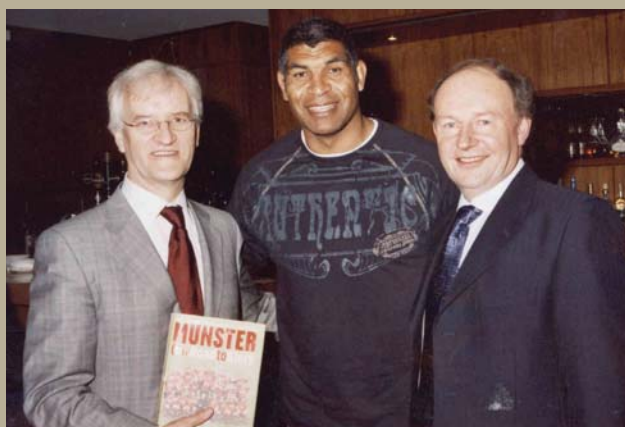
The official opening of the new Wellington Quay premises of ASTI Credit Union Ltd took place on September 29. Those present included members, former board members and supervisors, and a number of guests, including some founder members. The opening was officiated by Patricia Wroe, ASTI President, who commented on the progress made by ASTI Credit Union over the last 24 years.

Uel Adair, President of the Irish League of Credit Unions, praised ASTI Credit Union for its growth and service to its members. He pointed out that: "While banks use people to make money, credit unions use money to help people."

In an emotional speech on behalf of the first board of directors of the credit union, Mary O'Reilly commented on how far the credit union had come since its humble beginnings in an office under ASTI offices in Baggot Street. Mary talked about the early days of the organisation and the work and dedication of its founders who, back in 1984, worked without staff to produce its first surplus of £662. Tony Burke, Chairman of ASTI Credit Union, pointed out the progress made by the organisation, which now holds member shares in excess of €25 million and has current loans of more than €18 million. He talked about new services that have recently been introduced such as electronic fund transfer, which allows money to be transferred directly into members' bank accounts, service accounts, which allow members to access cash via the ATM network, and a new interactive website, which allows members to transact business from home using their personal computer.

Crossword prize

The ASTIR crossword prize has been increased to €200! The prize is sponsored by the ASTI Credit Union



From left: John White, ASTI General Secretary with Jim Williams, former Australian rugby international and coach to the Munster rugby team and Ger O'Donoghue, Chairperson, Limerick South Branch, at a Branch function in Limerick.



A group of attendees and trainer Pat Walsh, pictured at an in-service on student councils held in Head Office during October.



Members of the Non-Permanent Teachers Committee pictured at a recent meeting in Portlaoise (from left): Rosario Walsh; Justin McGree; Bernard Moynihan, ASTI Industrial Relations Official; Mary Crowley; Brendan Broderick; Pat Hurley, ASTI Vice President; and, Martha Goggin.

RSTA events from around the country



Some of the members of the newly formed Kildare Branch of the RSTA with Louis O'Flaherty on his recent visit to the branch (from left): Margaret Walsh; Grace Walsh; Louis O'Flaherty, President of RSTA; Margaret Aspell; Claire Power; and, Phil Dunning.

Thank you

Bernadine O'Sullivan wishes to thank RSTA members for their support in her recent bid for a Senate seat. She also wishes the RSTA every success with the year's activities.

Coffee morning in ASTI House

The annual RSTA coffee morning will take place on December 18, 2007, from 11.00am until 1.00pm.

Dublin Branch Christmas lunch

The Dublin Branch is holding a Christmas lunch on December 5, 2007, at 1.00pm in Wynn's Hotel, Lower Abbey Street.

If you wish to attend the lunch, please send your name, address and phone number, together with a payment of €30, to Ms Catherine McHugh, 5 Blackquiere Villas, Phibsborough, Dublin 7.

An early reply would be appreciated.



Teacher Training College, Makeni, Sierra Leone

IRISH AID

VOLUNTEERING & INFORMATION

CENTRE

Irish Aid is the Government's programme of assistance to the poorest countries in the world.

In partnership with developing countries Ireland is making a considerable difference in the areas of basic health and education, protection of the environment, governance and promotion of human rights.

The **Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre** opens in December 2007 on O'Connell Street, Dublin.

The Centre is a state of the art, multi-media exhibition and workshop space which features a range of interactive displays. It offers students, youth groups and the wider public a dynamic environment in which to learn about development and the work of Irish Aid and to engage with the issue of global poverty.

Teachers, students and groups are invited to visit the exhibition and to partake in our development workshops where students will:

- Learn about development issues and the work of Irish Aid, especially in some of the poorest countries in Africa, through hands-on exploration of the interactive multimedia exhibition.
- Take part in a facilitated workshop which will explore global issues and help develop students own thinking on development.

Preparatory material can also be supplied on request in advance of visits.

On completion of the programme teachers will be supplied with follow up classroom activities and information on how they can get involved in the development effort.

Transition Year and 5th and 6th year classes and their teachers are particularly welcome to visit the Centre.

For more details see the Centre website: www.irishaid.gov.ie/centre

We are now taking bookings for groups from January 2008. There is no charge for visiting the Centre.

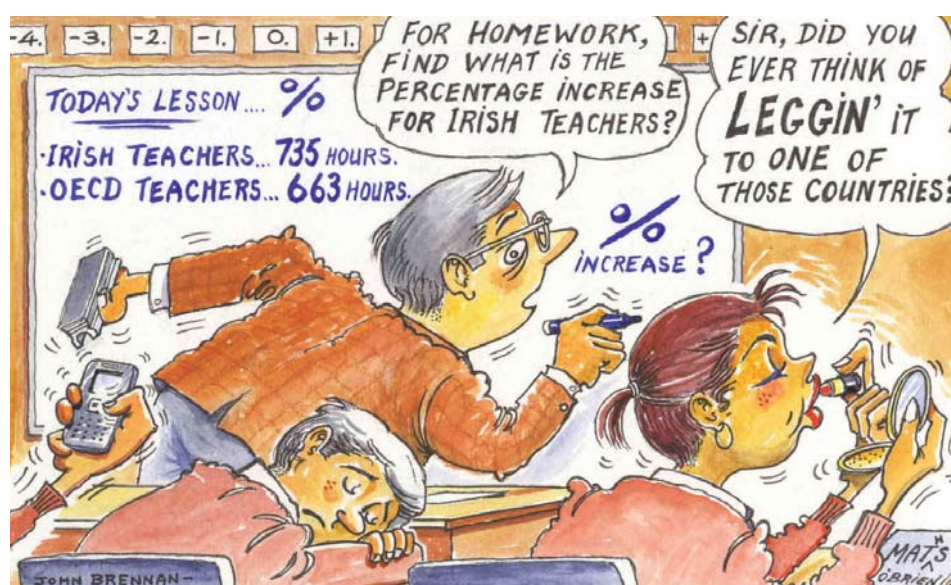
Please contact Irish Aid on:

t Lo Call Number: 1890 252 676
e irishaidcentre@dfa.ie

OECD Report

– Education at a Glance

DIARMAID DE PAOR examines the 2007 OECD Report for issues relevant to second-level education in Ireland.



The OECD Report 'Education at a Glance 2007' makes very interesting reading for all those involved in education in Ireland. In addition to the headline figures on investment in education, which place wealthy Ireland at the bottom of the table measuring the spend on each second-level student relative to GDP per capita, there is information worth studying in the sections on the economic benefits of education and on the pupil-teacher ratio.

Science does say it) that educational expenditure has risen over the period from 1995 to 2006, it is also true that the country's wealth has risen at a faster pace still. This means that the proportion of our wealth that we invest in education has fallen from 5.2% in 1995 to 4.6% today. This downward trend in investment in education is not only a failure to support Irish children in a crucial aspect of their development; it is also folly in terms of Ireland's future economic well being.



Investment in education

Ireland's GDP per capita is the second highest in the EU and sixth highest in the world. Despite the fact that we are one of the wealthiest countries in the world, Ireland comes joint last out of 29 OECD countries when it comes to spending on each second-level student relative to GDP per capita. Out of 29 OECD countries surveyed by the OECD, Ireland, Mexico, Greece and the Slovak Republic invest less per second-level student relative to GDP per capita than all other countries. Expenditure on education per student relative to GDP per capita is a spending measure that takes countries' relative wealth into account.

One of the most shocking facts to emerge from this report is that, measured as a proportion of our wealth, investment in education in Ireland has fallen in the last decade. While it is true to say (and the Department of Education and

The economic benefits of education

The OECD Report makes it very clear that "spending" on education is, in fact, properly called "investment" in education. The report looks at both private and public "internal rates of return", i.e., the economic benefits accruing to the individual and to the economy from investment in education. Not surprisingly, the higher the education level an individual achieves, the more they tend to earn. Interestingly, this report looked at private internal rates of return for upper secondary education (our senior cycle) for the first time. The significant conclusion drawn from this is that the rate of return is higher for upper secondary education than for tertiary education. In other words, while earnings increase with every level of education achieved, a student's potential earnings are increased more by completing secondary school than by obtaining a third-level degree. When it comes to the public internal rate of return, the report echoes what the ASTI, economists, international experts and even government ministers, including An Taoiseach, have been saying for years: investment in education is good for the economy. In those countries measured, the public internal rate of return for students obtaining an upper secondary education averaged 8.9% for boys and 6.6% for girls. The report acknowledges, however, that this does not paint the full picture, as there are other potential gains to the economy to be achieved by educating our children.



Indirect benefits of education include better health, more social cohesion and more informed and effective citizens.

"Internal rates of return to investment in education can also be viewed from a societal perspective. ...A social rate of return should also include a range of possible indirect benefits of education, which also have economic repercussions, such as better health, more social cohesion and more informed and effective citizens." The Report concludes that further research is necessary in this area.

Pupil-teacher ratio

Ireland is one of the wealthiest countries in the world and yet its ratio of students to teaching staff is among the highest in the OECD. In fact, of the 27 countries measured, only four have a higher PTR than the Republic of Ireland. Ireland's second-level PTR of 15.5 to 1 is higher than the OECD average of 13.4 to 1 and higher again than the EU average of 12.2 to 1. This means that the average 500-pupil school in Ireland would have nine fewer teachers than a school of similar size elsewhere in the EU.



Irish second-level teachers teach for a greater number of hours than most of their OECD counterparts.

Hours spent teaching

Irish second-level teachers teach for a greater number of hours than most of their OECD counterparts. On average, upper secondary (senior cycle) teachers in OECD countries teach for 663 hours per year. Irish second-level teachers teach for 735 hours per year at junior and senior cycle. 'Education at a Glance' notes that teaching hours is not the same as working time. Teaching time refers to the number of hours spent in a classroom with students. Working time includes hours devoted to other activities such as lesson planning, correcting, counselling students, meeting with parents, staff meetings, professional development and general school tasks.

OECD Education at a Glance, 2007

Expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP

1	Iceland	8
2	United States	7.4
3	Korea	7.2
4	New Zealand	6.9
5	Sweden	6.7
6	Mexico	6.4
7	Norway	6.2
	Switzerland	6.2
8	Belgium	6.1
	Finland	6.1
	France	6.1
9	Australia	5.9
10	United Kingdom	5.9
11	Hungary	5.6
12	Portugal	5.4
13	Germany	5.2
14	Netherlands	5.1
15	Czech Republic	4.9
	Italy	4.9
16	Japan	4.8
	Slovak Republic	4.8
17	Spain	4.7
18	Ireland	4.6
19	Turkey	4.1
20	Greece	3.4
OECD Average		5.8



*Diarmaid de Paor,
ASTI Deputy General Secretary.*



Professor Tom Collins is Head of Education at NUI Maynooth and Chairperson of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. He was the keynote speaker at the 2007 ASTI Education Conference. GEMMA TUFFY asks him about his vision for the future of second-level education.

Teachers will embrace change when it is linked to the joys of pedagogy, according to Professor Tom Collins, Head of Education at NUI Maynooth. After spending the last two years surrounded by current and future second-level teachers, and almost three decades studying and working in the field of education, Professor Collins believes that teachers demonstrate an enormous level of energy and readiness for pedagogical innovation. "If change is not compulsory, if it's not seen as just a gimmick, if it's not linked to performance management or human resource devices, then teachers will take on change." This, he explains, is why educational reform such as the development and implementation of the innovative Transition Year Programme has been able to take root in our schools. Currently Chairperson of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), Prof. Collins is clearly focused on the demands facing young people as they prepare for adult life and work in the knowledge

society. Employers, he says, are increasingly interested in what learning skills potential employees have and how flexible they are as learners, not what particular mass of knowledge they have acquired during their education. "That young people are able and willing to learn – that is what is important to employers. What they [young people] already know – that's much less important."

"The main work that I would do is in the first three years. Then we could say 'the fundamentals are in place, now we build on that'."

Educational reform

Flexible teaching and a flexible curriculum create flexible learners. This is key if second-level education is to be firmly embedded in the continuum of lifelong learning. Prof. Collins' vision for second-level education begins with the junior cycle. "I would move away from the subject base and focus much more on core skills learning, such as active learning, and the development of the whole person," he says. "I would be very keen to see more effort to teach abstract concepts through concrete activities." He adds that Irish learning institutions are too much of the view that learning is a purely cognitive activity.

"That young people are able and willing to learn – that is what is important to employers. What they [young people] already know – that's much less important."

"The greatest weakness of the current Junior Certificate is that it takes too much guidance from the Leaving Certificate. So it is doing to small people what the Leaving Certificate does to big people." He wants to see a move away from a national curriculum at junior cycle, with course and syllabus design being devolved to school level. While learning outcomes would be set nationally, schools would be allowed to construct a curriculum around these learning outcomes involving teachers, students and the wider community. This, he says, would give teachers far greater autonomy in meeting the individual needs of their students.

Such an overhaul of the junior cycle would be practical, according to Prof. Collins, because the Junior Certificate is not "the high stakes examination" that the Leaving Certificate is. And the model for this reform? The Transition Year. "It's a phenomenal success. Teachers have shown that they are well able to respond to the challenge that Transition Year presents for them, in terms of creating a syllabus and being highly innovative and exploratory in their teaching. Transition Year offers us a model for potentially transforming schooling."

Does the Junior Certificate examination feature in this vision of junior cycle reform? "I think there should be some sort of benchmark. ... But assessment should not set the agenda all the time. At the end of the junior cycle I would like every child to have built up a learning portfolio based on their holistic intelligence – their career in sport, their career in social participation such as working with the elderly – and also demonstrating their academic attributes." Whatever the form of certification at junior cycle, Professor Collins believes it should be based on a model of "assessment for learning" rather than "assessment of learning".

And the senior cycle? Prof. Collins believes that remodelling the junior cycle this way would allow the senior cycle to become more cognitive and subject focused. "The main work that I would do is in the first three years. Then we could say 'the fundamentals are in place, now we build on that.' There are some positive aspects to the senior cycle. I think it's a much better programme than the A-Level programme in the UK. I like the fact



Professor Tom Collins took over as Head of Education at NUI Maynooth in January 2006 following the retirement of Professor John Coolahan. Prior to this he was Director of Dundalk Institute of Technology and Director of the Centre for Adult Education at Maynooth. Throughout his career, Prof. Collins has been actively involved in many aspects of Irish educational policy. He is currently Chair of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

that students are not obliged to specialise so early." However, he is concerned that the pressures of the examination will mean that students are "taught to the test" and that the Leaving Certificate, as it currently stands, "is not the best kind of assessment of the kind of attributes that are important at third level and in the workplace."

"The best investment society can make in its future is investing in the quality of its teachers."

Investment in teachers

When discussing educational reform, teachers frequently cite inadequate investment in teacher professional development. Professor Collins agrees. "The teaching profession has been poorly served. This is in marked contrast to nursing, for example, where there has been a tradition of heavy investment in ongoing training. The second-level teacher gets a six- to eight-month pre-service course, which by its nature aims to be foundational. That you are supposed to sustain a life's work on this is just nonsense." Ireland needs to invest in a much more comprehensive and coherent programme of teacher professional development. "Professional development should be more than just saluting change. It needs to focus on pedagogical innovation and the pedagogical renewal of the teacher ... The best investment society can make in its future is investing in the quality of its teachers."

If you would like to respond to this article, email astirfeedback@astir.ie.



*Gemma Tuffy,
Media and Communications Officer.*

Advice on whole school evaluation and subject inspections

ASTI General Secretary JOHN WHITE addresses some of the concerns schools have about school inspections.

It is in the interests of all of the education community that schools operate in a caring, harmonious, efficient manner and endeavour to foster the potential of all of their pupils. The ASTI believes that the best schools are those which are inclusive and which cater for the full range of socio-economic backgrounds and the full range of abilities. We reject the narrow attenuated practices of the grind schools, which, incidentally, are not subject to any evaluation by the State, nor are their 'teachers' required to be registered as qualified by the Teaching Council.

Schools that are expecting a whole school evaluation, or teachers involved in a subject inspection, feel a natural concern as to whether the process will be stressful and upsetting. Evaluation of schools is required by the Education Act and the ASTI engaged in lengthy discussions with the DES in relation to the process to be followed. In these discussions, we emphasised that evaluations should be conducted in a fair manner, grounded on an understanding of the practicalities of teaching and learning in the modern school. It is in this context that the advice contained in this article is offered to members.

A relationship of mutual respect

As a first step, members should read *A Guide to Subject Inspection at Second Level* and *A Guide to Whole School Evaluation in Post-Primary Schools*, copies of which are available in all schools and are on the DES website (www.education.ie). In these, it is clearly stated that the relationship between teachers and inspectors should be that of co-professionals, grounded in mutual respect and courtesy. The *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting for the Inspectorate* states that the aims of evaluation are:

- to identify, acknowledge and affirm good practice in schools;
- to promote continuing improvement in the quality of education offered by schools;
- to promote self-evaluation and continuous development by schools and staffs; and,
- to provide an assurance of quality in the education system as a whole based on the collection of objective, dependable, high-quality data.

ASTI surveys of the conduct of inspections show that teachers' experiences have been generally positive and that inspectors have conducted the inspections in a sympathetic, professional manner in accordance with the aims outlined above.

As practising teachers, we must never forget that the quality of the education service is dependent on the knowledge, commitment and professionalism of teachers. Quality cannot be inspected in schools. Indeed, school self-evaluation and reflection is the best way to foster school improvement when all the school community – teachers, parents, students and boards of management – work towards the same agreed goals.

We believe that whole school evaluation and subject inspections should not place unnecessary additional administrative burdens on schools and should not be such as to disrupt the ongoing work of the school.



Guidelines

At preliminary meetings with staff, inspectors should be fully apprised of the contextual features that are relevant to the school, i.e., *inter alia*, the school enrolment policy, the catchment area, the number of students with special needs, the number of international students, and the socio-economic background of the students. Teachers may also wish to apprise the inspectors of any particularly challenging students in classes that are to be inspected. Any evaluations that do not fully take these factors into account are inappropriate and invalid. In addition, the inspectors should be fully apprised of any deficits in buildings, equipment, facilities and resources, and should be requested to note these in their report.

The inspectorate agreed with the ASTI that it is not necessary for teachers to prepare individual written lesson plans for the purpose of subject inspections. It is, however, expected that teachers will be able to indicate to inspectors a broad written plan of their work on a termly and yearly basis. It is important that teachers teach their classes in the normal way and remember that the inspectors agree that appropriate evaluations are not prescriptive as to teaching methodologies and acknowledge the need for diverse teaching approaches in accordance with the needs of the students. Substitution is provided if necessary where meetings are being held between subject teachers and inspectors, and teachers are not required to attend meetings with inspectors before or after school. A teacher, or the chairperson of the board of management, or a CEO of a VEC, may request a review of any aspect of an inspection visit. Such a request should be received within 14 days (excluding school holidays) of the date of the visit or the date of the issue of the report. The current procedure is set out in the Procedure for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13(9) of the Education Act 1998.

The inspectorate agreed with the ASTI that it is not necessary for teachers to prepare individual written lesson plans for the purpose of subject inspections.

In relation to the publication process, members should familiarise themselves with *The Publication of School Report Guidelines*, copies of which are in schools. It is a matter for each school to decide, given all of the circumstances, whether a formal response from the school to the evaluation report should be published with the report.

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



John White,
ASTI General Secretary.

TEACHERS - VISIT ZAMBIA WITH BÓTHAR

Bóthar, the Development Aid Agency, is putting in place a Study Tour to Zambia specifically for post-primary teachers. The trip takes place from 21st - 30th March 2008. See first hand how Bóthar projects work in Africa. Cost of trip is €2,500 per person. All flights, accommodation, transport and meals in-country included in cost. Places are limited to 16 participants, so book early to avoid disappointment.



For further information and an application form, contact:
Mary Goldrick at the Bóthar Fundraising Office, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo.
Telephone 071 9120100 or email mary@bothar.ie

Is your school safe?



The first in a series of articles by BRIGID FITZGERALD dealing with health and safety issues for teachers looks at health and safety legislation, and at creating and maintaining a safe working environment. An article focussing on workplace stress, a major health and safety issue for teachers, will feature in the January edition of ASTIR.

While schools have a relatively low rate of workplace injury as compared to other sectors, 76 incidents causing teachers to be absent for more than three days were reported to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in 2006. It is the overall responsibility of management to ensure that the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 is adhered to and that a health and safety management system is put in place. This system should be sufficiently rigorous to suit the requirements of a busy school and should protect not only the staff, but also students, parents and other visitors to the school.

76 incidents causing teachers to be absent for more than three days were reported to the HSA in 2006.

Safety statements

Every school is legally obliged to have a safety statement. A recent ASTI survey found, however, that only 90% of safety reps were aware of their school having one. This shortfall indicates a lack of adherence to the law. A 2006 report on occupational health and safety in the technologies carried out by the State Claims Agency and the DES found that safety statements in most schools were produced to fulfil the statutory legal requirement, and not as an active working document used to manage health and safety in schools.

The statement should be drawn up by management in consultation with employees and safety reps, and should be based on the principle that safety can be managed, since accidents are foreseeable and can be prevented. The statement should identify hazards, assess the risks arising from these hazards and give details of arrangements made to eliminate or control them. The ASTI provides a draft checklist for risk assessment inspections, which can be used as part of this process. It is vital that a safety statement is honest and lists all hazards, including those specific to individual schools. All staff, particularly new staff, should be made aware of the safety statement. If your school does not have a safety statement you should bring it to the immediate attention of the principal and, if necessary, the matter should be referred to the board of management.

Safety officer or safety rep?

The key to health and safety is awareness, and it is important that every school has a staff safety representative and a safety officer who act co-operatively to identify hazards and reduce risks. A safety officer is a person appointed by management to monitor health and safety standards in schools. A safety representative is elected by the school staff and is entitled to have time off to conduct safety inspections, to inspect areas where accidents have occurred, to investigate complaints by employees and to accompany inspectors carrying out inspections. The ASTI provides regionally-based training for staff safety reps, where they are briefed on safety legislation, the rights and role of the safety rep, and how to conduct safety inspections. The ASTI is indebted to the scores of

safety reps who care enough about their colleagues to volunteer. The responsibility does not stop with safety reps, however; all staff should be vigilant to health and safety breaches and risks, and should bring them to the immediate attention of management. Accidents and near misses should also be reported for analysis. Members should insist that health and safety is discussed at staff meetings on a regular basis and that health and safety procedures are reviewed at least once a year to ensure that controls are kept in place.

Safety drills

School safety drills are training for students that will stand to them throughout their lives, and are a very effective and cost-free means of risk prevention. There are, on average, 70–80 school fires each year but a recent ASTI survey found that 16% of schools did not have safety drills in the last year, and that 25% of schools had only one. School boards are legally required to provide and regularly test plans for emergencies and failing to do this is a breach of legislation and of duty of care to both students and teachers. It is essential that 100% of schools have evacuation procedures in place and hold safety drills on a regular basis.

Facilities

The quality of buildings and facilities plays a large part in ensuring that drills and evacuations run smoothly, and also has an effect on general workplace health and safety. A 2004 ASTI survey asked school stewards to rate the quality of the physical environment in their schools. Only 69% were satisfied with classroom standards, 63% with corridors, and 82% with electrical wiring or equipment. These figures were largely unchanged from the 2000 statistics. Inadequate buildings, lack of storage facilities and large class sizes can lead to thoroughways being blocked and a lack of space to circulate, both of which are a hazard in normal circumstances but are critical in the event of an evacuation. Exits and corridors must be kept clear and facilities need to be up to a standard that will limit the risk of accidents. An employer must ensure that the physical environment of a workplace is adequate and safe, that it is large enough to be safe and healthy, and is generally stable, with good ventilation, fresh air, and suitable temperatures and lighting. The Summer Works Scheme and Schools Building Programme are designed to upgrade schools and to undertake projects such as gas, electrical and mechanical works, fixture replacements and repairs, structural improvements and access works. It is worrying, however, that facilities have to reach a stage where these works are deemed to be absolutely necessary before anything is done. Accidents and injury can easily be caused by less obvious hazards such as frayed steps, worn or slippery surfaces or items left out of place. Slips and trips are the most frequent cause of schoolplace accidents.

The DES does provide specific funding to enable schools to implement improvements to comply with legislative requirements but, according to the 2006 report on occupational health and safety in technologies, many schools are still not compliant. While schools can only be expected to deal with a limited number of issues in any one school year, it is important to prioritise health and safety issues.

Technology subjects

The Health and Safety Authority states that due to the high exposure to critical risks in technology classrooms, it is imperative that teachers of these subjects are competent in best health and safety practice. The authority is supporting an initiative of the second-level support service for technology teachers (T₄) to provide a full day's (re)training to all technology teachers in the second-level system, which will introduce new skills in auditing, assessment and control. Arrangements are currently being made with the DES for the release of teachers to attend the course and for the related substitution cover. The report on occupational health and safety in the technologies recommends that workshops should be of an adequate design and size, that schools should limit class size where the room is deemed inadequate for a full group, and a formal monthly inspection should be carried out to include housekeeping issues such as obstruction of exits and passageways, storage arrangements and waste removal.

Schools need to not only adhere to but also to exceed health and safety requirements.

Health and Safety Authority initiatives

Rob Halford, a former CEC member and Kildare Branch Chairman, has been seconded to the Health and Safety Authority to advise on promoting its education strategy. This strategy is based on the principle that the school environment must be conducive to fostering a culture of accident prevention in young people. In order to address the learning aspect of this approach, the NCCA recently published a study for the Authority entitled 'Mapping Health and Safety in the Curriculum'. A HSA education module for TY, LCA and LCVP students, 'Choose Safety', is also being piloted in schools in the west and south east. The Authority is currently working with the DES, the State Claims Agency and the School Development Planning Initiative on designing a health and safety management system for second-level schools. Currently in the draft stage, it is hoped that this will encompass all management and staff need to know about health and safety in schools, and will assist schools in carrying out risk assessments and writing safety statements. It is hoped to pilot this system in a number of schools later this school year. Later this year and early next year, the Authority will be running an in-service training programme for teachers that is aimed at increasing awareness of health and safety, as well as assisting teachers with classroom strategies around safety in the curriculum.

Schools need to not only adhere to but also to exceed health and safety requirements. In 2002, a two-year programme was launched to ensure that the civil and public sectors work towards becoming exemplars of good workplace health and safety. The results of the 2000 and 2004 ASTI surveys of workplace health and safety showed that circumstances were, however, largely unchanged. Happily, there has been a marked improvement in the latest survey. This indicates a greater awareness of health and safety issues within schools, which should be built upon by school managements and staff.

For further information on the Health and Safety Authority's education strategy, contact Joanne Harmon, Education Strategy Manager, on joanne_harmon@hsa.ie or 01-6147123.

Postgraduate studies: to do or not to do – is that your question?

GERRY MAC RUAIRC, Lecturer in Education at University College Dublin, offers some practical advice on making the decision to return to postgraduate education.

The decision to return to postgraduate studies for any individual is not something that should be considered lightly. You are too busy, the kids are in Transition Year and need to be monitored carefully, you have to change your car, wash the dog ... In many ways returning to study is like giving up smoking (apologies to the nonsmokers for the analogy) – there is no good time. In other ways it is not like this at all because now is really a perfect time, and there are a number of reasons why this is so.

Why postgrad?

Increasingly, the currency in terms of job opportunities has shifted very significantly towards and beyond masters qualifications. For those interested in teaching and learning methodologies, curriculum developments, school management and a host of other education-related fields, a postgraduate qualification is most beneficial. In addition, there is a need to make sense of all of the changes – at a broad societal level and within the field of education itself – that have impacted on the work of all educationalists. As leaders of learning, it is necessary to try to work through where we are as a profession and how best to be more effective in our work and more relevant to society in a new millennium. Postgraduate studies enable participants to do this by providing the forum to critically engage with the challenges facing teachers and school leaders today. Courses typically draw on the participants' experience in the workplace and filter it through a range of lenses that will challenge and provoke participants. It is possible to guarantee that, whatever else happens, by the end of the course, you will think differently about many issues that impact on your practice.

Of course study will impact on your life; you will be a bit busier than normal but that's about all. You quickly get used to the changes with the result that it becomes part of what, and indeed who, you are. So delay no longer; the fact that you have read this far means there is some part of you asking a question. Perhaps you should answer it?

Practical issues

So you have made a decision! Where to from here? The first thing to do is to check out the graduate programmes on the different university websites. Universities have a range of course structures and run their lecture programmes differently. In UCD, our graduate programmes take place between 4.30 and 6.30 Monday to Thursday, and usually students are required to attend two evenings per week, depending on your choice of course and programme requirements. It is very important to familiarise yourself with the use of computers. So much of what happens in universities now assumes that we never existed without them. You have to apply online for most courses and register online when you are accepted onto a course. You need to go online to get reading material for some lectures and the entire library facilities, including reservation of books, can be accessed online. If you can break the back of this before you start to study, you will already be in control.

At masters level, courses offer a combination of taught components and a thesis. In UCD we offer a choice of full taught masters programmes with a short project, or masters courses with a greater research component, i.e., a thesis, and less coursework. If there is an issue that you have been interested in delving into for a while now, or an aspect of policy or practice that, in your opinion, needs to be problematised and teased out more comprehensively, your research can do this and in that way contribute to the debate in the area. If you have no particular idea for research in mind, you will find that during the course of the programme something will capture your imagination. Your research work will be supervised by an assigned member of the university staff, who will guide your questions and help you to get the most out of the process of conducting research.



A teacher's postgraduate experience



Eddie Kenneally teaches technical graphics at St Mary's College in Sligo. He recently graduated with a Masters in Management in Education from St Angela's College.

Support

For those of us who are now involved in teacher education and professional development, we remember the challenge of teaching all day and facing into lectures and assignments after work. The quality of student experience throughout the masters programme is of prime importance and every effort will be made to accommodate the needs you have when you start the course and the needs that emerge during the time you spend at postgraduate work. An essential driving force behind the work of those involved in masters programmes is a firm belief in the need to invest in teachers as intellectuals and as thinkers who, in the words of the great Italian thinker, Antonio Gramsci, will "not only seek to just understand what is known but also to challenge and transform it".



Dr Gerry MacRuairc

Dr Gerry MacRuairc is a lecturer in education in the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University College Dublin.

Where did you source information on available courses?

I was aware of the course from posters in the staff room. St Angela's College was convenient for me. A colleague of mine had done the Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Management there and suggested I try it.

Was it difficult to manage your time while studying and working?

There was a large workload, it was difficult and time was precious. But it was manageable. It is important to know what you are getting into. My research was practical and my teaching work fed into it, so that helped. The ASTI library was a fantastic resource.

What did you get out of your postgraduate research?

Doing research in the area of education made me reflect on my work, on what is involved and how to improve things. It was very interesting and I had the opportunity to share ideas and hear other people's views. As a year head, I found that I was mainly working in a disciplinary role, rather than a support role. My research focused on how to improve that situation.

It is always useful to keep abreast of developments in education. I made a lot of good friends and had some very good experiences.

Global Schoolroom

ASTI members GWEN BRENNAN and GARRET CAMPBELL worked with Cornmarket to set up the Global Schoolroom project. They describe their work and the development of the programme.



Students from St Henry School, Mizoram, a 12-teacher school with over 60 students in each class, pictured with Fr Anthony Valluran, Veronique Poisson (ASTI member), Maurice O'Mahony, Karol Moore and Lisa Walsh (Cornmarket), Clare McCarthy (ASTI member), Garret Campbell and Olivia McGarry.

About this time three years ago we were already looking forward to the next summer. Both of us had travelled quite a bit and had done short periods of aid work in Africa, South America and Mongolia. We had also been involved in teacher training both at home and abroad. For some time India had been in our sights but we did not want to go there as tourists – we wanted to get a little more under the skin of the country and, while it might seem clichéd, give something back while we were there. A friend of ours, Donal Neary S.J., had spent quite some time in Calcutta and in the northeast, and had worked with a Salesian priest from Kerala, Fr Anthony Valluran, who was now based in Silchar, the second biggest city in Assam. Donal put us in contact with Anthony, who was delighted that two Irish people were willing to come and do some work with him. The northeast of India is socially and philosophically a part of India which almost should not be in India at all. While the guide books refer to it as 'India's best kept secret', the reality is widespread poverty and neglect despite the apparent boom times further south.

The challenges

Education in the northeast is of particular concern as state schools operate in a very precarious manner, with class sizes in excess of 50 pupils (some with more than 100), in very cramped conditions and with very few resources. Added to this is a curriculum that leaves little room for discovery or understanding, let alone fun. The problems in education do not end there as teacher training, where it exists, is often quite poor. In many schools, teachers have received no training.

Over the last number of years, the Salesians have worked in this part of India and have built a number of schools offering a more holistic educational experience. While there has been general success with the bricks and mortar issues, the difficulty arises in the provision of motivated and well-equipped teachers. The Salesian order recruit their own teachers and pay them out of their own funds. While they teach the state curriculum, their salaries are even less than state salaries. There is a commitment by the order to try to rectify this and the carrot offered to these teachers is that they are working in a good environment with the possibility of training. Our plan in 2006 was to travel with Fr Anthony to some of the remoter villages in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram to deliver week-long teacher training workshops to the local teachers.



The Global Schoolroom 2007 team with their Indian teacher counterparts.



Global Schoolroom

Shortly before leaving for India, however, we were having dinner with friends, one of whom was Robert Power of Cornmarket. We were talking about our summer plans and he suggested that his company might be interested in getting involved with our work in the future.

It was a brilliant summer. We visited three parishes, each with a catchment of many thousands of children: the first in Umswai in the jungle area outside Guwahati, the capital of Assam; the second in Garabada in the Garro Hills of Meghalaya; and, the third in Silchar. It was clear to us that teacher training was necessary and that the future involvement of Irish teachers in this area would be very beneficial. A meeting with Robert and his team at Cornmarket on our return resulted in the birth of Global Schoolroom.

Global Schoolroom is non-denominational and its aim is to share educational experience worldwide and, by so doing, contribute to the eradication of poverty and to the support of sustainable communities.

With the financial support offered through our association with Cornmarket we were able to bring eight teachers and two Cornmarket staff to India in 2007. We visited more schools and worked with over 350 teachers. This has brought a whole new dimension to our work as we can now look towards the future with these Indian teachers, to developing meaningful relationships with them and continuing to share educational experiences and professional development.

An absolutely amazing group of people were part of the 2007 Global Schoolroom team who worked with us: Angela Mitchell, Dublin; Veronique Poisson, Dublin; Liam Kilbride, Dublin; Clare McCarthy, Westmeath; Maurice O'Mahony, Cork; Olivia McGarry, Roscommon; Karol Moore, Dublin; and, Lisa Walsh, Cork.

Global Schoolroom 2008 will return to the northeast of India and work in five locations, delivering teacher training workshops and offering additional classroom-based support to the local teachers. There is also the possibility of bringing some Indian teachers to Ireland for further training. This will be part of a three-year plan to help better equip these local schools, thus improving the quality of life for so many in this part of the world.

The deadline for applications from teachers wishing to take part in Global Schoolroom 2008 has now passed. However, further information regarding the project is available from Roisin Kelly at Cornmarket, Tel: 01-4084116, or email: roisin.kelly@cornmarket.ie. Information is also available on the project's website: www.cornmarket.ie/globalschoolroom.



Gwen Brennan
and Garret Campbell

Gwen Brennan is Deputy Principal at Presentation Secondary School, Warrenmount, Dublin 8, and Garret Campbell is Transition Year Co-ordinator at St Conleth's College, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. Together with Robert Power of Cornmarket, they set up Global Schoolroom.

ASTI contributes to curriculum development

ASTIR continues its series profiling the people who play key roles in the union. This issue the ASTI's Convenor and Second Representative on the NCCA course committee for mathematics

What work is involved in your role?

The main function of the Convenor and Second Rep is to represent the ASTI on the relevant NCCA course committee. The time spent at NCCA meetings depends on whether the course committee is active or not. At the moment both the Junior and Leaving Certificate maths committees are meeting regularly as part of a major review of mathematics.

Another function is to be the subject spokesperson for the ASTI. It is important to keep abreast of developments in the subject, and the Convenor and Second Rep write a report after the state exams and are available to give comment on the exams to the media on the ASTI's behalf.

As Convenor and Second Rep, we work very closely together. We consult before and after NCCA meetings and we write a joint report for the ASTI Education Committee.

How important is the role?

It is very important that we have teacher representation on the NCCA. What the committees decide on, teachers will be implementing in the future, so it's very important that we make sure that ASTI policy is upheld, particularly in the area of assessment. Being a representative involves channelling the views of teachers and looking after their interests.



(From left): Maria Kelly, ASTI Second Representative for mathematics and Eileen Scanlon, ASTI Convenor for mathematics.

What have you gained from your role?

It's very interesting to be involved in the NCCA and anybody who has the opportunity should go forward. It allows a more holistic view of the work and makes you more open to trying different methodologies. It's a way to get to know teachers from all over the country and to share ideas. Your students benefit and you get the opportunity to pass on your expertise and wisdom to other professionals. It does take a lot of effort but it gives you a sense of ownership of your profession. If teachers don't get involved this influence will dissipate and some other body will take over.

Maths literacy

The reason for the current NCCA review of maths is because of the perception that the maths course is not suitable for a number of students. Mathematical ability is innate and is used and needed as much in life as language literacy. The subject is meaningful and important for so many areas of life. The committees are trying to make it more relevant and attractive for students, and we are looking at introducing more contextual maths to relate the subject to students' real life experiences.

There is an ASTI Convenor and Second Representative for each subject. For information visit www.asti.ie.

Funding available for new ideas!

Looking for new ideas for school projects or professional development opportunities?

Need information on Europe for your students? Want to organise a school exchange?

Léargas manages a wide range of national, European and international cooperation programmes in education and is the Irish agent for the Europa Diaries, a free resource for Transition Year students.

EU-funded programmes include Comenius School Partnerships, Multilateral Projects, In-Service Training, Assistants and Networks, as well as eTwinning which promotes school partnerships using ICT.

Bilateral programmes include the East - West Schools Exchange Programme and the Irish Aid Schools Linking and Immersion Scheme.

 **léargas**



For information on these and other Léargas activities, please go to: www.leargas.ie or contact us at:

Léargas, 189 Parnell Street, Dublin 1 - (01) 873 1411



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

The Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee

MAIRE MULCAHY provides an update on the work of the Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee.

What is this committee?

The Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee was first established at a special meeting in May 1978, from members employed in what was then the relatively novel community school sector, and the slightly more established comprehensive school sector.

Convention records reveal a strong demand from ASTI members for a forum within which the needs and interests of members in these schools, and how the ASTI might respond to or anticipate their requirements, could be discussed. These schools brought forward a new model of management, the Deeds of Trust, constituting a formal regulation of school affairs, some differences in working conditions, a curriculum that comprehended the full range of subjects, and an introduction of the dual-union workplace.

Committee's contribution and value to the ASTI

Over the years the committee has:

- been an ASTI presence in schools;
- acted as a link between Head Office and schools;
- provided valuable information to Head Office on members' requirements, responses to policy, views on how the union was functioning, etc.; and,
- offered assistance in recruitment in dual-union schools.

At its meetings, the committee:

- assists in identifying necessary procedures/agreements for members;
- identifies members' concerns in individual schools or sectors; and,
- co-operates in the development of an appropriate response to members' or sectoral issues.

The committee members are:

Mr David Martin	Mount Temple Comprehensive
Mr Michael Stokes	Castlecomer Community School
Ms Catriona McGrath	Carrigaline Community School
Mr Pat White	Clonakilty Community School
Ms Eilis Casey	Crescent College Comprehensive
Mr Michael Lynch	Carrick-on-Shannon Community School
Mr Jim King	Royal and Prior
Mr Pat Deery	Chairperson

The ASTI President and Vice President also attend meetings.

Each committee member represents members in specific community and comprehensive schools. For a list of the schools assigned to each member, visit www.asti.ie.



At a meeting of the Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee. Back row (from left): Jim King; Michael Stokes; Pat White; Catriona McGrath; and, Liam O'Mahony, Honorary National Organiser. Front row (from left): David Martin; Maire Mulcahy, ASTI Assistant General Secretary; Pat Deery; and, Michael Lynch.

Current activities

In the current year the committee has focussed on the following issues in community and comprehensive schools:

- reviewing industrial relations procedures;
- monitoring developments in relation to redeployment for members in C&C schools;
- revising the IVEA codes on sexual harassment, bullying and harassment;
- developing a joint ASTI/TUI grievance procedure in VEC-managed schools;
- monitoring teacher allocation;
- ensuring that members were aware of possibilities under the Transitional Agreement and following up where members were 'short-changed';
- examining ways of 'mainstreaming' or integrating the work of the committee into branch structures;
- advising branches of the availability of area representatives to contribute to meetings; and,
- collecting information on the number of reserved places for members of religious orders and the number of members of religious orders employed in schools.

The committee would like to remind ASTI members that it is available to assist them.



*Maire Mulcahy,
Assistant General Secretary,
Industrial Relations.*

Assessment – getting it right

MOIRA LEYDON presents a simple guide to assessment concepts and to the assessment tools currently in use.

There is a renewed interest in assessment issues in the curriculum, arising from the concern to ensure that the full range of students' learning is recognised and validated. A lot of new terminology has emerged around assessment, which can sometimes be confusing.

Assessment and learning are inextricably linked. If we want to learn something, it is inevitable that we will want to know how well we have been learning it. This may seem axiomatic but it is worth stating because of the negative association of assessment among some people who advocate free, spontaneous and enthusiastic learning.

"Thus, questions may well be raised about the manner of assessment in certain circumstances but the idea of assessment cannot be dispensed with."

(Williams, K. *Assessment: A Discussion Paper*. ASTI, 1992)

All teachers engage in assessment as part of their everyday work – consciously and unconsciously. Monitoring students' understanding of the syllabus content, noting their progress and reviewing areas of work are all part and parcel of classroom teaching. Teachers use a variety of assessment tools to gather information about students' learning. Asking questions, giving written tests at the end of units of study, or setting and correcting homework assignments are all forms of assessment with which teachers are familiar.

Teachers use the results of this assessment to inform students of their progress, to report to parents, and to plan future classroom activities. In this way, teachers are using two techniques of assessment – summative and formative. Summative assessment takes place at the end of a unit of the syllabus/course of study/term and has as its primary purpose the grading and certifying of students' achievements. In this sense, the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate examinations are considered as summative assessment. Formative assessment, by contrast, intervenes during the learning process to identify the areas for remediation, and to provide feedback to students to improve their performance. Formative assessment is therefore sometimes referred to as diagnostic assessment, although the latter is more properly concerned with the administration of standardised tests to assess students' achievements across specified cognitive areas. Recent advances in our knowledge of how learning takes place and how learners make their way through classroom activities have led to new understandings of the importance of assessment in the promotion of learning. These new perspectives are having an impact across the curriculum as the focus in assessment activity begins to move from an emphasis on the assessment of learning to include assessment for learning – providing feedback to learners on how to improve their learning. The NCCA has embarked on a pilot project called 'Assessment for Learning' and has developed a schema (see Table) for a better understanding of the processes

Assessment of learning	Assessment for learning
Happens after the learning takes place	An integral part of the learning process
Information is gathered by the teacher	Information is shared with the learner
Information is usually transformed into marks or grades	Information is available on the quality of learning
Comparison with the performance of others	Comparison with aims and objectives is important
Looks back on past learning	Looks forward to the next stage of learning
Source: NCCA website – www.ncca.ie .	



of formative and summative assessment. It is important, however, to avoid seeing assessment of learning and assessment for learning as opposing or contradictory practices. Both are essential in the educational experience of students.

An important distinction needs to be made between formative and continuous assessment. While both occur during – as distinct from at the end of – the learning process, continuous assessment means assessment that is recorded for purposes of accreditation or certification. By contrast, formative assessment is used solely to help learners to improve their future learning.

It is the long-standing policy of the ASTI that teachers will not provide marks or grades for their own pupils for the purposes of accreditation or certification in the state certificate examinations. It is important that the objectivity and integrity of the state examinations are preserved. The international status of Irish state examinations is high and this is due in no small measure to the external and professional mode in which the examinations are conducted.

The NCCA

The NCCA 'Assessment for Learning' project relates to the junior cycle. At senior cycle, the NCCA is also developing proposals for the extension of second component assessment approaches across the majority of subjects. Second component assessment approaches refer to approaches used to complement the standard Leaving Certificate terminal written examination. Some of these approaches are already in use in the Leaving Certificate examination and include:

- two-paper examinations;
- aural components;
- oral components;
- coursework journals/investigations/field studies/special projects; and,
- practical examinations.

The work of the NCCA is conducted by course committees and, in some senior cycle subject areas, by boards of studies. Teachers, including ASTI members, sit on the course committees and ensure that the highest standards of professionalism are brought to bear on all discussions leading to decisions on what forms and techniques of assessment will be used in the classroom and in the state examinations.

The Leaving Certificate examination is the 'high stakes' examination in our education system. Its assessment arrangements enjoy high levels of public confidence in terms of standards, status and currency. The perceived objectivity of these arrangements is seen as the examination's major strength. It is a core principle of the ASTI that no changes should be introduced into the assessment arrangements of either the Junior or the Leaving Certificate examinations that would in any manner compromise or undermine their current norms of objectivity, transparency and reliability.

NOTE: The ASTI website is being redesigned to include a curriculum and NCCA section in the 'members only' area. This section will contain documents relating to the work of NCCA committees and will have an interactive feature to enable subject teachers to communicate their views on proposed changes to syllabus and assessment to the ASTI representatives on the NCCA.



*Moira Leydon,
Assistant General Secretary,
Education and Research.*

Dundalk Branch



Members of the Dundalk Branch pictured at a recent branch meeting. Front row (from left): Edel Nolan; Daragh McKeown; Pamela Campbell; and, Aidan Heffernan. Middle: Peadar Gallagher; Sean Leahy; and, Bill Elvin. Back: Francis Foyle; and, Brendan Mc Caughey.

Who's who

Elaine Devlin, Chairperson
Francis Foyle, Secretary
Aidan Heffernan, Treasurer
Pamela Campbell, Equality Officer
Alan Craven, Organiser

Branch size

280 members

Meetings

Meetings are held once a month in the local teachers' centre. We have a core of regular attendees and ask all new members to attend the meeting at which they are nominated. This brings new people to the meetings and sometimes they even come to the next one!

Activities

We have a meal in September for our school stewards. This is always a very enjoyable night and a great way for new stewards to get to know the officers. We organise an event each year. We hold a biannual retirement function. This is a formal night where we present all our retired members with the ASTI bookmark. It is always a successful night and is very much appreciated by our retired members. Every other year we may have a speaker to discuss some topical issues and last year we held a table quiz. These social events help to raise the ASTI profile in our schools. This year, to encourage regular school meetings, we decided to send a list of the topics discussed at our meetings to the school stewards; hopefully, this will help to raise awareness of the work of the ASTI.

Links

Dundalk is the home of our General Secretary, John White, who rose through the ranks of the branch to his current position. It is also the birthplace of our previous General Secretary, Charlie Lennon. The branch is very proud of its connection with these men.

Committee members

Elaine was elected to the Equal Opportunities Committee at the April convention while Francis was elected to the Rules Committee. Elaine, Francis and Sean Leahy have been members of CEC for a number of years, and Sean in particular has many ASTI stories to tell!

Longstanding members

Aidan Heffernan has been Treasurer for almost a quarter of a century. He highlights the meetings during the pay campaign, where there was great participation and passionate debate, as the most memorable. Sean Leahy has been attending meetings since 1968. During this time he has experienced the gradual laicisation of our profession, along with the introduction of a common pay scale, with deputy principals and posts of responsibility. Teacher participation in boards of management is another huge and positive change, according to Sean. Both men speak of the friendships that grew from our regular meetings and the follow-up in the local hostelry, where many debates continued. As both are in their final year of teaching, the branch is delighted to have the opportunity to thank them for their long and dedicated service.

If your branch would like to feature in ASTIR, please email astir@asti.ie.

Obituaries

Niamh Russell Coughlan

Niamh Coughlan (nee Russell) passed away peacefully on Christmas Day, 2006 after a short illness, bravely borne.

Niamh, a native of Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, received her primary education from the Sisters of Charity and her secondary education in the Loreto Secondary School, both in Clonmel. She graduated in 1976 from University College Cork with a BComm (Honours) degree, followed by a Higher Diploma in Education (Honours) in 1977. Her first teaching post was in Loreto Secondary School in Youghal, Co. Cork.

On her marriage to West Cork man Laurence Coughlan, she moved to Clonakilty, setting up home and family there. It was there too, in 1990, that Niamh began her teaching career with the Sacred Heart Secondary School, teaching accounting and business to senior students and business studies to junior students. Niamh also taught enterprise education to Transition Year and Leaving Cert Applied students. Niamh was a very experienced examiner in the state examinations for Leaving Certificate accounting (higher level) and was able to give all her students the benefit of that experience.

Niamh was a naturally gifted and talented teacher, who instilled in her students a love of learning, along with a rare gift of humour and good nature that was infectious and brightened up many a student's day. She had the ability to bring out the best in her students. She has been described by her colleagues in many positive ways, but one quality that stands out was her love of life.

Niamh treated everybody – students, colleagues and parents – with warmth and respect. She bore her illness with admirable courage and dignity and, true to her nature, her faith, along with the support of a loving family, sustained her to the end.

Niamh touched many lives, not merely the students who were lucky enough to have her as their teacher, but also the staff and parents who were privileged to know her and to have been touched by her sense of fun and *joie de vivre*. We will not forget her.

To her husband Laurence, her sons Finbarr and Hugh, her daughter Ann Marie, her sister Brid and family we extend our deepest sympathy.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dilis.

From all her colleagues at Sacred Heart Secondary School.

Fidelma O'Connor

2 November 1965–11 August 2007

The peaceful death occurred after a short illness of Fidelma O'Connor on Saturday, August 11 at her residence on Castle Street, Cloghan.

It is a sad occasion to have to say goodbye to a loved one, especially someone full of spirit and will to live. Fidelma possessed strength of character, faith and a steely determination. Never once did she give up hope or succumb to self-pity. From the first diagnosis of her illness, her focus was on the pleasure of life and living.

Those who knew Fidelma will remember her as the girl with the big head of curls, that wonderful smile and a cheeky sense of humour. Fidelma was a past pupil of St Joseph and St Sarans SS, Ferbane, and qualified as a home economics and Irish teacher in 1987. She loved her work, both at Margaret Aylward's Community College, Dublin and her exam work for the State Examinations Commission. She had many interests and hobbies, most especially her flair and talent for needlecraft. Fidelma loved to travel and, with her friends, she journeyed the globe and experienced life to the full.

Her treatment commenced in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin in February 2006 but as soon as she could be transferred to the care of Tullamore Hospital, she came home to be among her family, friends and dear neighbours. It meant so much to Fidelma to have the support of the parish priest, Fr Michael Scanlon, and Fr Frank Grey, a cherished family friend, the dedicated care of Dr Velma Harkins, GP, and many friends and neighbours who were always there for her.

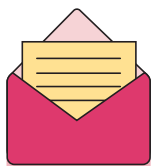
Fidelma was very special and loved, and will be missed dearly by her sisters Eithne (Gannon), Ann (Dolan), Deirdre (Hanamy) and Gertrude (Fox), her only brother Gearoid, her nieces and nephews, brothers-in-law and sister-in-law, aunts and uncles, relatives and many friends.

After concelebrated funeral mass with Fr Michael Scanlon PP (Cloghan), assisted by Fr Simon Cadam CC (Banagher), on Tuesday August 14 in St Mary's Church Cloghan, burial took place in Killourney Cemetery. May she rest in peace.

The O'Connor family would like to thank everybody who supported them during Fidelma's illness, including the oncology teams in Tullamore and Beaumont Hospitals, and all those involved in her funeral, those who attended her funeral, those who sent their condolences, and a special word of thanks to those friends and neighbours who provided refreshments for all the callers to their home. Fidelma will be sadly missed and never forgotten, and the knowledge that she had so many loyal and true friends during her life will always be a comfort.

Go dtuga Dia suaimhneas siorai dá h-anam uasal agus áit i measc na naomh.

'Sé an Tiarna m'aoire, ní bheidh aon ní de dhíth orm,
Cuireann Sé i mo lui mé i móinéar féarghlas,
Seolann Sé ar imeall an uisce mé
Mar a bhfaighim suaimhneas!



Noticeboard

Human rights education resource

Amnesty International has released a human rights education resource pack for second-level teachers. The pack includes a workbook, a DVD containing four short films made by Transition Year students as part of their work with internationally acclaimed directors and 15 cards of photographic images taken by students under the guidance of professional photographers. The workbook contains eight workshops specifically designed to address themes such as refugee rights, the asylum process, disability rights, inequality and homelessness. For further information visit www.amnesty.ie. Packs are available by contacting voc@amnesty.ie.

IFI schools

The Irish Film Institute has launched its autumn/winter education programme, which aims to support film in school curricula and promote moving image culture for young audiences. The programme includes films in Irish, French, German and Spanish alongside Leaving Cert English titles, new Irish films and documentaries. For bookings or information, contact Alicia or Deirdre on 01-6795744 or email schools@irishfilm.ie.

ICT training for teachers

The National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE), in collaboration with other educational partners, provides a range of ICT professional development opportunities for teachers. These courses are fully funded and available through the education centre network. NCTE courses focus on how ICT can be used to enhance the school's curriculum, while at the same time advancing teachers' ICT skills. There are 26 different courses available, including an online course: The Internet: A Teaching and Learning Resource. In addition to scheduled courses, courses can also be run as 'whole school' events, taking place in the education centre or in your school. For more information, go to www.ncte.ie/icttraining.

Global citizenship DVD

Trocaire and Christian Aid have jointly launched a global citizenship DVD-Rom teaching pack aimed at students aged 11-14. The DVD pack, 'Get Real', is available in English and Irish and contains films, video stories and downloadable teaching activities that explore peace and conflict, HIV, climate change, children's rights and gender equality. The pack would be particularly useful for RE or CSPE classes, and aims to increase student understanding of how the world works and to develop knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that contribute to the qualities of global citizenship. Copies of the pack are free and available by emailing tgroves@trocaire.ie or by telephoning 01-6549116. This development education pack was funded by the EU.

Recent publications

A number of books that may be of interest to teachers have recently been published: *Beyond Educational Disadvantage*, edited by Paul Downes and Ann-Louise Gilligan; *Faith and the Nation: Religion, Culture and Schooling in Ireland*, by Kevin Williams; *Saving the Future: How Social Partnership Shaped Ireland's Economic Success* by Tim Hastings, Brian Sheehan and Padraig Yeates; and, *The Story of Ireland* by former history teacher Brendan O'Brien.

Digital imagination



HP Ireland has launched this year's schools photography competition aimed at furthering the use of digital imaging in the classroom and home. Students will choose from a number of themes and submit a photograph that interprets their chosen theme in a unique way. Students can enter at www.hp.com/ie/digitalimagination. The website also contains information and expert photography tips. The closing date for entry is November 30. Above is last year's winning competition entry.

Geology competition

Next year is International Year of Planet Earth and, as part of this, the Geological Survey of Ireland has launched a competition, 'How Erratic is your Block?' aimed at Transition Year students. The aim is to stimulate geological awareness and to encourage students to consider pursuing geosciences at third level. Entrants are asked to identify an erratic (out of place) rock and to write an essay about how it came to its current location. Prizes will be awarded to the best entries from each of the 32 counties and a top prize will be presented to the best overall entry and their school. Each entrant school will receive a geological wall map of Ireland. All details, including the application form, are available on www.planetearch.ie/erratics.



Community Links resource

The Community Links School Integration Project has developed a resource folder for teachers working with international students, which contains information on 27 countries, information on working with migrant children in the classroom and letter templates translated into 10 languages, allowing parents and teachers to communicate more effectively.

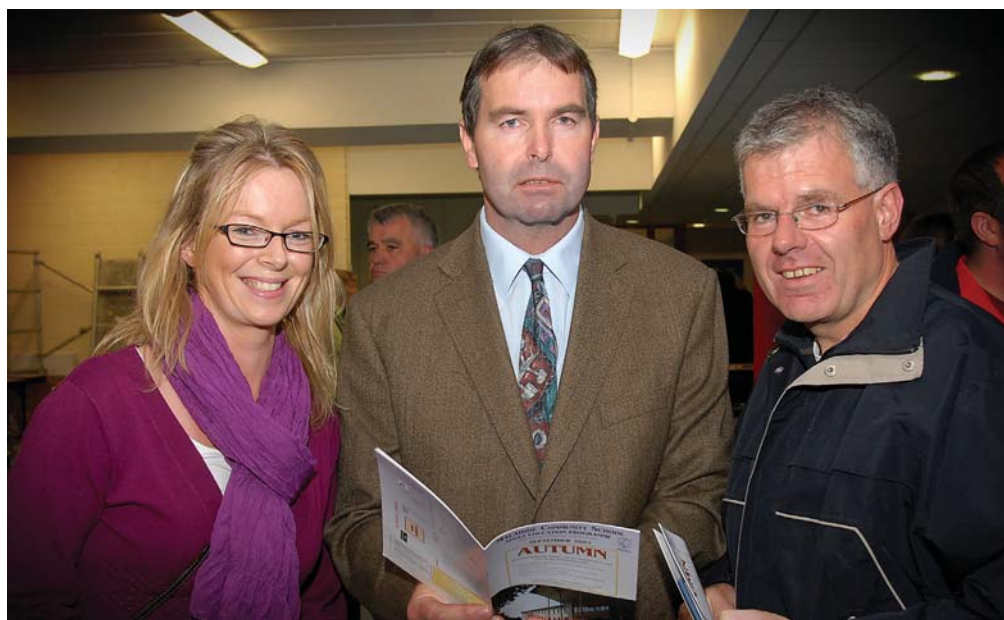
For further information or to order a folder (cost €20), contact Caroline Fahey on 01-8148644 or email Caroline.fahey@jrs.net.

Bóthar CSPE trip

Development aid agency Bóthar is organising a study tour to Zambia in March 2008. The trip will be of particular interest to teachers involved in CSPE. Places are limited to 16 participants and the cost is €2,500. For further information, contact Mary Goldrick, Study Tour Co-ordinator, Bóthar Fundraising Office, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, Tel: 071-9120100, email: mary@bothar.ie.

Profile of a director of adult education

BRIGID FITZGERALD talks to Robert Harold, teacher and director of adult education at Malahide Community School.



Robert Harold speaking with adult education students at the Adult Education Open Evening held in Malahide Community School.

How did you become involved in adult education?

I did some of the adult education courses myself and realised that there was quite an active programme. After about six or seven years in the school an opportunity came up in adult education so I went for it. Setting up an adult education programme in a school gives teachers opportunities for promotion. In my school, for example, we have my position and five other promotional posts.

What would a typical working week be like for you?

The work goes in cycles. During May and June I arrange courses and make contact with tutors and with colleges that offer accreditation. I also book local advertising and liaise with the printers to design the course brochure. We distribute the brochure in August and put the course listings on www.LearningIreland.com.

In September I spend a lot of time replying to all sorts of general enquiries. We process postal enrolments and organise a main enrolment night. I'm always trying to improve the service for students and am currently working on an online enrolment system.

Classes start in mid September and, because adult education has to be provided on a self-financing basis, I have to decide if we have enough interest to make a class viable. We allocate rooms and equipment, and for the first few weeks I go along every evening to ensure everything runs smoothly. The rest of the time I would go one night a week and my colleagues would cover the other nights.

I teach Junior and Leaving Cert classes throughout the year as well, though my teaching time is reduced by 10 hours because of my post. It's a particularly busy time until classes settle. We try to pay all our bills, refund cheques etc. by mid term and then we are into the planning phase for January, when the whole cycle starts again.

I have to account for everything and make returns about course participation annually.

The other area that takes a lot of my time is my work as Chairman of the National Association of Adult and Community Education Directors (NACED), which offers support to directors of adult education programmes in community and comprehensive and voluntary secondary schools.

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

Adult education is somewhat a victim of its own success; there is huge potential for growth but it can't grow any more at present because of funding and time restrictions. The Department of Education and Science needs to keep pace with interest in the programmes. Adult education should be subsidised and, to have a developing, active growing adult education programme in schools, teachers need time to devote to it. We have made a proposal for that through the unions.

You have to make sure that courses are relevant and interesting. We try to get adults who didn't realise their full potential in school involved but it's a challenge to reach out to that group. There are some very popular classes like digital photography, but we also have literacy classes and to get even one literacy student on board takes a lot of effort.

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

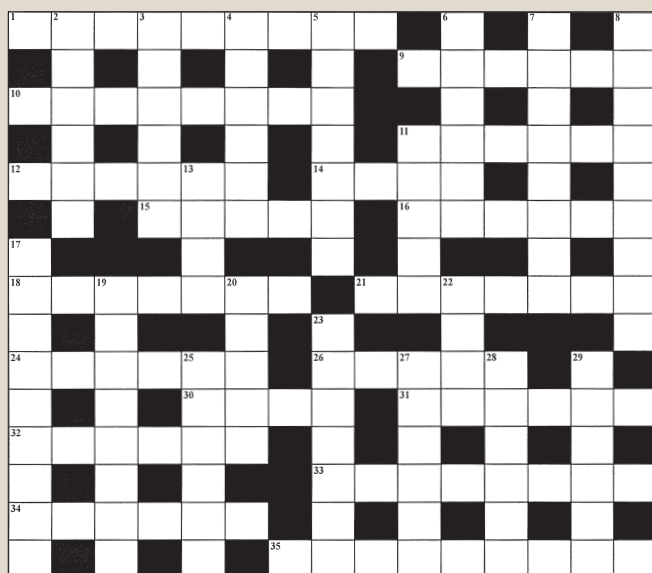
It's very gratifying when you see the numbers coming in and how it makes a difference to people. The positive response we get is the biggest lift. The work is varied and I have a certain level of autonomy. I get the chance to talk about trends in adult education and the fact that it is growing is rewarding. It's very busy but when you have a good team of teachers with you, it does feel as if you are getting somewhere.

ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 0705

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Entries to: **Astir Crossword No. 0705, Think Media,
The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.**

To arrive by: **Friday, December 14, 2007.**

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 The ASTI will celebrate this memorable year in 2009 (9)
- 9 The third constellation of the zodiac (6)
- 10 My aged aunt in Galway is tending to overwhelm me! (8)
- 11 "Full many a gem of purest ray ___" (Thomas Gray) (6)
- 12 A trite dress? (6)
- 14 Ireland is the 29th out of 30 of these countries in terms
of amount invested per capita in second level education (1.1.1.1.)
- 15 Light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation, in short (5)
- 16 French Impressionist painter of *Les Parapluies* (6)
- 18 Secretary General of the Department of Education & Science (7)
- 21 Make it clear that it's a concert given by an individual musician (7)
- 24 Buns eaten inside will dislodge (6)
- 26 A paean will bring about a suspension of breathing (5)
- 30 Face ___, Fork ___, Ski ___ (4)
- 31 See 17 down
- 32 French party in the evening (6)
- 33 Pam rages as she rushes wildly about (8)
- 34 Stare at V and turn away (6)
- 35 See 17 down

CLUES DOWN

- 2 Tote bet selecting 1st and 2nd in that order (6)
- 3 Slot in each side of the throat (6)
- 4 Nono is escaping from the senseless shouting (6)
- 5 Also known as buachalán buidhe and a very common weed now in Ireland (7)
- 6 Withdraw 500 from decreed to retreat (6)
- 7 Albeit of small size it is used to save lives (8)
- 8 16% of second-level schools had none during the past school year (4,5)
- 11 A product of rock fall (5)

- 13 "It droppeth as the gentle ___ from Heaven" (Shakespeare) (4)
- 17 down, 35 & 31 across: OCO, in short, organising a 'big ballot' for
schoolchildren in November (9,9,6)
- 19 Self propelled, explosive projectiles (8)
- 20 Open an i tune (5)
- 22 "Strip it bare then make it work"
– the reason why Jamie is the naked one! (4)
- 23 Inflammation of a mucous membrane (7)
- 25 You could be getting text ones (6)
- 27 At the end of the morn AI conforms to type (6)
- 28 If afar it could be a liaison (6)
- 29 You look at it in the cinema (6)

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 0704:

Ann C Walsh, CBS James's St, Kilkenny City, Co. Kilkenny.

Solution to ASTIR crossword No. 0704

Across

1. Postal
4. Disaster
9. Thomas
10. Infinity
12. Imbue
13. MacDonagh
15. MEP
16. Inane
17. Innate

Down

22. Athena
24. Aesop
27. Cup
28. Elizabeth
31. Erode
32. Testator
33. Siesta
34. Convener
35. Amidst
1. Patricia
2. Showboat
3. Abasement
5. Ionic
6. Amigo
7. Taiwan
8. Rhythm
11. Empire
14. DNA
18. Nuacht
19. Trapezium
20. Espoused
21. Epsen Act
23. Hub
25. Hectic
26. Wilson
29. Adage
30. Ecole

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Ms. Catherine Nic Aodha (Director, ASTI Credit Union) presenting the car keys to Ms. Tina Lewis from Dublin, Mr. Denis Corry from Galway also won an Opel ASTRA

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