

Volume 25: Number 4: September 2007
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astir

Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland



Welcome back

Advice for new teachers

Professional behaviour
guidelines

Art on the brink



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2007 - 2008

ALL COURSES WILL BE HELD IN ASTI, THOMAS MacDONAGH HOUSE, WINETAVERN STREET, DUBLIN 8

PROMOTING EFFECTIVE STUDENT COUNCILS

Targeted At

Teachers who are interested in developing the Student Council in the school or who have been allocated responsibility for assisting the work of the Student Council.

Objectives

- To provide information on role and functions of Student Councils.
- To identify in-school supports for effective Student Councils.
- To develop students' leadership skills.

Areas To Be Addressed

Establishment and operation of Student Council, supporting students to acquire student leadership skills, identifying barriers and "enablers", effective meeting skills.

Course 1: Tuesday 25th September & Thursday 4th October 07

Course 2: Tuesday 22nd January & Thursday 7th February 08

THE ROLE OF THE YEAR HEAD

Targeted At

Teachers who are interested in applying for the post of Year Head or who have recently been appointed to this post.

Objectives

- To provide a comprehensive overview of the work of the Year Head in the Pastoral Care system.
- To present strategies for working with "at-risk" students and disciplinary problems.
- To develop effective communication and administration skills.

Areas To Be Addressed

Roles and responsibilities, developing relationships, conflict management, working with students, students at risk, record keeping and follow-up.

Course 1: Thursday 27th September & Thursday 25th October 07

Course 2: Tuesday 11th December & 29th January 08

VOCAL FITNESS FOR TEACHERS

Targeted At

All teachers, in particular those who are concerned about maintaining a healthy voice.

Objectives

- To prevent vocal strain in the classroom.
- To develop "voice care" skills.
- To develop effective vocal skills for the classroom.

Areas To Be Addressed

Anatomy of the voice, breathing, voice projection, effective vocal skills, care of voice, relaxation and posture.

Course 1: Thursday 18th October 07

Course 2: Thursday 24th January 08

PLCs AND FETAC QUALITY ASSURANCE

Targeted At

Second level teachers teaching PLC courses as part of schools' further education programmes.

Objectives

- To inform teachers of the FETAC award structure and students' learning programmes.
- To provide training on the implementation of the FETAC Quality Assurance Process.
- To provide training on conducting student assessment and completion of assessment documentation.

Areas To Be Addressed

Good practice in PLC provision, FETAC award structure, FETAC quality assurance structure, student assessment, setting learning outcomes and evaluating students' learning.

DATE: Tuesday 9th October 07

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES TO TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Targeted At

Teachers who are teaching English as a second language and English language teachers.

Objectives

- To provide a model for whole-school approaches to teaching English as a second language.
- To provide training on supporting language acquisition skills across subject areas.
- To provide training on using the English Language Portfolio teaching and learning resource.

Areas To Be Addressed

Teaching English as a second language, supporting students' language learning across the curriculum, group work with students, resources for supporting language acquisition skills.

DATE: Tuesday 16th October 07

PLANNING FOR SUCCESSFUL RETIREMENT

Targeted At

Teachers who are contemplating preparation for retirement or those who have recently retired from teaching.

Objectives

- To identify strategies for dealing with changes in relationships, money, time and identity.
- To develop skills in relation to effective management of pensions, taxation and investment matters.
- To raise awareness in relation to maintaining physical and mental health.

Areas To Be Addressed

Relationships in the home, health, budgeting, learning opportunities, making a will, making the most of time, social welfare, supports for active retirement.

Course 1: Tuesday 15th January & Tuesday 31st January 08

Course 2: Tuesday 5th February & Tuesday 19th February 08

Courses open to all ASTI members.

Register by phone or by email with the ASTI Inservice Section at 01-604 0170 or inservice@asti.ie

Places will be allocated on a "first-come, first-served" basis.

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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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New school year, new opportunities



Welcome back! And, if it is your first time to join the teaching workforce, a special welcome to you and the hope that you find the work rewarding and personally enriching.

Each of us as teachers needs a vibrant branch structure that supports us professionally and emotionally in our work. It is important that we believe in the value of what we do.

I have long advocated that we have not put sufficient priority and resources into our branch and school steward structures. Annual Convention, having considered the solid research undertaken by the 2006 Convention-commissioned sub-committee, this year took the bold step of voting to put a new priority on the branch structure to make it more responsive to the needs of the classroom teacher. Key to the success of revitalising branches will be prioritising adequate resources to generate and support new, interesting and relevant activities at branch level. The implementation of Convention's decision will be one of the foremost priorities of my presidency and one on which I will consult widely among branch officers and school stewards in the coming weeks to ensure that there is the widest buy-in for the new process.

This is all the more urgent today because of the acknowledged strategic impact that teaching has on both the social and economic outcomes for our society. A key part of motivating any profession in the 21st century is the financial worth that society attaches to it. We face into the inherent weaknesses within the benchmarking structure and the requirements in Towards 2016 that have removed our ability to negotiate this value independently and transparently. If teachers' pay falls behind other comparable professionals in society then society faces the challenge of keeping motivated teachers in the profession.

The new Teaching Council has within its remit the capacity to underwrite and enhance our professionalism. In a short time it has accomplished a great deal; however, it has to be allowed to develop into a professional body that determines and oversees its own procedures with the level of autonomy required of such a body.

As we start back to a new academic year, we have, as an Association, some serious reflection to do on both the recent past and on forthcoming issues. Despite a strong campaign run on behalf of our two Seanad candidates,

the results were disappointing. In numerical strength we in the ASTI have the power to deliver more than two entire quotas for the NUI!

In a critical election year, another issue that was high on the agenda of Annual Convention this year, that of class size has, sadly, not yet received the level of public debate it requires. Despite the serious impediments of large class sizes and a lack of adequate resources, we second-level teachers proved again this year that our students perform very well compared to international counterparts. Think of what we could achieve if the exchequer spending on education was moved up from its present low position at the bottom of the international league table!

We have the numbers to be a strong voice. Strength is really there when each one of us says that we know we do a good job, believing its prime importance to the social and economic well-being of society. We are proud of our key role in supporting the holistic development of our young people, our future citizens; enabling them to develop the skills of how to learn so that they can do that time and again in their lives in different and adaptable ways.

We will have the opportunity to raise class size as a prime resourcing issue at our meeting with Minister Hanafin, scheduled for mid-September.



Patricia Wroe
ASTI President

Curriculum development

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed a template for the development of transition units – destined to be one of the curriculum components forming the new senior cycle programme. The NCCA has opened up the process of developing these units to non-governmental organisations.

GLEN, the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network, wishes to work with a small number of teachers to develop a transition unit that will offer students an opportunity to explore issues related to sexual identity in the context of human rights and equality. Second-level teachers with experience of teaching Transition Year, CSPE or SPHE, or with other relevant experience who are interested in working on the project are asked to contact Sandra Gowran, Tel: 01-473 2609/087-796 0615, or Email: sandragowran@glen.ie.



Students invited to use their voices

The Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) is offering every school in Ireland the chance to get involved in a nationwide project, 'the big ballot', this November. Children and young people between the ages of four and 18 who get involved in the project will vote on issues important to them in a referendum-style event and, over the next three years, the Ombudsman will commit to working on the top issues selected. In planning this project, OCO staff engaged in a significant consultation process with key education stakeholders, including teachers, teaching unions, parents' groups and networks representing boards of management.

At the same time, the OCO commissioned research to identify the main issues affecting children and young people in Ireland, and obstacles to them realising their rights. An interim set of issues was produced, which included having a voice, play and recreation, education, and health. As well as casting their votes, CSPE students in second or third year will be invited to lead on the project across their school, with the support of their teachers.

The OCO has worked with the CSPE network and a team of experienced writers to produce a set of materials to support the lead class and resources for the project that will complement the CSPE curriculum. These materials will be distributed to participating schools at the beginning of the new school year.

Teachers and students invited to 'Choose Safety'

The Health and Safety Authority has designed a new education programme allowing students to explore core principles of health and safety relevant to young people in their current or future places of work. The series of lessons and student activities is designed for students in Transition Year and the Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programmes but may be adapted for use with other year groups. It is particularly useful for students who will engage in work experience or community service during the year. Parts of the module may also supplement lessons in such subjects as science, architectural technology or home economics. An education pack, which includes detailed lesson plans, learning aids/teaching prompts and a DVD to complement the lessons, is also available. The lesson plans and activity sheets are multimedia-resourced and are designed for students of all abilities.

As part of a phased national rollout of this programme the education pack and related supports are available to schools operating within the catchment areas of education centres in Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford, Clare and Mayo. If your school lies within these areas, you can contact the relevant education centre to indicate your school's interest.

For further information, please contact Paul Fields, Director, Kilkenny Education Centre, Tel: 056-776 0200.

ASTI pursues class size issue

The ASTI will meet with the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, in September to discuss a range of issues affecting second-level teachers and schools. The new Programme for Government contains a commitment to prioritise reductions in class size in the core subjects English, Irish and maths. At the meeting, the ASTI will ask the Minister what plans are being put in place to deliver on this commitment. The union will highlight its recent survey on junior cycle classes, which found that 13% of all history classes had 30 pupils or more, 11% of all English classes had 30 pupils or more and 10% of all maths classes had 30 pupils or more.

The ASTI will also discuss special needs education with the Minister. In particular, the ASTI will seek the appointment of additional special needs teachers and the establishment of a post of special needs co-ordinator. Mary Hanafin was reappointed as Minister for Education and Science in June following her election to Dáil Éireann in May.

Teachers in the Oireachtas

Congratulations to all former or current ASTI members who were elected to the Dáil and Seanad Éireann this summer. Deputies Mary Hanafin, Dún Laoghaire; Thomas Broughan, Dublin North East; Noel Dempsey, Meath; Tony Gregory, Dublin Central; Maire Hootor, Tipperary North; Micheál Martin, Cork South Central; Michael Noonan, Limerick East; Ulick Burke, Galway East; Joe Costello, Dublin Central; Margaret Conlon, Cavan/Monaghan; Frank Fahey, Galway West; Mary O'Rourke, Longford/Westmeath; and, Senator Jerry Buttimer.

World Teachers' Day – October 5, 2007



The ASTI encourages school stewards to buy cakes for morning break in their staffrooms on October 5 to celebrate World Teachers' Day. They can claim the cost from their branches. World Teachers' Day was inaugurated to commemorate the joint signing of the UNESCO/ILO Recommendation concerning the status of teachers on October 5, 1966. Aspects of this recommendation were useful to Irish teachers' unions when the government refused to implement an arbitration award in 1985. Education International, of which ASTI is an affiliate, uses the occasion of World Teachers' Day to campaign for the rights of children worldwide to free, quality, public-funded education, and to celebrate the work of teachers. The ASTI is also involved in supporting the EI Global Campaign for Education.

For further information on World Teachers' Day, go to www.ei-ie.org.

ASTI postal ballots

Thank you to all members who have returned their updated contact forms and to the School Stewards involved in their distribution. Future ASTI ballots will be conducted by postal ballot so it is very important that Head Office has the correct contact information for each member. Any member who has not yet returned their form, please do so as soon as possible to ensure that you have a vote in future ballots.

Occupational health service

The Minister for Education and Science has taken steps to put in place an occupational health service for teachers. The objective is to create a service that will address the fundamental health issues for primary and second-level teachers and school management authorities. The announcement follows ASTI campaigns for an Employee Assistance Service and other occupational health services. Last year saw the launch of an EAS service for teachers. The focus of the occupational health service will be the promotion of physical and mental well-being of all teachers in the workplace. The service is due to commence in January 2008. The ASTI, which was involved in the initial consultation process in relation to an occupational health service for teachers, expects consultation to continue as the service develops.

State Examinations Commission Chief Examiners' reports

The Chief Examiners of the State Examinations Commission publish reports on a selected number of subjects and programmes each year. These reports provide a review of the performance of candidates in the state certificate examinations and contain detailed analysis of all aspects of the examining process. They also contain recommendations for teachers and students and generally include exemplars of candidates' answers. The 2006 report is now available and all previous reports can be accessed on the State Examinations Commission website – www.examination.ie – in the examination material archive.

Irish students receive awards in German essay competition

Six second-level school students were recently recognised for their linguistic achievements as the winners of the Irish Austrian Society's 'German Language Essay for Irish Schools Competition', which is organised in collaboration with the Austrian Embassy in Dublin. The competition, which is in its 10th year, was developed to encourage more German study and to reward outstanding students. It has attracted over 2,000 entries since it began and this year students from over 90 schools took part.

The winners received a scholarship to Austria for two weeks, which included German lessons and a sport, culture and social study programme.

This year's winners were: Kevin Ryan, Cistercian College, Roscrea; Shirley Bird, St Michael's Loreto, Navan; Lynsey Callaghan, Assumption Secondary School, Walkinstown, Dublin 12; Liam Murphy, St Peter's College Secondary School, Wexford; Oisín Leong, St Finian's College, Mullingar; and, Karla Lee, Mount Sackville Secondary School, Dublin 20. This year, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of this Competition, Anglo Irish Bank and Richmond Marketing awarded two special prizes for students drawn from finalists in the Senior Category. The winners were Tom Hayes, Cistercian College, Roscrea and Cassie Roddy, St Paul's Secondary School, Oughterard, Co. Galway.

Young Social Innovators



Pictured at the Young Social Innovators exhibition last May were Roz Purcell and Emma Dolan from Loreto Secondary School, Clonmel, with their project, *Ed, who is one of a trio of characters called Ed, Kay and Sean ('Education') made by the school.*

ASTI member elected president of national charity

ASTI member, Mairead Bushnell, a home economics teacher from Cork, has recently been elected National President of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Ireland. Mairead is the first woman to hold this position during the Society's 163-year history. Previous to her appointment, Mairead taught in St Angela's



College in Cork City, where she was involved in organising the President's award and Co-operation Ireland activities.

The St Vincent de Paul Society is Ireland's largest voluntary organisation of social concern and action, with over 9,200 volunteers around the country. Mairead became involved with the St Vincent de Paul as a volunteer at the Christ King Conference in Cork. In the early 1990s she was involved in the volunteer training scheme and was appointed National Training Co-ordinator. In 2003 she became Cork Regional President.

Coming of age in Wexford



ASTI member Jim McGovern presents two cheques of €11,000 each to St Mary's CBS, Enniscorthy, and Glynn-Barntown GAA Club, proceeds from the sales of Coming of Age in Wexford GAA, a book about Jim's sporting career. Pictured from left are: John White, ASTI General Secretary; John Ryan, Principal, St Mary's CBS; Jim McGovern; Jim Bolger, sponsor; and, John Cooney, Chairman of Glynn-Barntown GAA Club Development Fund.

Inclusion guidelines for SEN students

Comprehensive guidelines for the inclusion of secondary school students with special educational needs were published by the Department of Education in June of this year. Given that the National Council for Special Education estimates that 18% of the school-going population have special educational needs, the aim of the guidelines – to direct schools in providing a co-ordinated approach towards an inclusive education service – is an important one. The guidelines are presented as good practice advice rather than as a set of prescriptions; they provide information in relation to class organisation and teaching methodologies, and have an emphasis on staff collaboration. The ASTI made a submission to the NCSE regarding these guidelines in 2006, the core points of which were the need for a co-ordinator to manage the multiplicity of tasks associated with implementing the whole-school approach to inclusion and the need for a comprehensive in-service programme for teachers. The guidelines recommend that teachers have at least two days in-service training per year on inclusive education, including the IEP process. However, no extra provision has been made for an extension of the Special Education Support Service (SESS) to reach a level of delivery adequate to this recommendation. The guidelines do not include statements on additional resource provision to support their overall implementation.

ASTIR: arrangements for members on leave

Teachers on career break, maternity leave, study leave and secondment who retain their ASTI membership can have their copy of ASTIR posted to their home address by registering for this service with ASTI Head Office. The service is available on a year-by-year basis, so teachers need to re-register at the start of each school year. To register contact Brigid Fitzgerald at 01-6040160 or email astir@asti.ie.

Child protection procedures

The Department of Education and Science (DES) has recently introduced revised child protection procedures for DES staff members. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide direction and guidance to staff in responding to allegations or complaints of child abuse made to the Department.

It is not the function of the DES to investigate allegations of child abuse. Responsibility for child protection rests with the Health Services Executive (HSE); however, where an allegation or complaint of child abuse relating to a school is brought to DES attention, it has a responsibility to ensure that the information received is passed to the relevant school and to the HSE or Garda Síochána. It must also request confirmation from the school that the allegation or complaint is being dealt with in accordance with the prescribed 'Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools', as well as an indication of whether it was reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation. The primary concern of DES staff in dealing with any allegation of child abuse must be the welfare and protection of children, but staff must also be alert to the right of persons to their good name. When a complaint is received, the DES will refer the details to the designated liaison person in the relevant school without making any judgement on the substance or truth of the information received. Any communication regarding the complaint will be conducted through the principal officer in the relevant section of the Department and the principle of confidentiality will be observed at all times.

Cornmarket Irish Junior Cup finals



Cornmarket Assistant Regional Manager, Sean Forde, presenting the Irish Junior Girls Cup to Ciara Hegarty of Merville Community College. Also pictured is Ray Scott, FAI Schools. Merville won the final 2:1 against Skerries Community College. The boys' cup went to Douglas Community School, Cork, who won 2:0 against Scoil Mhuire Buncrana.

New marking schemes for Irish

Significant changes to the proportion of marks awarded for oral Irish in the Leaving Certificate examinations will come into effect for students enrolled in first year in September 2007 and taking the Leaving Certificate examination in 2012.

The changes mean that the marks for the oral examination at higher and ordinary levels in the Leaving Certificate examination will be increased from 25% to 40% of the total mark in 2012. Marks for the aural will be reduced to 10% at both higher and ordinary levels, and 50% of the overall marks will be awarded for the written papers. At foundation level in the Leaving Certificate examination, the marks for oral Irish will be increased from 25% to 40%. Marks for the aural will be reduced from 30% to 20% and the written paper will attract 40% of the marks.

In the case of the Leaving Certificate Applied, the marks for oral Irish will be increased from 33% to 40%. Marks for the aural will be reduced from 30% to 25%, and 35% of the overall marks will be awarded for the written paper. Where students take the oral examination in the first year of their senior cycle programme, the changed marking arrangements will come into effect in 2011.

November ASTIR

The deadline for November ASTIR is Wednesday October 3. Contributions should be forwarded to astir@asti.ie.

Students win European award

Five students from CBS High School Clonmel were winners of this year's Junior Achievement – Young Enterprise European Company of the Year award, held in Berlin in July. Having won the RDS Business Innovation Award earlier this year, the team – Eoin Corby, Finbar Hogan, Peter Quinn, Tiernan Nix and Cormac Britton – went forward to the European level, where they faced competition from 25 other entrants from all over Europe. Their product, Deutsch Macht Spas, consisted of a CD, colouring book and posters, which provide a new and innovative approach to teaching and learning German in primary schools. The team had to promote and sell their package, stage a presentation and complete interviews with the judging panel. The award has been in existence for 18 years and this is the first time an Irish school has won. The project also won the European Language Award for 2007 earlier this year in Ireland.



Junior Achievement – Young Enterprise European Company of the Year award winners from CBS High School Clonmel with their certificate.

Gender in education

The gender divide in second-level teaching has continued to grow since 1980, according to a recent report on gender in Irish education launched by the Department of Education and Science.

The report, entitled 'Sé Si', shows that in 1985 the ratio of female to male second-level teachers was 50:50. The current ratio is close to 60:40. Despite this, women are under-represented in promotional posts from the level of A-post upwards and only 32% of school principals in secondary and community and comprehensive schools are female.

The report also showed that girls are outperforming boys in both Junior and Leaving Cert exams and that there has been a stark increase in the ratio difference between boys and girls who remain in education and who pursue higher and further studies. According to the report, boys account for almost two-thirds of the pupils who leave second-level education before the Leaving Certificate.

At the launch of the report, the Minister for Education made the point that this situation is not peculiar to Ireland, but said that the widening academic gap could be bridged with greater emphasis on school completion rates and by increasing the number of male teachers.

Around the Branches



Navan Branch

Pictured at a Navan Branch retirement function held on April 19. Back (from left): Val and Joan Mulvany; Jimmy Hegarty; Pauline Connolly, Branch Treasurer; Jane Campbell, Branch Chairperson; Pat King, Assistant General Secretary; and, Jim O'Brien, Standing Committee 2001-2007. Front (from left): Kitty Monaghan; Anne O'Malley; Elizabeth Jenkinson; Louis Flaherty, President, RSTA; and, Mary Baneham.

Retirees not in photo: Anthony Stanley; Mary Gilhawley; Ken Donnelly; Caroline Byrne; Paddy Keogan; Loreto Reilly; Mary Wallace; Trudi McEntee; Sam Baneham; and, Helen Rochford.

Cork South Branch

Pictured at a recent Cork South Branch retirement function were Jim Long, Deerpark CBS, with Michael Freeley, ASTI Immediate Past-President and John White, ASTI General Secretary.



Cork North Branch

Pictured at a Cork North Branch retirement function held on May 17 are (front row): Dan Healy, Hon. Secretary; Máire Ni Laoire, Vice Chairperson; Louis O'Flaherty, President RSTA; Patricia Wroe, ASTI President; David Briscoe, Chairperson; Máire NiChiarba, Treasurer; and, Máire Mulcahy, Assistant General Secretary, ASTI.

Good news in Kinvara

The future for ASTI members in Seamount College, Kinvara is more certain after a number of important developments over the summer. The staff, along with the local community in Kinvara, have been campaigning since October last to force the Mercy Sisters to reverse their decision to close the school in 2012. There had been no consultation with parents or teachers in advance of the decision to close.

In May the Department of Education and Science confirmed that a new second-level school would be built in Kinvara, the opening of which would coincide with the closure of Seamount College. Despite this, the trustees refused to allow the school to enrol first-year students for September 2007, thus placing the future of education provision in Kinvara in jeopardy once again. After further discussions and representations, the trustees eventually agreed to allow incoming first years to remain in the school until 2012.

In a separate but significant development, the trustees, who disbanded the school's board of management in October last and replaced it with a single manager, have relented, and a board with parent and teacher representation

has been reinstated. The ASTI had argued that the disbandment of the board was in breach of the Education Act and, following advice from ASTI lawyers, the ASTI initiated High Court proceedings against the trustees and the Minister for Education and Science, who had approved the appointment of the single manager on July 25. The day before the court hearing was due, a settlement was reached between the parties. The settlement involved the trustees and the Minister paying all their own legal costs along with €18,000 of the ASTI's costs. Furthermore, the trustees agreed that any decisions made by the single manager during their brief period in office could now be open to review by the board of management, thus confirming the ASTI's opinion on the illegality of the single manager's appointment.

ASTI General Secretary, John White, expressed satisfaction with the outcome and pointed out that a comprehensive prior consultation and adherence to legislation must be the hallmarks of any school rationalisation plans by trustees or the Department.

Events from around the country

The Annual General Meeting of the RSTA was held in Thomas MacDonagh House, Winetavern St, on May 2.

There was a large attendance at the AGM of members from branches around the country who were greeted on arrival by the then President of the ASTI, Michael Freeley, and the General Secretary, John White, both of whom stated their commitment to retired teachers and to the protection of teachers' pensions.

Louis O'Flaherty, President of the RSTA, welcomed the members and extended a special welcome to our invited guests who included fraternal delegates from the retired sections of the INTO and the TUI.

The following members were elected to the National Committee for next year:

President:	Louis O'Flaherty, 43 Lorcan Drive, Dublin 9
Vice President:	Marie Doyle, 52 Culmore Rd, Dublin 20
Treasurer:	Catherine McHugh, 5 Blacquiere Villas, Dublin 7
Secretary:	Eileen Kelly, 17 Acorn Rd., Dublin 16
Membership Secretary:	Sarah Scott, 3 Portmarnock Grove, Co. Dublin (Tel: 01-846 2088)
Also elected were:	Daithi Geary, Limerick; Aveen Kilduff, Wicklow; Humphrey Twomey, Cork; Nuala O'Connor, Dublin; and, Martin Wallace, Dublin.

All queries regarding membership (including requests for application forms) should be addressed to Sarah Scott, Membership Secretary.

RSTA/Belfast link

For five years now RSTA members and their Northern counterparts, the NASUWT (retired members) have had meetings in locations north and south, to attend talks or to visit places of interest. The connection has proved rewarding and enriching for all. On June 13 last, 30 RSTA members from Dublin, Wicklow and the North Eastern branches travelled by train to Belfast. Together with their Northern colleagues, they enjoyed a very pleasant trip on the Lagan and a guided tour of SS Nomadic, described as Titanic's little sister and the last vessel afloat of the once great White Star Line. This historic vessel is currently undergoing restoration and is moored at Queen's Quay, Belfast. Further trips will be planned in the year ahead.

(Report by Nuala O'Connor)

Kildare Branch

Good news for retired members living in the Kildare area. A new branch has been formed in Kildare town. For information contact Grace Walsh, Tel: 086-816 1043.

North Eastern Branch

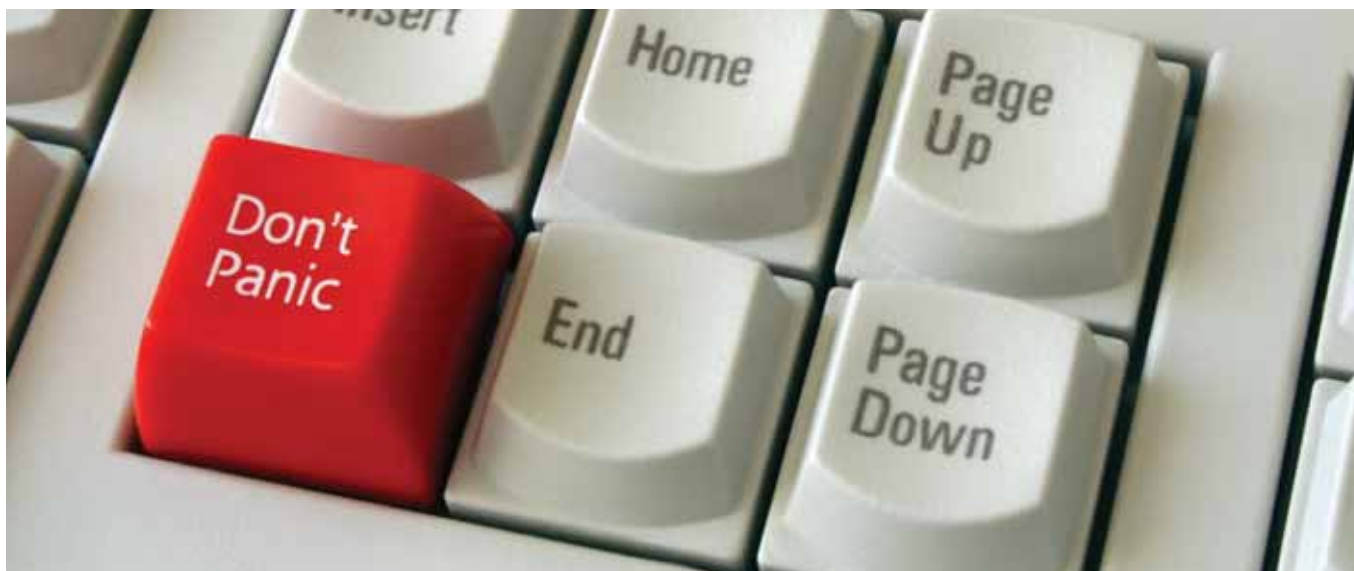
On May 28, 39 members of the RSTA and the NASUWT enjoyed a day trip to Inniskeen, home of the Monaghan poet, Patrick Kavanagh. As usual with anything organised by this branch, it was a huge success. A full report will be published in the RSTA Newsletter in autumn.

Michael McMahon wishes to inform members that the branch has plans for a visit to Connemara, spending three nights in Ostán an Cheathrú Rua on September 19, 20 and 21. This outing will include a trip to Dún Aengus on Inis Mór. Dinner, bed and breakfast is €65 per person per night and €80 for single rooms.

Twenty-four places are available for a tour of Newgrange and Knowth taking place on October 11. The cost is €4.50 for Newgrange and €2.90 for Knowth. To book a place or obtain further details please contact Michael McMahon as soon as possible, Tel: 087-753 5280/042-966 1097, Email: ctcmahon@eircom.net.

Branches will resume regular meetings in September.

Starting out in teaching



Worried about how you will survive your first year in the classroom? BRIGID FITZGERALD asks one experienced and one new teacher for their advice.

The National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction has been in operation in a number of schools since September 2002. Delivery and administration of the post-primary pillar of the project is carried out by the Education Department at UCD and aims, among other things, to develop models for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and to identify the issues impacting on them.

The project pairs newly qualified teachers with experienced teachers, who then act as mentors. The mentor offers advice and support in relation not only to professional issues such as teaching methods and classroom management, but also in relation to practical matters, such as administrative arrangements, communicating with parents or methods of access to resources. The hope is that the mentor and NQT will establish a good collaborative relationship and that the NQT can approach the mentor when seeking advice on any school issue. Both mentors and NQTs receive ongoing support from the UCD project team.

Brenda Byrne, Wicklow Branch

Brenda teaches English, history and CSPE and is Deputy Principal at St Mary's College, Arklow. She has participated in the Teacher Induction Programme as a mentor.

"Your first year teaching is an entirely different experience to what you had when you did your HDip. It's easy to prepare and plan for eight classes of teaching practice in a week, but 22 hours of teaching amounts to 33 classes and a big challenge for a newly qualified teacher is time management and coping with that number and variety of classes. Being organised, keeping a diary and writing down what you do every day is helpful.

"Teaching really is a vocation and you have to love it to survive at it; you have to have a good philosophy and vision. Some people are natural born

teachers, but that's not to say that somebody inexperienced, who might have a few difficulties starting off, cannot become a very good teacher. "Behaviour in the classroom is a big challenge. The important thing is not to let it overcome the teaching and the learning. The best piece of advice I got starting out was to always know what you are going to teach and how you are going to teach it. A good knowledge of your subject is vital but good classroom management is equally important. It is important to be prepared and to involve all pupils in the lesson, to use different varieties of teaching methods and questioning techniques, to be consistent and fair, and to get to know your students' abilities and pitch your lessons to the right level.

I think it is a good idea for the principal to ask an experienced member of staff to look out for newly qualified teachers and to meet with these new teachers.

"Two very important words are 'balance' and 'housekeeping.' You need to develop a good positive relationship with students but that doesn't mean being their friend. It's very important also to relate to other staff. It is important, I think, to have a mentor during your first year of teaching, because that person can anchor you and you can turn to them for advice, support and information about protocols in the school. You can't always depend on somebody doing that for you so I think it is a good idea for the principal to ask an experienced member of staff to look out for newly qualified teachers and to meet with these new teachers.



For the new teacher, preparation is everything.



Cork mentors and NQTs who participated in the Induction Programme last year, pictured at the Cork Education Centre.

"One very important thing to remember is that if you are running into difficulties, you should seek help early on. Don't try to go it alone. One of the big trends in education now is 'collaboration' and the best form of learning is through discussion about different experiences. Some of the best advice is given over coffee break! Local education centres are a great resource; they organise excellent ongoing facilitation on a huge range of topics and allow for mingling of experienced teachers and newly qualified teachers. Teaching is like a family institution and it's important to get a break outside of that to broaden your horizon. What you will often find is that what you are coping with is no different to what other teachers are coping with."

Elizabeth O'Dea, Wicklow Branch

Elizabeth has been teaching English and drama at St Mary's College, Arklow. Last year, during her first year of teaching, she participated in the Teacher Induction Programme.

"I'm not sure that anything can prepare you properly for teaching, other than actually being in the classroom. One thing I do think about secondary teacher training in Ireland is that we need a little more time in the classroom with somebody else, be that observing, being observed or team teaching.

"Discipline is probably the thing that is on young teachers' minds most; it is the toughest nut to crack. That old advice of batten down the hatches pretty strongly during the first term is the best advice I can give, but it's something a teacher can only discover how to deal with for themselves. An orderly classroom allows you to get on with your teaching. "Finding your place in the school can be just as intimidating and the induction programme helped me with that. Find a friendly face among the

staff, someone who will tell you useful information like the staff code for use of the photocopier and things like that. Time is really short in schools so this can be difficult, but it is important and if you have a mentor it's good to sit down together and talk about things.

"Finding time with colleagues who teach the same subjects is important. You are teaching material for the first time and it's good to swap resources or ask questions of more experienced teachers. The induction programme is great because you are able to spend time with other new teachers and thrash things out.

"I think the HDip programme is great for making you enthusiastic about developing innovative and exciting lesson plans. You are in the habit of having all-singing, all-dancing lessons, bringing the students away from the textbook into what they are more interested in. I don't want to let that habit go; I find that students really appreciate the effort, but it is hard work to keep up that momentum with so much work.

"I enjoy teaching more than I anticipated I would. I learned a lot from my mistakes in the Dip year and I find that students are, on the whole, interested in learning, especially if you can tap into something that appeals to them.

"The induction programme seminars dealt with great topics such as developing your own teacher identity, the power of professional relationships and doing justice to all students in a mixed-ability classroom. But the most valuable aspect of the programme is the chance it gives to interact with other newly qualified teachers in a safe place, where you can speak freely and learn that other people are having the same experiences as you."

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

New job, new school? Some practical advice from ASTI

Pat King, Assistant General Secretary, ASTI, has valuable advice and support to offer the new teacher.



When appointed to a new job you are entitled to receive clear written information on the terms and conditions of your job. You should be given a clear written statement/letter of appointment/written contract, which sets out the nature of your employment, date of beginning and end, clarity on whether it is permanent or fixed term, the exact number of hours per week, the subjects and levels you will be teaching, the reason for the vacancy you are filling and whether you will be paid by the school or by the Department of Education and Science. You should keep a copy of all documents as these could become very important subsequently. Take time to read your contract, ask questions, if necessary, and get advice from your School Steward or ASTI Head Office before signing.

What type of contract?

The type of contract you are offered depends on the reason for the vacancy. The Department will pay the salaries of full-time permanent teachers who are appointed to in-quota positions based on an 18:1 pupil/teacher appointment ratio. The Department also pays for extra 'concessionary' teaching hours in schools and such hours normally result in fixed-term (temporary) contracts. Sometimes schools pay teachers directly from their own funds. Where a teacher holds a fixed-term position for four consecutive years, he/she might then, in certain circumstances, be entitled to a contract of indefinite duration (CID), which is permanent. It is essential that fixed-term teachers receive and retain each year a clear written statement as to the reason for and nature of their employment.

Salary

The salary to be paid to a teacher depends on the teacher's qualifications, years of service, number of hours, period of the contract and the nature of that contract. A permanent full-time teacher is paid an annual salary based on a 25-point incremental scale (3rd point is €33,227 – 25th point is €60,307). In addition, teachers receive a degree allowance (honours – €4,927) and a HDip allowance (honours – €1,238). Casual part-time teachers (e.g., replacing a teacher who is on short-term sick leave) are paid €47.22 for each hour of teaching. After 150 hours at the casual rate, the teacher is paid a personal non-casual hourly rate based on his/her qualifications and previous experience. A teacher who is

employed as an RPT (recognised part-time teacher) is employed and paid for 12 months (August to July) and is paid a fraction of the full-time permanent salary rate, depending on how many hours he/she teaches (e.g., 22 hours per week gets full salary; 11 hours per week gets half salary).

Where a teacher holds a fixed-term position for four consecutive years, he/she might then, in certain circumstances, be entitled to a contract of indefinite duration (CID), which is permanent.

Colleagues

The ASTI advises you to develop a good working relationship with your teaching colleagues and your school principal. A staffroom can be a busy place; however, experienced colleagues, especially those in your subject area, will be willing to offer good advice.

School procedures

You should make sure you are familiar with your school's procedures, disciplinary codes, safety statement, school traditions, etc. Your relationship with your students should be friendly but respectful and the ASTI advises that you apply 'arms length' professionalism in your approach. If possible, you should avoid one-to-one situations with students and always consult with your school principal where one-to-one communication is necessary (see the article on professional behaviour on p26).

Class preparation

Lessons should be well prepared in advance, with the aims and content of each lesson defined clearly. Pitch the standard of the lesson to suit the class. Do not try to cover too much material in each lesson and vary your approach.

Student behaviour

Well-prepared classes reduce discipline problems. Punctual commencement of lessons promotes good order. Be assertive but avoid sarcasm. Do not

ASTI welcomes new teachers

In a new initiative by the ASTI, School Stewards will have received a set of recruitment brochures to distribute to new teachers at their school. The brochures contain information about the benefits of union membership, and the many services that ASTI offers to its members, and include a Freepost application form for teachers to complete and return if they wish to join the union. We hope that this initiative will help to make new teachers feel welcome and we look forward to hearing from new members around the country.



make promises or threats that you cannot fulfil. Pupils need to know exactly what is expected from them. Where possible, highlight good work and good conduct. Make full use of the school's disciplinary code and procedures. Record keeping of serious misdemeanours and actions taken is essential.

A staffroom can be a busy place; however, experienced colleagues, especially those in your subject area, will be willing to offer good advice.

Teacher healthcare

Teaching can be a demanding and stressful occupation. You should be aware of the dangers of unacceptable levels of stress and seek guidance if this is becoming a problem. Teachers should pay particular attention to voice care and this can be assisted by having good room ventilation and by drinking water to keep the throat moist.

Teaching appointments

The number of second-level teaching positions is directly linked to the number of pupils attending second-level schools. The ASTI is campaigning for a reduction in the pupil-teacher appointment ratio (currently 18:1) in order to improve the quality of education and to increase the number of teachers in employment.

When appointed to a position, you should ensure that you clearly understand the nature of your appointment. You should know what form of contract you have been offered, the duration of the contract, and the exact duties you are expected to perform. This information should be available from the school principal. Contracts should be examined carefully before being signed. You are also advised to consult your ASTI School Steward if you have any concerns about your contract.

Your contract

Three types of contract are given to teachers in whole-time positions. A temporary contract should be given only when the need for the teacher's service is genuinely a temporary one. A probationary contract may be given to teachers entering service for the first time. Continuous contracts are given to teachers who hold permanent positions having completed the probationary period satisfactorily.

Part-time teachers

In general, part-time teachers are given letters of appointment. This letter should define the period of employment and the teaching duties to be undertaken, pro rata incremental salary and conditions to apply to all teachers for the year. Full information on this is available from the ASTI Head Office or from www.asti.ie.

ASTI support

Each staff group elects a School Steward (ASTI union representative). The School Steward will give you good advice should you require it. Alternatively, you are welcome to make direct contact with officials in ASTI Head Office at 01-604 0160 or info@asti.ie. ASTI advice, information and, if necessary, representation is readily available. You should attend ASTI meetings in your local school or local branch, where your opinion will be valued. In the autumn, ASTI officials will be addressing regional meetings of newly appointed teachers. ASTI Head Office has produced a CD ROM, 26 information leaflets and other material that may be of assistance to you. Visit the ASTI website at www.asti.ie.



*Pat King,
Assistant General Secretary,
Industrial Relations.*

The school steward

ASTIR introduces a new feature, profiling the people who play a key part in the union. This issue: the school steward.



Maura Greaney (centre), outgoing school steward at Seamount College, and incoming school steward Christina Kennedy speaking with Minister for Education and former ASTI school steward at Sion Hill, Dublin, Mary Hanafin.

MAURA GREANEY is the outgoing school steward at Seamount College, Kinvara. She was recently elected to the ASTI Central Executive Council.

What were your key duties as school steward?

Distributing information – mainly ASTI information; acting as the liaison person between management and staff; giving out ASTI application forms to new teachers, etc.

During the past year I've been involved with the threatened closure of our school. The union became a pivotal forum for communicating progress on the staff's issues and for making collective decisions. The staff became involved with the RESCUE campaign (Retain Education at Seamount College United) and I attended the RESCUE meetings on behalf of the staff.

What experience did you gain from your time as school steward?

Personally I've learnt to juggle my work with my personal life as a lot of the meetings were held outside school hours. Within the school we have become more organised about how the union works in the school. We now have in-house ASTI meetings every month where the minutes are recorded and read back at the next meeting. We have an assistant school steward who goes on to become the school steward the following year. Christina Kennedy, who was a brilliant assistant school steward to me last year, is now the school steward.

How did your experience as school steward stand to you during the school's recent crisis?

I spent five years as school steward prior to this year, and had attended branch meetings and Annual Convention over this time. I made a lot of

contacts and became a Galway branch officer. When we were threatened with the closure of our school and our board of management was disbanded, I was overwhelmed at the level of support we got from ASTI members and branches around the country. The Galway Branch was particularly supportive and provided great guidance. The fact that Christina and I were personally involved with our branch probably lent itself to the support we got. When we sent a petition to schools we got a huge response, which helped us to reach a total of 11,111 signatures in support of our case. This gave our staff a great feeling of support and unity. In addition, the action taken by the ASTI in challenging the trustees' decision to disband the board of management led to the board being re-instated. This was crucial in getting the enrolment for 2007 because it provided a formal structure for negotiations between the relevant bodies. It was also important in giving the staff access to information and having some say in relation to decisions about the school.

Would you encourage other ASTI members to consider serving as a school steward?

I would encourage all ASTI members to take their turn at being a school steward. It is a great experience and it prepares you for any crisis that you or your colleagues might have to face in the future. It's also a great way to get involved in the ASTI without having to be very experienced. Once you get involved in the union you learn about issues that otherwise you may never have been aware of or felt you could not influence.



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Guarding the rights of non-permanent and part-time teachers

BERNARD MOYNIHAN provides an update on the work of the Non-Permanent Teachers' Advisory Committee.

The ASTI Non-Permanent Teachers' Advisory Committee represents teachers who are working in fixed-term teaching positions and part-time (casual and non-casual) teaching positions. The ASTI has almost 2,700 such members.

The main focus of the Advisory Committee's work is the proper and fair implementation of the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act and the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act in second-level schools. The Committee also advises Standing Committee in relation to key issues affecting non-permanent and part-time teachers.

Legislation

In recent years, two pieces of legislation have substantially improved the employment rights of non-permanent and part-time teachers. Under the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act, 2001, part-time teachers are entitled to the same pay and conditions – on a pro rata basis – as full-time teachers. The ASTI has campaigned to ensure the speediest possible implementation of this legislation in all second-level schools. During the past year the ASTI has represented a number of privately paid teachers (teachers paid from school funds rather than by the Department of Education and Science) who were not receiving the same rate of pay (pro rata) as their Department-paid colleagues. The ASTI also wrote to all boards of management in second-level schools stating that part-time teachers who are privately paid should be paid on the same basis, pro rata, as their full-time colleagues who are paid by the Department. The enactment of the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act, 2003, means that teachers employed on a fixed-term/non-permanent basis for four years are entitled to a contract of indefinite duration (CID) unless there is an objective reason for a further fixed-term contract. The ASTI Non-Permanent Teachers' Advisory Committee spends much of its time discussing how best to ensure that the employment rights of teachers working in fixed-term positions are protected.

Significant achievements

ASTI's significant recent achievements have included:

- the introduction of a mechanism for awarding incremental credit for part-time and fixed-term teachers; and,
- the payment of arrears to teachers by the Department of Education and Science arising from the enactment of the part-time workers legislation.

Meetings for teachers

The ASTI holds information meetings for non-permanent and part-time teachers. During the 2006/07 school year, close to 1,000 non-permanent and part-time teachers attended information meetings organised by the ASTI. The meetings covered topics such as incremental credit for part-time teachers, the payment of arrears to part-time teachers and contracts of indefinite duration (CIDs).

More jobs for teachers

The ASTI Non-Permanent Teachers' Advisory Committee believes that a reduction in class size at second level will lead to the creation of more full-time permanent teaching positions. A recent survey on class size in second-level schools, carried out by Drury Research on behalf of the ASTI, found that almost two-thirds of third-year students are in classes of 25 to 30 on a regular basis and approximately 15% are in classes of 30 or more. This situation is unacceptable for a modern, wealthy country such as Ireland, which relies on a knowledge-driven economy.





Pictured at a meeting for non-permanent teachers held last January were (from left): Liz Nagel; Bernard Moynihan; Patsy Coughlan; and, Niamh Flannery.

The ASTI has embarked on a campaign to persuade those with political power to address the issue of large class sizes in our second-level schools. Other issues of concern to the Non-Permanent Teachers' Advisory Committee include sick leave entitlements, posts of responsibility and redeployment rights for non-permanent and part-time teachers.

The ASTI Non-Permanent Teachers' Advisory Committee

The members of the ASTI Non-Permanent Teachers' Advisory Committee are elected every two years on a regional basis by ASTI members who are non-permanent and part-time teachers. The current committee is as follows: Mary Crowley (Chair); Justin McGree; Marian O'Connor; Martha Goggin; Rosario Walsh; Geraldine Delaney; Brendan Broderick (Standing Committee Representative); and, Maria Foley (CEC Representative).

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



*Bernard Moynihan,
Executive Officer, Industrial Relations, ASTI.*

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Class size

The ASTI industrial relations team explains the union's policy on class size.

What is the ASTI's policy on class size?

The ASTI's policy on class size states that the following are the maximum class sizes which should be permitted in schools:

Home economics	20
Art	24
Agricultural science	24
Construction studies	24
Engineering	24
Leaving Certificate Applied	24
Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme	24
Materials technology (wood)	24
Metalwork (materials and technology)	24
Music	24
Science	24
Technical drawing	24
Technical graphics	24
Technology	24
Transition Year Programme	24
All other classes	30

The aim of the ASTI policy on class sizes is to help to:

- foster good teaching practice;
- encourage positive classroom relationships;
- assist school discipline;
- enhance standards of education;
- retain teaching positions; and,
- maintain health and safety standards in classrooms.

What if I am experiencing a difficulty with regard to class size?

If a teacher is experiencing a difficulty with regard to class size, the issue should be raised with the school steward, who should bring it to the attention of the principal and seek a resolution.

It should be noted that the Department of Education and Science has no recommended class sizes and there are no legal liabilities on a teacher in relation to this matter. Such liabilities are a matter for the employer, who has to ensure that pupils are protected by an adequate duty of care.

ASTI Convention has, over the years, adopted a number of resolutions in relation to class size, which would significantly lower the maximum class sizes listed above. The ASTI is currently engaged in a campaign to persuade the Government to address the issue of large class sizes in our second-level schools. The Government has stated that it will "prioritise the reduction of class sizes in core subjects at second level". The ASTI is pressing for details from the Government on how it intends to fulfil this commitment.

Advice on professional behaviour for teachers



In an increasingly litigious society, where rights and responsibilities are becoming clearly delineated, it is important that teachers act in line with best professional practice. JOHN WHITE, ASTI General Secretary, examines the issues.

Teachers are professionals. Professionalism implies that members of the public, in this case parents and children, bestow a trust on the professional and are entitled to expect that this trust will be upheld in an ethical manner. Teachers are thus placed by society in a position of crucial importance and trust. Teachers in this position of trust are deemed to be 'in loco parentis' and are expected to exercise the same duty of care that a careful and responsible parent would exercise in similar circumstances. The test that is applied to this duty of care is the test of reasonableness – what it is reasonable to expect in any given set of circumstances. The Teaching Council, in fulfilling one of its primary duties, has developed codes of professional conduct for teachers, which are available from the Teaching Council and the ASTI (www.teachingcouncil.ie, www.asti.ie).

Arms-length professionalism

As professionals, teachers possess a body of knowledge which is to do with their particular subject and is also to do with pedagogy. They are thus involved in imparting a body of knowledge, but are also involved in creating an atmosphere which encourages critical enquiry, innovation, self-generated knowledge and a questioning spirit. This, inevitably and rightly, means that a friendly and respectful relationship develops between teachers and pupils. Teachers, however, while encouraging and fostering a warm and friendly relationship with their pupils, must always maintain arms-length professionalism in this relationship. This is particularly so at second level, where teachers are dealing with adolescents and young adults.

Avoiding allegations

The exercise of arms-length professionalism is central to the avoidance of improper behaviour against teachers. While the fostering and maintenance of friendly relationships with pupils is important, undue familiarity should be avoided. Teachers should not become too involved with the emotional or personal problems of pupils outside the professional educational arena. Where pupils' emotional or personal problems come to the attention of a teacher, the assistance of the guidance counsellor should be sought or appropriate reporting procedures followed, as specified, for instance, in the Child Protection

Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools. Such arms-length professionalism should extend to both in-school and out-of-school contact.

Where the exercise of professional duties involves dealing with pupils on sensitive issues, the following safeguards should apply, if at all possible, given the need for confidentiality in certain professional matters:

- (a) instances of being alone with one pupil should be avoided;
- (b) other members of staff should be informed of one-to-one tuition or educational contact with pupils;
- (c) doors should be left open where one-to-one contact is unavoidable; and,
- (d) overfamiliar personal texting or emailing to pupils should be avoided.

These safeguards may appear overly cautious but a due prudence requires their application.

Pupils' health and safety

There is a legal requirement on all employers to publish a safety statement. Areas such as dormitories, changing areas and toilets present a problem. While the exercise of a prudent discretion is called for in all circumstances, the overriding factor to be considered in such sensitive areas is the safety of pupils, having due regard to their right to privacy and dignity. Clearly, tact and discretion are called for. However, in circumstances where the health and safety of pupils is at issue, this should override all other concerns. In boarding schools the levels of supervision in dormitories should be clearly stated.

Complaints investigation

In the exercise of professionalism, pupils' privacy and dignity must be respected, having regard to their age and level of understanding. A child's complaints have a right to be heard and should be investigated through fair and reasonable procedures. Given the nature of relationships that can develop between individual teachers and difficult, sometimes recalcitrant adolescent pupils, teachers need to be cognisant of the need to protect their professional reputation. Prudent behaviour and correct procedures are essential.

Department of Education and Science circulars and guidelines

The Department of Education has issued circulars and guidelines to schools with which all teachers should be acquainted. These include:

- Circular M33/91 – A Suggested Code of Behaviour and Discipline for Post-Primary Schools (see Section 20: Students and Student Behaviour);
- Circular M42/93 – Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools (see Section 20: Students and Student Behaviour); and,
- Child Protection Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (available on the ASTI website, www.asti.ie, or the Department of Education website, www.education.ie).

Acting through the principal, school management should bring the contents of these circular letters and guidelines to the attention of all teachers.

It is particularly important that all schools formulate a code of behaviour that is known to parents, teachers, pupils and the board of management, and which sets out clear procedures for dealing with infringements of school discipline. The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) is currently engaged in a process of consultation with regard to preparing guidelines for schools on new codes of behaviour. The ASTI has made a lengthy submission to the Welfare Board in relation to these guidelines, which are due to be published in September.

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ASTI returns to the biennial conference of the ICTU

Carmel Heneghan was part of the ASTI delegation to the ICTU Conference, where a number of motions relevant to ASTI were debated.



ASTI delegation to ICTU Biennial Conference (from left): Patricia Wroe, ASTI President; Sheila Parsons; Bill Loneragan; John White, ASTI General Secretary; Paddy Mulcahy; Susie Hall; Michael Freeley; Agnes Keane; Diarmuid de Paor, ASTI Deputy General Secretary; Kevin McEneaney; Gerry Breslin; Michael Stokes; David Martin; and, Carmel Heneghan.

As chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Committee, it gave me great pleasure to be a delegate at this conference with its theme of 'Equality for All', especially in this designated European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, and the 200th anniversary of the outlawing of the slave trade. A guest speaker, Niall Crowley, Chief Executive of the Equality Authority and Chairperson of European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, stated that while valuable progress has been made in legislation to combat discrimination, adjust for diversity and promote equality, significant inequalities persisted. The effective implementation of equality legislation is hindered by resource barriers. The Equality Authority also requires the necessary funding to deploy the full range of its power and functions. Workers could be waiting for over five years to get their cases before the Equality Tribunal due to the inexcusable delay in the appointment of equality officers and the delivery of recommendations. These concerns were echoed by Sally Ann Kinahan, the Assistant General Secretary of ICTU. Niall Crowley believes that a new and enhanced ambition for equality is necessary and deemed Congress a key player.

All motions on equality were carried, including the ASTI motion seeking the repeal of section 37.1 of the Employment Equality Act, 1998. In promoting and seconding the motion, it was made very clear that the ASTI

did not dispute the right of a school or institution to its ethos, nor did it condone the undermining of that ethos. It merely sought for a consultative process to commence with those bodies responsible for the insertion of that clause, to ensure that discrimination does not occur. Many members consider this clause an unnecessary and excessive protection of denominational interests – an opt-out clause for respecting diversity. The clause has been cited as a cause of great anxiety to some teachers when applying for a permanent or promotional post. Many feel that it is an affront to their capacity to be loyal members of staff. It encourages silence and deception about their identity. It implies suspicion and accommodates prejudice. Members feel that there should not be a legal provision whereby personal beliefs or private lifestyles could be used to discriminate against committed and dedicated teachers. The ASTI holds the view that there is adequate scope within existing codes for an employer to confront behaviour that conflicts with the wide range of values espoused by the school. There is no basis for the additional specific measures. The lack of legal recognition for cohabiting couples, which results in serious disadvantage in areas such as taxation, inheritance and pension rights, was highlighted by a member of the Executive Council, who described Ireland as a constitutional limbo for such couples.

In the education debate, the ASTI motion on class size commanded the wide support of Congress. The pupil-teacher appointment ratio is higher now than it was 30 years ago while a more diverse student cohort places greater demands on teachers. The argument that there is an urgent need for a reduction in class size was convincingly made by outgoing ASTI President, Michael Freeley, and incoming President, Patricia Wroe, based on OECD figures. The INTO motion on early childhood care and education was passed unanimously. The absolute need for universal early childhood education was summed up in the description of early childhood as "a time of being, not of becoming". The TUI, supported by the ASTI, sought to debate a motion that would have the effect of disallowing all unions from having a vote on the conditions of service of individual unions. It is regrettable that the motion was ruled out of order. Many teachers feel strongly on this issue. Another motion from the TUI for behaviour support service/classrooms in all schools got wide support. It did not seek to coerce or corral the disaffected but to gain an appropriate curriculum for the needs of the child. There was a call on governments, both North and South, to regulate mobile and internet providers in an effort to control cyber bullying of students and teachers (NASUWT). Motion 3 of the Executive Council welcomed the publication of the National Disability Strategy as it places the 3% employment target on a statutory level for the first time. It stressed the need for the state to take a central role in raising the level of education and training among people with disabilities. Another motion from the Executive Council called on Congress to focus on the multiple disadvantages faced by women. The

IFUT motion cautioned against the development of the industrial model in universities, rather than the fostering of critical thinking. A nationwide campaign to defend occupational pensions was called for at the Conference, as 12 times as many young workers are being forced into inferior defined contribution pension schemes rather than into defined benefit schemes. Rosheen Callender called on the Government to publish its Green Paper on pensions and to look at the report on mandatory pensions.

Finally, the social side of the Conference was very pleasant. The atmosphere was convivial and offered all an opportunity to intermingle and share ideas.



Carmel Heneghan

Carmel Heneghan is Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Committee and teaches at Ballinrobe Community School in Mayo.

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

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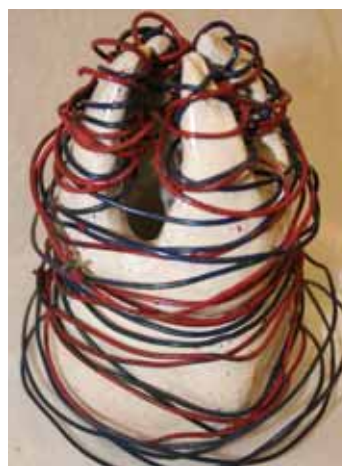
Art on the brink

JANE CAMPBELL introduces the new senior cycle art syllabus.



Very soon, a new senior cycle art syllabus will be up and running in second-level schools. The syllabus, which has been 10 years in the making, is now complete; it has been passed by the NCCA Council and is finally ready to roll. Implementation details are currently being finalised. It is far superior to the existing syllabus and will be appreciated as such by students, teachers and third-level art colleges alike.

For the students, it offers continuity from junior to senior cycle in that, like the Junior Certificate art, craft, design course, it is project based. This is good news because it means that there is time for the student to work on a piece, develop ideas, experiment with media, explore possibilities and, through that process, arrive at an artwork that has to be more creative than what usually resulted from a two-and-a-half-hour invigilated exam. Teachers too will like the syllabus, as it is wide enough to allow them to specialise in teaching their own particular orientation, be it 3D, fine art, visual communication or craft. There is less art history to be taught. Students will now answer two questions instead of three, chosen from a much narrower time frame. The icing on the cake is, of course, funding; there will be an injection of capital into the art department of every school for the implementation of this new course.



It is a good time for art education. It is on the agenda at the highest levels, so let's hope that the powers act as soon as possible.

When the Junior Certificate art, craft, design syllabus was introduced about 15 years ago the standard of the students' work shot up. It is widely agreed that the best art produced in secondary schools is at that level. It is expected, therefore, that the same thing will happen with the new Leaving Certificate art syllabus. This has to be good for the art colleges, who have long been dissatisfied with the current standards at Leaving Cert level. In the new syllabus there is a much greater emphasis on IT and on the design process, on developing ideas and on the integration of art history with the practical work. This, if it works, should please everyone.

Structure of the new syllabus

Section A: drawing

- Unit 1: observational drawing; and,
- Unit 2: life drawing.

Section B: studio work

- Unit 3: craft;
- Unit 4: fine art; and,
- Unit 5: visual communication.

Section C: history and appreciation of art and design

- Unit 6: history and appreciation of art and design.

Ordinary-level students may choose Unit 1: observational drawing or Unit 2: life drawing. For higher-level students life drawing is compulsory.

The assessment components and weightings are as follows:

- Section A: a drawing examination (25%);
- Section B: assessment of studio work (45%); and,
- Section C: a written examination (30%).

The allocation of marks in assessing studio work will vary slightly between ordinary and higher level.

In Section B students study all three units and choose two of these in which they will be assessed.



TABLE 1: List of study areas in the new syllabus.

Category 1

- Area 1 Early Irish art and architecture c. 1200AD
- Area 2 Romanesque and Gothic art and architecture
- Area 3 European art during the Renaissance c. 1400–c. 1520AD
- Area 4 Art and architecture in the Baroque age
- Area 5 Architecture in Ireland c. 1700–c. 1837AD

Category 2

- Area 6 Age of revolution – French painting
- Area 7 Modernism
- Area 8 20th Century architecture and design
- Area 9 20th Century and contemporary film
- Area 10 Contemporary art
- Area 11 Islamic and Asian art and design

In Section C there are two categories, one containing five areas of study and the other containing six. Two areas are studied for examination, one from category 1 and one from category 2 for both ordinary- and higher-level students. A rolling system will operate, where two of the areas are available from category 1 and three from category 2 in each exam year. One of the two in category 1 and one of the three in category 2 is selected for examination. This is repeated, with the same areas available again for the following exam year. This rolls forward until all areas have been covered; however, the details have yet to be finalised. The syllabus is designed for 180 hours of class contact time (the equivalent of five periods of 40 minutes each per

week). Most of the interested parties have been waiting positively for the implementation of a more relevant, updated and exciting Leaving Cert art syllabus that more coherently follows on from the Junior Cert course. It will be more enjoyable to teach, it will give the students more choice, flexibility and skill and it will, as a consequence, improve standards. Altogether it will produce a much more creative end result.

Junior Cert art, craft, design

If all of that is not enough happiness, the Junior Cert is also changing. The art, craft, design syllabus is being reviewed, along with a cluster of other subjects, as part of an overall re-balancing of junior cycle subject syllabi by the NCCA. The purpose of this is to standardise the way all syllabi are presented and to address the issue of overload. The likely result of that review from an art point of view is a re-drafting of the syllabus to standardise it in line with others and a definite reduction in the amount of work for assessment. There will probably be more emphasis on the finished artwork and some areas may be examined slightly differently, particularly support studies, which is currently not working as intended. Clearer and more definite guidelines as to the requirements for support studies will issue on the examination paper, and it will be less ambiguous and less open-ended. It is a good time for art education. It is on the agenda at the highest levels, so let's hope that the powers act as soon as possible.

**Jane Campbell**

Jane Campbell teaches art at St Joseph's Secondary School in Navan. She is also the ASTI Convenor on the NCCA committee for art.



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Wexford Tony Boland Branch

Who's who

Cathal O'Gara, Chairperson
John S. Nolan, Vice Chair
Gary Purcell, Secretary
Sean Hurley, Treasurer
Caroline O'Brien, Equality Officer
Michael McMahon, Organiser

Branch size

171 members

Meetings

Meetings are held about once every seven or eight weeks, usually on a Tuesday or Thursday, at the River Bank House Hotel in Wexford Town.

Key issues

Part-time teachers' concerns are a big issue for the branch, with a lot of teachers looking for permanent or secure positions. CIDs are causing a lot of concern; there is a lot of confusion about what exactly they are and the benefits that they offer. Deteriorating working conditions are a major issue, e.g., being asked to have parent teacher meetings at night.

Activities

The branch generally has informal nights out after meetings, usually in the bar in the River Bank Hotel. A retirement function was held recently, the first in years. There are new members' meetings every September, so that members can get to know each other and the Branch structure. The Branch also has a new school stewards' meeting in the second week of every September, so that stewards can get to know the branch officers.

Local history

The Branch was renamed after ASTI member, Tony Boland, when he passed away in 1996. Tony was President of the ASTI in 1981 and taught in Wexford CBS. He and Michael Waddell, another Branch member, were very active in the union and the Branch was very involved in the pay campaign in the 1980s.



Michael Waddell speaking to RTE News during ASTI Annual Convention, 1999.



Wexford Tony Boland Branch members Michael Waddell, Joe Campbell, Tony Boland and Irene Irish at the ASTI Annual Convention, 1993.





Noticeboard

Concern FAST

The Concern FAST is held annually on the last Thursday in November and this year's event will take place on November 25.

Last year, over 74,000 people around Ireland took part, including students and teachers from over 200 secondary schools. If you would like to become involved in this year's FAST, or if you want to get your school involved, you can visit www.concernfast.org or call 1850-505055.

STAR awards

The second annual Adult Learners' Festival takes place from February 4-8, 2008. The STAR awards form part of the festival and highlight the work done by adult learning projects throughout the country. AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation, is delighted to invite nominations for the STAR awards. Nominations are encouraged from all adult education organisations and community and voluntary groups. You can nominate a project by filling in a nomination form, available at www.adultlearnersfestival.com. The closing date for nominations is Friday 19 October at 5.00pm.

The Crocus Project

The Crocus Project is a perennial activity intended for students aged 11 and upwards. It is run by the Holocaust Educational Trust of Ireland, which provides schools with yellow crocus bulbs to plant in memory of the children who died during the Holocaust. Guidelines and information that may be of assistance to teachers in this activity are also available from the organisation. For more information, you can visit www.holocausteducationaltrust.org or Tel: 01-669 0593.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Tropo Theatre Company will present a production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde in Liberty Hall Theatre, Dublin between November 13 and 17. The cast includes second-level school teachers Paul McCorry, Mary O Maolmhuire and Nessa Power. Special rates are available for school bookings, Tel: 01-872 1122 or book online at www.ticketbureau.com.

Online masters programme

The Centre for Co-operative Studies, University College Cork, is running a Masters Programme in Co-operative and Social Enterprise. The course is delivered online and may be of interest to teachers. For more information, Tel: 021-490 2570 or Email: ccs@ucc.ie.

HADD

HADD, the Hyperactivity and Attention Deficit Disorder Family Support Group, is holding an open/information evening in Croke Park from 8.00pm until 10.00pm on September 25. For more information, Tel: 01-874 8349 or Email: info@hadd.ie.



Focus Ireland Schoolmate Sleepover

The Focus Ireland Schoolmate Sleepover takes place on Friday November 16. The event is a fundraising challenge, which sees teams of second-level school students raise sponsorship to participate in a nationwide sleepover. Focus Ireland hopes to raise over €45,000 for their work with homeless people and the team that raises the most sponsorship will win two PCs for their school. Teachers are encouraged to enter their class for the sleepover and to use the event to cover the issue of homelessness as part of the year's CSPE and LCA coursework through these modules.

The sleepover can take place in the home of a team member and last year some schools also hosted the sleepover in their school halls. Parental consent forms must be signed and returned to the host house or school before students can participate.

To register your class or for more information,

Email: sleepover@focusireland.ie or log on to www.focusireland.ie.

Sustainable development course

ECO-UNESCO, Ireland's environmental education and youth organisation, is taking bookings for an 'Introduction to Sustainable Development' evening course, which runs from September 26 to December 19 in Dublin city centre. The course equips participants with a nationally recognised qualification and is aimed at teachers, youth leaders, community leaders or anyone working with young people who are interested in learning about sustainable development. The course will look at sustainable communities and the links between society, economy and the environment. For further information, contact Sorcha O'Brien, Tel: 01-662 5491.

The ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards (YES) honour the work of young people between the ages of 12 and 18 who protect and conserve our environment through local projects. The closing date for registration for this year's event is November 30. For further information, visit www.ecounesco.ie.

Teacher's mystical musings

Second-level teacher Brian Mac a'Bhaird has launched a double CD package of true short stories narrated by the author, available in English (*Mystical Irish Musings*) and as Gaeilge (*Aislingí Fánacha*). The 18 stories paint a picture of times past in Ireland. The package contains a six-page photographic insert, which should be particularly helpful to those teaching Transition Year students, and is available from www.irishmusings.com or www.aislingifanacha.com.

Profile of a guidance counsellor

Joe Varley, guidance counsellor at Patrician College, Finglas.

How did you become a guidance counsellor?

When I finished college I went into industry and after that I started teaching in England. When I came back to Ireland I taught for a while at Patrician College, where I work now. I taught commercial subjects such as business studies and accountancy for the Inter Cert and economics for Leaving Cert. As well as being a graduate, I'm also a ship's radio officer and I went to sea for a while after teaching. When I came back in 1977 I did the Diploma in Career Guidance in UCD and since I qualified I have been working as a guidance counsellor in Patrician College.

What would a typical working week be like for you?

There's no such thing as a typical week for me and it depends totally on the time of the year. My year starts in August when I try to make sure that the students who did the Leaving Cert the previous June are sorted with something. From September I teach career guidance classes in the junior school. In Patrician College we do the Leaving Cert Vocational Programme and I do the link module side of that, which involves a mixture of IT, career guidance and business. This is a great programme; students get formal career guidance instruction and we hope that by the start of sixth year they have a rough idea of the direction they want to go in. I teach classes in the mornings and in the afternoons I do individual guidance and counselling. The counselling is largely vocational and educational.



Joe Varley advises a student at Patrician College.

I aim to see all of the sixth years by about the middle of November. At this stage I have a good idea if students will apply to the CAO or are interested in FETAC and Access schemes. Access involves schools making arrangements with colleges to give their students enhanced entry and I do a huge amount of work around that.

After the CAO forms are in, I concentrate a lot on the third years and their subject choices for Leaving Cert. Our school also offers the option of the Leaving Cert Applied and the Leaving Cert Vocational Programmes. We usually have night meetings with parents, and I meet with the students individually and work a lot with the tutors. I try to finish up at the end of May with the students heading in to do the Junior Cert with a good idea of what they want to do when they come back in September.

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

Because of my technical and business background, I like vocational counselling a lot. I especially enjoy getting students to stretch themselves a bit, maybe go for things that they thought were a bit beyond them.

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

There are some students who have bags of ability but are not doing a whole lot about it. So, within those parameters, you are trying to keep them going in the right direction and that can be difficult.

Obituary

Mrs Moira Gilleran RIP, April 13, 2007

The staff and pupils of Coláiste Mhuire, Ballygar, suffered a grievous loss in April with the death of long-term teacher, colleague and friend, Mrs Moira Gilleran.

Mrs Gilleran died on April 13, 2007, after a two-year battle with cancer. Her death was met with grief, sadness and disbelief that one so imbued with life force should no longer be with us.

Mrs Gilleran first started at Coláiste Mhuire in 1986 – coming to us from Spiddal and earlier, Bunclody – and continued there until illness caused her to leave in 2005. During that time she taught maths, geography, technical graphics and religion. She participated fully in the life of the school, as class teacher, form tutor and special duties teacher, and even served on the board of management. She was a motivational teacher,

extremely dedicated to the welfare of all pupils of the school. She entered totally into their concerns and interests. The open and confiding nature of her relationship with the pupils was an example to us all.

She was a loving and genuine friend, who relished all chances to enjoy social occasions. Indeed, she was the unofficial social director for the school and organised many a staff 'do'. She was a regular participant in school tours, both in Ireland and abroad. Her sense of humour remains perhaps her outstanding characteristic, the one by which she will be most dearly remembered by all those who knew and loved her and who will continue to miss her for a long time to come.

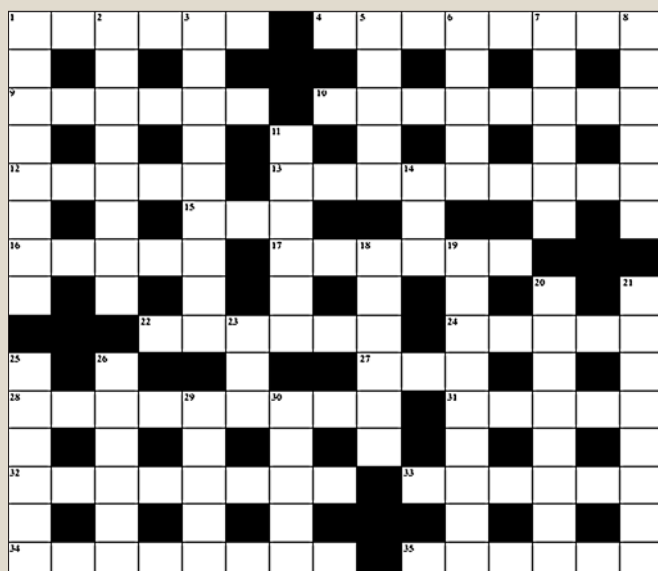
She is survived by her loving family, in particular her devoted husband, Mr Noel Gilleran, and her three children, Conor, Darragh and Niamh.

ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 0704

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Entries to: **Astir Crossword No. 0704, Think Media,
The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.**

To arrive by: **Friday, October 19, 2007.**

CLUES ACROSS:

- 1 Members will have such a vote from September onwards (6)
- 4 This memory in Whiddy island is as terrible as in 1979 (8)
- 9 & 13 Head Office House? (6,9)
- 10 This project aims to make maths and science
relevant and interesting to students (8)
- 12 Grim Buenos Aires could permeate (5)
- 13 See 9 across
- 15 One of the 785 as of 1 January 2007 (1,1,1)
- 16 A silly 17 across without a T (5)
- 17 Belonging to 16 across with a T (6)
- 22 Greek goddess of wisdom (6)
- 24 He wrote *The Fox & the Grapes* (5)
- 27 McCarthy or Maguire, for instance (3)
- 28 First name of start of 31 across! (9)
- 31 28 across starts a lyric poem to wear away (5)
- 32 At rest to leave a will (8)
- 33 Take a Spanish nap (6)
- 34 The ASTI is represented on NCCA committees
by a ... and a Second Representative (8)
- 35 Madam, I'd stay in the middle (6)

CLUES DOWN:

- 1 First name of current ASTI President (8)
- 2 You might hear "ol' man river" here (8)
- 3 A man beset by lowering in rank (9)
- 5 Classical Greek architecture characterised by fluted columns (5)
- 6 Am I going to make a Spanish friend? (5)
- 7 Used to be known as Formosa (6)
- 8 Comprising all the elements as accent,
metre and tempo but no vowels! (6)
- 11 New York is known as this state (6)

- 14 Deoxyribonucleic acid in short (1,1,1)
- 18 ASTI school newsletter (6)
- 19 Four sided with two parallel (9)
- 20 Sue posed the question and was married (8)
- 21 This Act provides for individual education plans (5,3)
- 23 The IFSC is a financial one (3)
- 25 "the leaves dead – yellow, and black, and pale and ... red" (Shelley) (6)
- 26 ASTI President from 1959 to 1960 (6)
- 29 "Be careful what you wish for, it may come true",
is an example of one (5)
- 30 A French school (5)

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 0703:

**John M MacCurtain,
I.S.K., Killorglin, Co Kerry.**

Solution to ASTIR crossword No. 0703

Across

1. Jobsharing
6. Stew
10. Early
11. Summation
12. Mainland
13. Eclat
15. Truism
17. Chekhov

Down

1. Jeep
2. Barracuda
3. Haydn
4. Rascals
5. Nomadic
7. Trial
8. Winetavern
9. Casement
14. Strandhill
16. Standing
18. Hurricane
20. Topside
21. Chianti
23. Patio
25. Naive
26. Wept

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