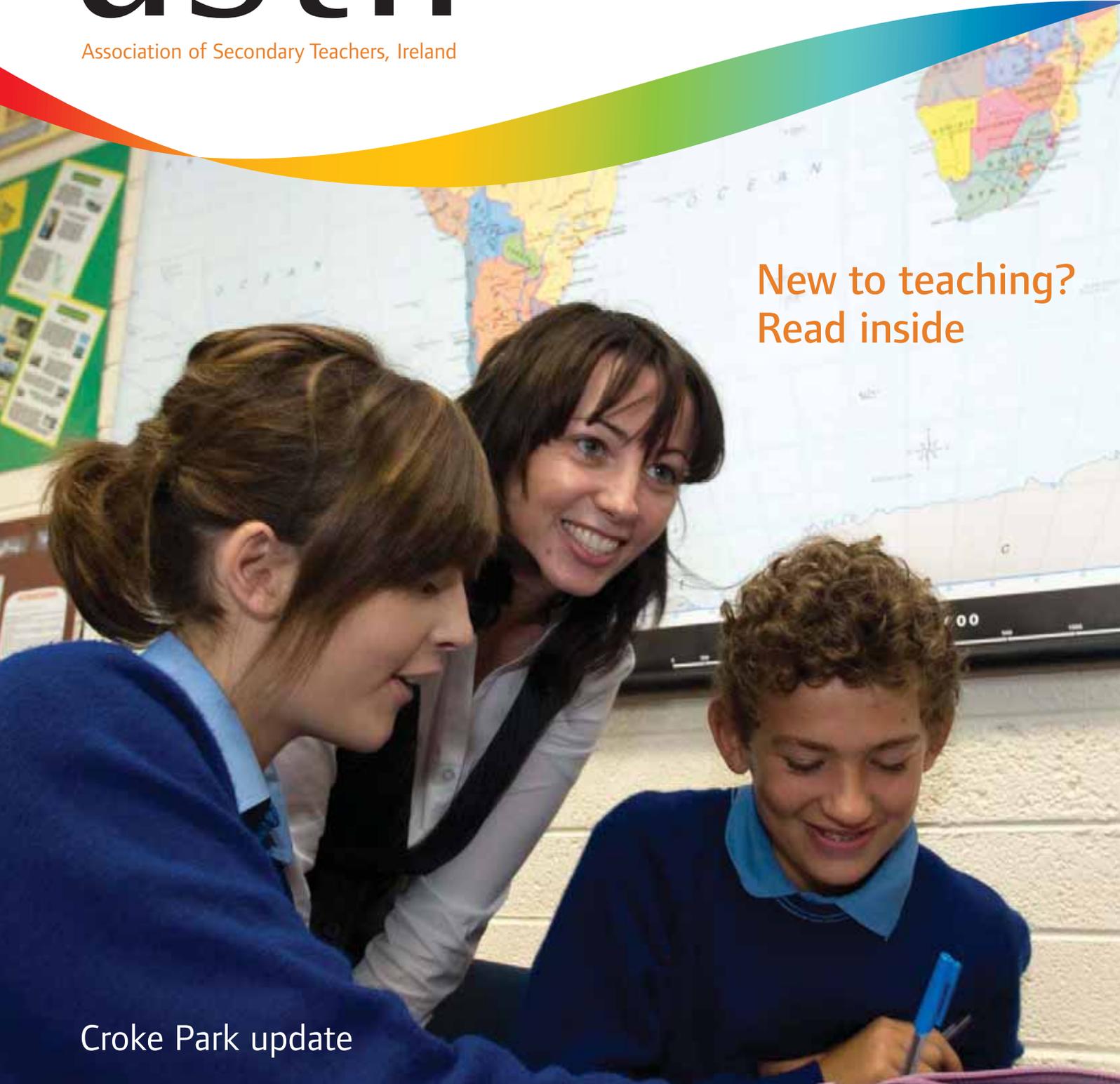


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Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland



New to teaching?
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Croke Park update

Teachers going the
extra-curricular mile

Project Maths
– two views

ASTI membership
– the benefits



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Cover photo: Éidin Gallagher, a teacher at Malahide Community School, pictured with two of her students. (Photo by Dave Cullen.)

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



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A tough year ahead

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you back for the new school year and to extend a special welcome to new teachers. All recently qualified second-level teachers are invited to attend the ASTI's Know Your Rights seminars this autumn, which will provide invaluable information and advice as you embark on your career in teaching – see page 19 for more details.

Challenging times

This will be a challenging and tough year. We are going through the greatest economic crisis the country has ever experienced because of the unholy alliance between bankers, developers and politicians. At present unemployment is at nearly 14% and is rising. Emigration is beginning to drain the country of a generation of highly educated and talented young people. The education service is in crisis because of the savage cutbacks announced over the past two years. Even before the cutbacks, Ireland's investment in second-level education left us at the bottom of the OECD table for spending relative to income per capita. As ASTI President, I will work to convince politicians that adequate investment in education is the route to economic recovery. This is not the quick fix solution the Government so desperately wants, but it is the only enduring solution and it is the only way we can protect the future life chances of our young people.

Teachers have always been willing to contribute to the development of this country, including during times of economic difficulty. The good will and commitment of teachers is clearly established as highlighted once again in an article on extra-curricular activities in this edition of *ASTIR*. But there is a limit to what teachers are willing to give. In the past year and a half teachers and other public servants have endured a pay cut of approximately 7% and a pension levy of approximately 7%. They are also paying the increased income and health levies that apply to all workers. They have forgone an agreed 6% salary increase due to them under the Partnership programme Towards 2016. On top of this, posts of responsibility – the only promotional opportunities available to the vast majority of teachers – are no longer available. The mitigation of the moratorium on posts of responsibility – announced recently by the Minister for Education and Skills – will have little impact on schools, many of which have been almost entirely stripped of their middle management. As this *ASTIR* goes to print, the ASTI is having preliminary talks without prejudice with the Department of Education and Skills in relation to the proposed implementation of the Croke Park Agreement in the education sector. ASTI members rejected the Agreement in a ballot in May this year. Many members felt that they were being asked to agree to an open-ended review of teachers' contracts with little detail about what such a review

would entail. Members were also anxious to have details of the extra hour of administrative work per week clarified. The ASTI remains committed to our members' decision and to protecting members' terms and conditions in these preliminary talks. An update on these talks and other issues appears in this *ASTIR* and a special *Nuacht* will issue with further details when they become available.

Protecting members

Over 3,000 of our members are on temporary and/or part-time contracts. These teachers remain a key priority for the ASTI. The trend towards an 'hours culture' in second-level teaching is not only damaging to teachers but to the entire education service. Young teachers teaching four or five hours a week in a school often find it difficult to integrate into the life of the school. This further increases their vulnerability. The ASTI will be measured by what we do for our most vulnerable members. The voice of the young teacher must be heard at all levels within the ASTI. Only in this way can we truly serve the entire membership and protect the teaching profession into the future. My hope is that we can increase the involvement of our youngest members at local and national level during the coming years. This work has already begun with initiatives such as the ASTI Young Teachers' Conference, which has been running for the last two years. ASTI activists of all ages can play a crucial role in encouraging and supporting young teachers to take up representative roles within their union and to ensure that the ASTI speaks and acts for them. These may be tough times, but we have two gifts in our hands – the high esteem in which teachers are held by the public (in the recent independent survey for the Teaching Council, teachers had the second highest level of public satisfaction after nurses), and the fact that the ASTI is a dynamic and energetic organisation. I am honoured to serve as President of the ASTI and I have every confidence in our union and its members.



Jack Keane

ASTI President

Facing the challenges

ASTI General Secretary Pat King updates members on the latest developments regarding the Croke Park Agreement.



Following several months of a public service-wide industrial action campaign against Government decisions on pay and pensions, the public service unions put the Public Service Agreement (Croke Park Agreement) before their members earlier this year. The ASTI held a ballot of its members in May and members voted against acceptance of the Agreement by 62% to 38%. However, by a 2:1 majority, the 19 public service unions involved voted to accept the Agreement. This means that most of the public service unions and public service employers are now proceeding to implement the various aspects of the Agreement. All of the public service unions, except the ASTI and the TUI, have also ended their industrial action campaigns against the Government. The ASTI Directives are still operational. The Directives are available at www.asti.ie. ASTI Standing Committee met in June and considered the outcome of the various ballots on the Croke Park Agreement. Standing Committee decided to meet with the Department of Education and Skills on an 'exploratory' basis, without prejudice to the ASTI's rejection of the Agreement. Standing Committee unanimously agreed that any changes in conditions of employment arising from the Croke Park Agreement and these exploratory talks must be put to a ballot of ASTI members for acceptance or rejection.

At the time writing, these exploratory talks between the ASTI and the Department are ongoing. Standing Committee will meet again prior to the start of the school year to review these talks. Updates on the exploratory talks and any decisions made by Standing Committee in relation to these talks will be communicated to members via *Nuacht* and the ASTI website. In particular, members are urged to consult the ASTI website for the most up-to-date information.

ASTI members have shown tremendous commitment to the trade union movement and unyielding solidarity with one another over the past two years. Difficult decisions had to be taken to promote the collective and long-

term interests of teachers, other public sector workers and society as a whole. A continuation of this commitment and solidarity is vital as we consider the difficult strategic decisions facing us in the 2010/2011 school year.

Posts of responsibility

The new Minister for Education and Skills, Tánaiste Mary Coughlan, announced an "alleviation" of the moratorium on posts of responsibility in schools in July. This alleviation is based on the application of a minimum threshold for schools on the number of assistant principal posts. For example, a school with 700 to 900 pupils cannot fall below a minimum threshold of six assistant principals. The ASTI believes that this alleviation is totally inadequate and does not take into account the complexity of second-level schools, the diversity of the student cohort and the broad range of student needs. Schools are struggling to cope with the loss of key post holders including year heads, programme co-ordinators and exam secretaries. The Minister must do much more to maintain an effective middle management support structure in schools. Otherwise essential support services for students will continue to be curtailed.



Pat King

ASTI General Secretary

Important information for ASTI members thinking about retirement

Following the recent changes to public sector pay and conditions, a number of your colleagues have been calling Cornmarket looking for advice on their pension options. As a result, Cornmarket has developed software to answer all these questions as part of their complimentary Retirement Planning Service.

Furthermore, this FREE service seeks to address:

- your Social Welfare Pension entitlements depending on whether you pay A1 or D1 PRSI
- what it would mean if you break service
- changing retirement rules and options e.g. Cost Neutral Early Retirement, etc.

This service is proving very popular and beneficial with ASTI members.



To avail of your complimentary appointment,
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Get up to the minute ASTI news

The ASTI is now on Facebook and Twitter so you can get updates on what's going on in your union, find out about upcoming events, and network with your teaching colleagues. Join us today at www.facebook.com/astiteachers or www.twitter.com/astiunion.

Of course you can still access all the latest ASTI news and information on our website too. Log on through your computer or on your phone and if you subscribe to our RSS news feed you can choose to be alerted by phone or email when new content is added to the site! See www.asti.ie/rss.

ASTI endorses appeal for volunteers

The ASTI is endorsing an appeal from Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) for Irish teachers to volunteer abroad. ASTI Immediate Past President Joe Moran got a taste of the volunteer experience in May when he visited a Global Schoolroom project in India and says the memory of his visits to schools in Guwahati and Shillong was inspiring: "The courtesy and warmth of the students and teachers in welcoming us to their schools will never be forgotten. Irish teachers can do so much to help with their professional expertise and it will be appreciated by these friendly school communities". A survey carried out by VSO earlier this year found that 83% of respondents would consider volunteering in another country but 23% feared that they would not find employment on their return to Ireland. The ASTI encourages teachers to explore the option of a career break, which allows permanent teachers to take leave without pay for up to five school years. If you take a career break, you are entitled to resume employment at the end of the period subject to whatever regulations are in force regarding redeployment. Discretion lies with the school management whether or not a career break is offered. Be sure to research your career break options carefully. Pension and PRSI contributions are not paid during career break leave so you may wish to continue to make such contributions voluntarily. See the ASTI website leave section for more information – www.asti.ie. The VSO is currently appealing for experienced teachers to train local teachers in developing countries for a period of one or two academic years. See www.vso.ie for more information.

Meet your ASTI reps

Two new regional representatives have joined ASTI Standing Committee. One representative from each of the 18 ASTI regions sits on Standing Committee, along with the officers of the union. Standing Committee meets each month and at other intervals as required, and looks after the business of the union.

Jim O'Neill is the new area representative for Dublin North 1 and Dublin North Central.

Ger Curtin is the new representative for Dublin South West and Dublin North West.

Kieran Christie from the Sligo Branch has taken over as the new ASTI Honorary National Organiser.

You can find contact details for your regional representatives in the branch section of the ASTI website. Standing Committee should reflect the views of members, so make sure to make your views known to your regional representative.

General Secretary retires



To mark his retirement as ASTI General Secretary and to honour his long service to the ASTI, CEC made a presentation to former General Secretary, John White, in May. Pictured: Matt Birmingham and Niamh Carroll make the presentation to John White (centre). See more on John White on page 22.

ASTI Centenary Scholarship Award winner



Donal O'Mahony, ASTI Centenary Scholarship Award winner, pictured with two of his students.

The ASTI Centenary Scholarship Award 2010 has been awarded to Donal O'Mahony, who teaches religion and history at Portmarnock Community School in Dublin. Donal is in his second year of research towards a PhD in Education. His research focuses on the use of online learning environments to enhance teaching and learning. You can keep up with Donal's research and all things e-learning on his blog at donalomahony.edublogs.org. Donal's use of e-learning with students in his school featured in the March 2008 issue of *ASTIR*, which can be read on the publications section of the ASTI website – www.asti.ie.

Read more on *ICT in the classroom* on page 28.

Look out for a summary of Donal's research to be published in a future edition of *ASTIR*.

New to teaching?

Take a look at the dedicated section for new teachers on the ASTI website – www.asti.ie. Find out all you need to know about your job and career, get advice on job hunting and classroom management, and have all your 'new job' questions answered.

ASTI campaign success

Following the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio announced in Budget 2009, the ASTI lobbied for and secured extra teaching posts, 100 of which came on stream in schools this month. Budget 2009 also cut funding for a range of education programmes and supports. Sustained campaigning and lobbying by the ASTI and the other teacher unions has resulted in an allocation of extra funding to allow schools to provide assistance for books and to fund Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, physics and chemistry, home economics, music activities and the Junior Certificate Schools Programme. This funding was allocated to schools in June. See page 10 in the news section for more on this allocation. The ASTI education cuts campaign is ongoing and has recently been bolstered by a report by the Economic and Social Research Institute, which urges that the long-term importance of investment in education should not be forgotten in today's difficult economic climate. The report, 'Investing in Education: Combating Educational Disadvantage' mirrors case study research carried out by the ASTI in March of last year, which found that the cuts in educational expenditure made in recent budgets have had significant impacts, particularly on the most vulnerable disadvantaged students. Read more at www.asti.ie/news/campaigns.

Dublin North West retirement function



A Dublin North West Branch retirement function was held last May to honour retirees: Andy McGeady, Castleknock College; Marita McGeady, King's Hospital; Terry Dolan, Mount Sackville; Dick Delaney, Martin Malone, and Dermot Lalor, St Declans; and, Kathleen Long, St Michael's Holy Faith. Pictured with the retirees are members of the Dublin North West Branch and guests from ASTI Head Office.

Do we have your details?

In order for your voice to be heard in ASTI ballots, we must have your correct postal address. Ballot papers are posted to the most recent address provided by members to ASTI Head Office. Your details are held in strict confidence. You can update your contact information on the ASTI website – www.asti.ie – or by emailing membership@asti.ie, or calling 01-604 0162.

ASTI retirement



Pictured during a presentation to Michael Ward (centre) to mark his retirement and long service to the ASTI are (from left): ASTI President Jack Keane; Immediate Past President Joe Moran; Michael Ward; former General Secretary John White; and, Vice-President, Brendan Broderick.

New General Secretary appointed

Pat King has been appointed the new General Secretary of the ASTI. Pat assumed the role from the beginning of this month, moving from his previous position as Assistant General Secretary. Pat has worked in the ASTI for the last 20 years, and taught at Presentation Secondary School, Terenure for 20 years before that. Read more about Pat King and his priorities for the future of the ASTI in an interview on page 24.

ASTI representative chairs Teaching Council

ASTI member Lily Cronin has been appointed Chairperson of the Teaching Council.

Lily was elected to the Teaching Council in 2006. She is a member of the Disciplinary, Finance and Audit Committees and the Post-primary Applications Panel.

A native of Killarney, Lily teaches science and biology at Mercy Mounthawk Secondary School, Tralee, and is chairperson of the Kerry Branch of the ASTI.

Lily is committed to raising the status and morale of the teaching profession through the Teaching Council. At the ASTI New Teacher Conference in May Lily assured members: "The interests of teachers are absolutely paramount at the Teaching Council table. There are 22 teachers on the Council; we know what it's like in the classroom, we know where you are at, and we are there to support you".



Teaching Council Chairperson and ASTI member Lily Cronin.

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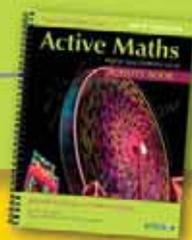
- 75% of Pilot Schools have chosen Junior Certificate Active Maths Higher and Ordinary Level for Project Maths
- Leaving Certificate **Active Maths** Ordinary Level - Now Available
- Leaving Certificate **Active Maths** Higher Level - Available October 2010*

*Access sample chapters on www.folensonline.ie

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Activity Book



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Textbook



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Working World resource pack

This autumn will see the launch of the YouthConnect Working World pack and web resource for second-level teachers and students.

The resource can be used as part of Transition Year, Leaving Cert Applied and Vocational, a range of syllabi (CSPE, economics, business studies, etc.) and career guidance.

YouthConnect Working World, produced by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions with input from ASTI members, will promote students' understanding of workplaces and issues that concern young people, including globalisation and equality. It consists of:

- a comprehensive YouthConnect Working World pack for teachers, which includes lesson plans and worksheets;
- a web resource for teachers and students; and,
- a YouthConnect pack for students.

For more information visit www.ictu.ie.

Celebrate World Teachers' Day!

World Teachers' Day is held annually on October 5 to commemorate the anniversary of the signing in 1966 of the UNESCO/ILO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. Education International, to which ASTI is affiliated, uses the occasion of World Teachers' Day to celebrate the essential role of teachers in providing quality education at all levels. In the context of the global economic crisis and austerity policies, which impact greatly on the education sector and on teachers, this year's theme is: 'Recovery Begins with Teachers!'. The ASTI is encouraging members to take some time, perhaps during morning break, on October 5 to celebrate World Teachers' Day. School stewards can buy cakes for the staff to enjoy and reclaim the cost from their ASTI branches.



Check out www.5oct.org for more on World Teachers' Day.

Is your school safe?

One in ten workplaces in the education sector inspected during 2009 had not prepared a safety statement. All schools are required to prepare a safety statement in order to comply with health and safety legislation. A total of 269 health and safety inspections were carried out in the education sector in 2009. While only two inspections resulted in prohibition notices, health and safety advice was given in 177 cases. In addition to a management-appointed Health and Safety Officer, school staff should elect a safety rep to represent their interests. The percentage of inspected workplaces with elected safety representatives has almost doubled to 63% from 2008 to 2009.

The ASTI holds training seminars for school safety representatives. Look out for information in your staffroom and on the ASTI website.

Grants and funding restored

Following lobbying by the ASTI, the other teacher unions and others, the Renewed Programme for Government allowed for the restoration of a range of grants and funding withdrawn under Budget 2009.

The additional per capita funding to be provided is:

| | |
|--|------|
| Allocation to DEIS schools for books | €39 |
| Allocation to non-DEIS schools for books | €24 |
| Junior Certificate Schools Programme | €63 |
| Transition Year Programme | €100 |
| Leaving Certificate Applied Programme | €159 |
| Physics and chemistry | €13 |

The allocation that previously went towards music and equipment for the Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational programmes, as well as home economics equipment, will be incorporated into general school capitation funding. The Department of Education and Skills intends to incorporate payment of all programme grants and funding into school capitation payments in future.

Calling payroll?

Staff in the payroll division of the Department of Education will no longer answer telephone queries on Tuesday or Wednesday mornings. This measure is to ensure that staff have adequate time to check payroll reports and monitor the payrolls. In future the payroll division will only take telephone queries on Tuesdays and Wednesdays after 2.30pm.

Ombudsman for Children education initiatives

Since its establishment in 2004, the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) has linked with schools throughout Ireland and welcomed hundreds of young people and their teachers to its office in Dublin to participate in educational workshops. Two current OCO education initiatives are particularly relevant to post-primary schools and teachers.

'What do you say?' is a resource pack for CSPE consisting of 10 lessons that support teachers to explore children's rights with young people in the context of the curriculum. The pack also presents



ideas for an action project based on the issues covered. Every year, the OCO welcomes children and young people and their teachers to Dublin to participate in activity-based workshops on issues concerning children's and young people's rights in Ireland. A visit to the OCO is free of charge and transport costs are covered. 'What do you say?' can be downloaded at www.oco.ie. The OCO also has a limited number of printed copies available on a first come, first served basis. To get your copy or to book a visit to the OCO, contact the OCO, Tel: 01-865 6800, or Email: oco@oco.ie.



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www.scratch.ie

EAS offers support in troubling times

One hundred percent of those who have accessed the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) for teachers would recommend the service to others, according to a recent survey. The same survey showed that the EAS improved respondents' ability to manage the pressure of their situation in 94% of cases. Following representations from the ASTI and the other teacher unions, the EAS was established in 2006 to provide confidential counselling exclusively for teachers and their immediate family members. The EAS provides assistance in coping with a variety of issues, for example managing work-life balance or coping with bereavement. Given that we are living through a period of change and uncertainty, the EAS is now, more than ever, a beneficial resource offering guidance and support in coping with these changes.

The EAS is available to any teacher whose position is funded by the Department of Education and Skills, their spouses or partners, their dependents above the age of 16 and their parents, where appropriate. Vhi Corporate Solutions, an external provider, delivers the EAS. Staff follow strict ethical guidelines and codes of practice. Any contact remains confidential and no information about you is available to anyone without your written consent. Any feedback provided to the Department is purely in general terms and is anonymous in nature.

What services are available?

- Telephone counselling – single sessions or short-term structured counselling
- Face-to-face counselling – up to six counselling sessions
- Counselling is provided on issues such as health, relationships, addictions, bereavement, stress, conflict, critical incident and trauma.

Accessing the service

The EAS is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through Freephone 1800 411 057, or Email: eas@vhics.ie.

Irish students are politically aware

Young people in Ireland are more politically and civically aware than students in some 30 other countries, according to the initial findings of a major international survey of civic and citizenship education (ICCS). Irish students perform well above the international average on a test of civic knowledge, ranking seventh.

Students in Ireland report higher than average levels of trust in schools (75%) and people in general (64%). In contrast, only 52% of students trust the national government, 48% trust the media, and just 40% trust political parties. Trust in the national government reported by Irish students is ten percentage points lower than the international average of 62%.

There is evidence of progress in attitudes towards equal gender rights since the last Irish survey in 1971. In 1971, 22% of students agreed that 'Women should stay out of politics' and in 2009, just 7% agreed with this statement.

A total of 38 countries took part in the study carried out in Ireland by the Educational Research Centre. In Ireland, 3,400 students, 1,900 teachers and 145 schools were surveyed.

Junior Spider Awards



Would you like a project to help develop your students' web design skills, or your own? Take a look at the eircom Junior Spider Awards 2010! The Eircom Junior Spiders encourage and reward web and app creation and innovation in primary and second-level students. Last year the awards received over 80 entries in seven categories and this year they're hoping for even more.

As well as the student categories, teachers will also have the opportunity to win an award. Principals can nominate a teacher from their school for their contribution to education in the use of the internet and web applications in school.

Students can enter individually, in groups of up to three, or in class/school groups. All entries represent both the students and the school, and must include contact details for a teacher or school principal. Winners will be announced at an awards ceremony and this year's finalists will get to showcase their work at the exhibition in the Helix in December.

For more information go to www.junior spiders.ie.

Categories include:

Primary level

1. Best project – <http://www.junior spiders.ie/1-project/>
2. Best School Blog – <http://www.junior spiders.ie/2-school-blog/%20>
3. Best School Website – <http://www.junior spiders.ie/school-websites/>

Second level

1. Best Concept – <http://www.junior spiders.ie/bestconcept/>
2. Best Project – <http://www.junior spiders.ie/best-project/>
3. Best Web Design – <http://www.junior spiders.ie/3-best-web-design/%20>
4. Suiomh is Fearr – <http://www.junior spiders.ie/suiomh-is-fearr/>
5. Best Web App – <http://www.junior spiders.ie/best-web-app/>

Cycle to work scheme

A new circular relating to the Cycle to Work Scheme for teachers in 2011 has been issued by the Department of Education and Skills. Under the Scheme, you can have the Department, as your employer, pay up to €1,000 towards the cost of a new bicycle or bicycle safety equipment. You then pay the cost off via salary sacrifice instalments. The amount paid will not be liable for benefit-in-kind taxation, or any other tax deduction. You can apply for the scheme now; however, applications will not be processed until January 2011. Applications for the 2011 scheme will be accepted until April 23.

See Circular 46/2010 for more information. You can download application forms in the education personnel section of the Department's website – www.education.gov.ie – or check out www.biketowork.ie/teachers, which offers an easy step-by-step guide to the process of buying your new bike.

The supervision of State Exams

JOE COY, Tuam Branch, feels that a shift of emphasis by the ASTI is needed.



Apart from their basic salaries, teachers have few opportunities to add to their earnings within the profession except for increments and post allowances (both now under threat). The only other source of income is the supervision or correction of State Examinations. Traditionally, there were more applicants for the supervision jobs than there were vacancies so seniority (i.e., age) applied. I was in my early 30s before I first succeeded. However, a teacher in my school who is in her early 50s believes that she was rejected this year because she was 'too young'.

When I went to the regional centre to collect my box of exam papers on June 8, I could see why this had happened. The place was full of retired teachers. I knew many of them – some were in their early 70s, some retired many years ago and others had left the profession having taken early retirement with an enhanced pension.

Now what I don't understand is that if retirement from full-time teaching is compulsory at age 65, then why do the same rules not apply to supervision?

I would guess that most of these retired teachers pay no annual subscription, so why does the ASTI tolerate a situation where its own paid-up members are denied supervision work while non-members take their places?

Before charges of ageism are raised, let me add that I am 63 and on the verge of retirement myself. As with the medical card debate, the spectre of impoverished old age may be raised to stifle discussion. Well I don't buy it. Because of recent budget changes, which greatly diminished the salaries of young teachers, many young teachers now earn less than the pensioners who retired at the top of the scale. Add to this the fact that young teachers, especially those with families, have expensive childcare costs, increased transport costs, expensive mortgages and potential university fees to pay. To cap it all, they will be carrying the burden of NAMA for the rest of their working lives.

The ASTI should be fighting for its younger members. We of the older generation had it good for the past 15 years, much as some of us might like to argue otherwise. Our homes are paid for and our families reared. We now have the time and energy to attend Branch meetings and go to Congress so we are exerting an undue influence on the thinking of our union to the detriment of the younger generation. The focus should shift to the younger teachers who are faced with increasingly difficult jobs and tougher conditions for less pay.

The ASTI should start by reclaiming the supervision of exams for young teachers and for young graduates who cannot get full-time work or are depending on part-time, temporary work.

The question might also be asked as to why the Department is employing an increasing number of retired people. Could it have anything to do with the threat by some ASTI members to boycott exams during the last period of industrial action?

I loved teaching for the past 38 years but I would not like to be starting again. More and more is going to be expected for less and less. The mass media sees teachers as fair game for continuous snide and negative remarks (some of it unfortunately fed by ourselves). Parents are often more demanding and less supportive, while some pupils are impossible to control, never mind teach, due to social breakdown. Now more than ever, teachers need a strong union to protect their profession and mind their interests. The ASTI needs to redirect its energies away from the 'haves' and the 'have-beens' to the 'have-nots'.

Got something to say? We want to hear it. Send contributions for publication in *ASTIR* to astir@asti.ie



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New to teaching?

ASTIR shares some information you need to know when starting your teaching career.



You know your curriculum inside out, you've got teaching methodologies pretty much down, you've finally figured out how to pronounce 'pedagogy'. Now you're faced with a new set of complications: teaching contracts, school as a work environment, teaching hours, your salary ...

ASTIR is here to help clear up the confusion!

Your job

The number of teacher appointments in a school is linked to the number of students attending that school. The current pupil-teacher ratio is 19:1 so for every 19 students, one permanent full-time teaching position is allocated. These positions are called 'in-quota' positions and are funded by the Department of Education and Skills.

Schools can also apply to the Department for 'concessionary' teaching hours. These extra hours are granted depending on a school's individual needs. Some schools may also pay for teaching hours directly from their own funds.

Your contract

The type of contract you hold depends on the reasons for the vacancy and the type of hours you will cover. In-quota positions are permanent, while concessionary hours will normally result in a fixed-term contract. Outside of concessionary hours, a fixed-term contract should only be given when the need for the teacher's service is genuinely a temporary one, for example, where you are replacing a teacher on leave.

You should make sure you receive clear written information on the terms and conditions of your job, either in the form of a letter of appointment, a written contract, or a written statement. You are entitled to this information and it's important that you have it so that you fully understand the nature of your employment. Remember to keep a copy of all documents, as they may be

important in future. If there is anything you are unsure of ask your ASTI school steward or ASTI Head Office for clarification or advice before you sign anything.

Check that your contract:

- sets out the nature and duration of your employment;
- clarifies the type of contract under which you are employed: fixed-term or permanent, part-time or whole-time;
- clarifies the number of hours per week you are contracted to teach;
- names the subjects and levels you will be teaching;
- gives the reason for the vacancy you are filling;
- and,
- tells you whether you will be paid by the Department of Education, the school, or the VEC.

The current pupil-teacher ratio is 19:1 so for every 19 students, one permanent full-time teaching position is allocated. These positions are called 'in-quota' positions and are funded by the Department of Education and Skills.

Part-time or non-permanent?

Unfortunately, most new teachers will not find permanent or full-time employment right away. Instead most new teachers teach part-time hours or on fixed-term contracts.



A regular part-time (RPT) teacher is appointed where the need for part-time hours is viable for at least a year.

A casual part-time teacher is appointed where there is a casual need for hours to be covered, for example, when replacing a teacher on short-term sick leave.

A fixed-term contract is awarded for concessionary hours, or where there is a specific reason for a temporary position, for example, where you will be covering the hours of a teacher on leave.

Permanent vs CID

Some teachers entering service for the first time may just be lucky enough to find full-time permanent positions. Such teachers may receive a probationary contract but once the probationary period has been served the teacher should receive a continuous contract. A contract of indefinite duration (CID) affords the holder the same rights and entitlements as a permanent teacher, except that their salary is based on the number of hours they teach per week. If you have been employed on four successive fixed-term contracts, you may be entitled to a CID. A CID holder on 18 hours or more per week is paid a full-time salary. Full information on contracts is available on www.asti.ie. The ASTI has also produced an information leaflet on contracts, which can be found on the website or requested from Head Office.

An RPT teacher is employed and paid for 12 months (September to August), and is paid at an hourly rate that is calculated by dividing the relevant salary scale point rate plus allowances by 735.

You should make sure you receive clear written information on the terms and conditions of your job, either in the form of a letter of appointment, a written contract, or a written statement.

Your salary

Your salary will depend on your qualifications, years of service, number of hours, the period of your contract and the nature of your contract. A permanent full-time teacher is paid based on a 25-point incremental scale. Qualified teachers start the scale at point 3, which is currently €33,041. In addition to this basic salary, you will receive a degree allowance and HDip/PGDE allowance.

A fixed-term teacher's salary is based on a pro-rata fraction of the relevant point on the salary scale plus allowances, depending on how many hours they teach. A qualified casual part-time teacher is paid €46.85 for each hour of teaching. After 150 hours at the casual rate in one school year, the teacher is paid a personal non-casual hourly rate based on his or her qualifications and previous experience for the remainder of that school year.

An RPT teacher is employed and paid for 12 months (September to August), and is paid at an hourly rate that is calculated by dividing the relevant salary scale point rate plus allowances by 735. Registration with the Teaching Council is a requirement for all teachers who wish to teach in recognised schools and have their salaries paid from State monies. Visit www.teachingcouncil.ie for more information or to begin the registration process.

Full details of salary scales and allowances are available on www.asti.ie.

As well as managing the teaching staff, the principal has overall responsibility for the instruction provided to students and for the education and personal development of students.

Your school

Most schools are run by boards of management, which are appointed by the patron body to manage the school on its behalf. Teachers are among those represented on boards of management. The board of management appoints a principal to manage the school on a day-to-day basis. As well as managing

the teaching staff, the principal has overall responsibility for the instruction provided to students and for the education and personal development of students. If you work in a voluntary secondary school or a community school, the board of management is your employer. The local Vocational Education Committee is the employer in vocational schools and community colleges.

Learn more:

www.asti.ie/pay-and-conditions
www.asti.ie/operation-of-schools
www.teachingcouncil.ie

Want to share your own new teacher experience?

Email: astirfeedback@asti.ie.

Some 'not so new' teachers tell us about their first teaching jobs.

Pat King, ASTI General Secretary

Tough but worth it

Starting out as a new teacher was certainly tough. It's a very lonely job when you walk into the classroom and close the door – you're on your own and you hope the students don't notice. I remember thinking back to the good teachers I had and finding inspiration there. It took time to develop confidence; it was tough for the first few years and I did think about giving up. But over my second and third years I realised I was really enjoying it and in the end I absolutely loved the job.

PJ Sheehy, Wicklow

Different times

My first job was just for one year and when I had to look for another, I just drove around the coast – Cork, Waterford, Wexford – knocking on doors, and being told: "Well, if you had maths...." In the end, I got a job in Arklow CBS.

Kieran Christie, Honorary National Organiser

From classroom to staffroom

My most vivid memory of my early days in teaching is the trepidation I felt facing into the staffroom. Some of my new colleagues had actually taught me as a secondary school student and I was really curious as to how we would react to that situation. In fairness, I found them all very supportive and saw no small irony in their offers of advice on how to handle students who offer the kind of challenging behaviour I might have displayed in their classes just a few years before! From a classroom point of view, I soon discovered that it is necessary to stake out your ground very early with students. You are a professional person doing a professional job and the dynamic that creates must be clearly understood. Once the groundwork is done, you will discover that teaching is an interesting and very enjoyable profession.

Brendan Broderick, ASTI Vice-President

Plus ça change...

I started teaching in the early '80s when, like today, Ireland was in recession, unemployment was rising and public services were being decimated. Before I got a permanent job, I worked in a number of schools and when I wasn't teaching I worked on building sites, in electronics or signed on the dole – not a pleasant experience. I was actually considering taking a post in Oman when a permanent job became available not far from where I was living and I was lucky enough to get it. The period while I didn't have a permanent job was difficult; feelings of insecurity and vulnerability abounded and I always felt like an outsider in the staffroom. Unfortunately the casualisation of the teaching profession that began back then was purposely maintained during the boom years and is now embedded in the system. It's great that non-permanent workers have better legal protections today, but of course securing a permanent position can be as stressful and frustrating as ever.

Ed Byrne, Fingal

Pack your sense of humour!

Starting your teaching career is both daunting and exciting and one of the most important weapons in your armoury is your sense of humour. A number of years ago, when I thought I had done the difficult job of securing my first post, I was determined to make a good start and create a strong impression. When it came time for my first class I entered wearing a suit, shirt, and tie and well-polished shoes – a policy I discarded in later years. I introduced myself to a sixth-year class and began walking around the room talking in a very serious manner trying hard to mask my nerves. Just as I began to feel comfortable I made my way to the front of the class and sat down on my desk. The desk collapsed under me, sending a well-attired teacher sprawling. I cut an absolutely ridiculous figure wriggling about on the floor. The sound of laughter echoed through the corridors and there was nothing left but to laugh with them. It certainly broke the ice. A number of years later the incident was recalled on an infamous website and the writer commented on how stupid I looked. But every comment posted after that said I recovered very well. Everybody sees incidents differently, you cannot control that. My advice is to prepare well for your first day but remember to bring your sense of humour – you just might need it.

Whether you are an ASTI member or have yet to join the ASTI, you are invited to a **Know Your Rights** meeting near you.

ASTI Information Meetings Know Your Rights

CIDs

Part-time Hours

Contracts

Fixed-Term

ASTI Information Meetings for Newly Appointed Teachers will take place from 6.30pm-9.00pm

HAVE ALL YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

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Your pay slip explained

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How teachers can save money

| VENUE | DATE |
|--|----------------|
| Central Hotel, Donegal Town | 8th September |
| The Brehon Hotel, Killarney | 9th September |
| The Clarion Airport Hotel, Dublin | 9th September |
| Nuremore Hotel, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan | 9th September |
| Bloomfield House Hotel, Mullingar | 14th September |
| Silversprings Moran Hotel, Cork | 14th September |
| Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore, Co. Offaly | 14th September |
| Carlton Hotel, Galway | 14th September |
| Stillorgan Park Hotel, Co. Dublin | 21st September |
| South Court Hotel, Limerick | 21st September |
| Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny | 21st September |
| McWilliam Hotel, Claremorris, Co. Mayo | 21st September |

Tea, coffee & sandwiches will be available at 6pm each evening. For more information please contact Eileen O'Rourke on Tel: (01) 6040170 or Email: asti.library@asti.ie.

What can we do for you?

As a new school year begins, ASTIR takes a look at what the ASTI has to offer to members.



Answers to your questions

The ASTI is here to explain all aspects of your job, your rights, and your entitlements. Got a question about your contract? Need to know about pensions or salary? Wondering about union policy? Any question, big or small, give us a call on 1850-418400; Email info@asti.ie; or click onto our website, which has hundreds of pages of information available to you 24/7. You can also request a school visit where your school staff can be briefed on their rights and entitlements or on specific queries by one of our industrial relations officials. So, if you have a question or concern at any time throughout the year, we're here to help.

Representation and protection...

... for you

The ASTI will stand up for you if your employment rights are being infringed. We will advise and represent you if you are involved in a dispute of any kind. Through the ASTI, you can access professional industrial relations support and advice, and legal representation, if necessary. ASTI staff will represent you in meetings with school management and the Department of Education. Most issues can be easily and quickly resolved through discussion at this level. Where necessary, however, we will represent and support you in cases taken to the Rights Commissioner, equality tribunals, or the Labour Court. We have years of experience and a wealth of expert knowledge – put it to use!

DID YOU KNOW...?

- The ASTI has all the information you need on your rights and entitlements.
- ASTI members can avail of a range of money-saving financial benefits.
- Being an active member enables you to influence education policy.

We will advise and represent you if you are involved in a dispute of any kind.

....for your profession

In the coming year we will continue to work to protect and improve teachers' working conditions and to ensure job security. The ASTI represents its members at national, regional, and school levels. We negotiate with the Department of Education, managerial bodies, boards of management and VECs on an ongoing basis to achieve the best conditions for our members. Watch out for updates on the ASTI website, in *Nuacht* and in *ASTIR*.

Training and professional development

The ASTI programme of events kicks off this month with a series of 'Know Your Rights' seminars for non-permanent teachers. We also offer trade union training, including: courses for school stewards and board of management representatives; our ever-popular retirement courses; health and safety training; and, a variety of other courses according to demand. Annual Convention at Easter and the ASTI New Teacher Conference in May will give you the chance to meet colleagues from around the country and to stay informed. Look out for details on the ASTI website and advertised in schools.

Campaigns on your behalf

ASTI campaigns reflect your best interests and those of your students. This year we will continue to campaign against cuts to your pay and threats to your pension, and for improved education funding, better school conditions and more teaching jobs.

Last year the ASTI succeeded in securing extra teaching posts, at a time when vacancies in other areas of the public service went unfilled. We have a powerful voice to use on your behalf.

News and information

The ASTI website is updated daily with news and information for teachers. Throughout the year members will receive copies of *ASTIR* magazine, providing news, features and comment on subjects of interest to teachers professionally and personally. *Nuacht* will regularly update you on issues relating to your job, working conditions, industrial relations developments and ASTI activity and achievements. As an ASTI member, you can access information leaflets covering all aspects of your job, rights and entitlements. Browse these comprehensive leaflets on the ASTI website and request copies from ASTI Head Office. Keep track of your teaching and ASTI activities this year on your ASTI year planner and in your ASTI diary. These handy organisers are sent to every ASTI member each year.

We maintain a register of teachers available for work so we can match them to substitute opportunities as they arise. Visit our website to sign up.

Financial benefits

If you are due an eye exam or dental check-up this year, remember to keep your receipt – the ASTI Sickness Benefit Scheme allows members to claim up to €165 back on optical and dental treatment. The Scheme also offers financial assistance to cover medical expenses for teachers who are out of work due to illness for seven consecutive days or more.

In exceptional circumstances members can apply for assistance from the ASTI Benevolent Fund. Terms and conditions apply to these schemes. Contact ASTI Head Office or see our website for more information. As an ASTI member, you can access a number of specially negotiated deals on a range of products including car, home, travel and health insurance. You can investigate these on the services and benefits section of our website.

If you are on part-time hours or out of work this year, sign up to our substitute placement scheme. We maintain a register of teachers available for work so we can match them to substitute opportunities as they arise. Visit our website to sign up.

A say in education

Only ASTI members can influence ASTI policy. You can do this through ballots, at branch meetings, by sitting on committees and by attending Convention. The ASTI is represented on the NCCA and the Teaching Council, as well as other education bodies. We play an important role in shaping second-level education policy in Ireland. As an ASTI member, you can influence the changing landscape of education, so if you have something to say, now is the time to say it!

We negotiate with the Department of Education, managerial bodies, boards of management and VECs on an ongoing basis to achieve the best conditions for our members.

What's going on this term?

September

New teacher information evenings in Killarney, Cork, Limerick, Donegal, Dublin Airport, Stillorgan, Carrickmacross, Mullingar, Tullamore, and Galway.

School steward training courses in Galway, Cork and Stillorgan.

See www.asti.ie for details.

Note the date: collect your ASTI Wallplanner from your school steward this month.

October

School steward training: Dublin, Limerick, Mullingar, Carrick-on-Shannon, and Kilkenny. See www.asti.ie for details.

Get the latest ASTI news and information relevant to your job in this month's *Nuacht*.

November

Board of management training in Dublin, Cork, Galway, and Kilkenny. See www.asti.ie for details.

Watch out for the next issue of *ASTIR* online and in schools.

December

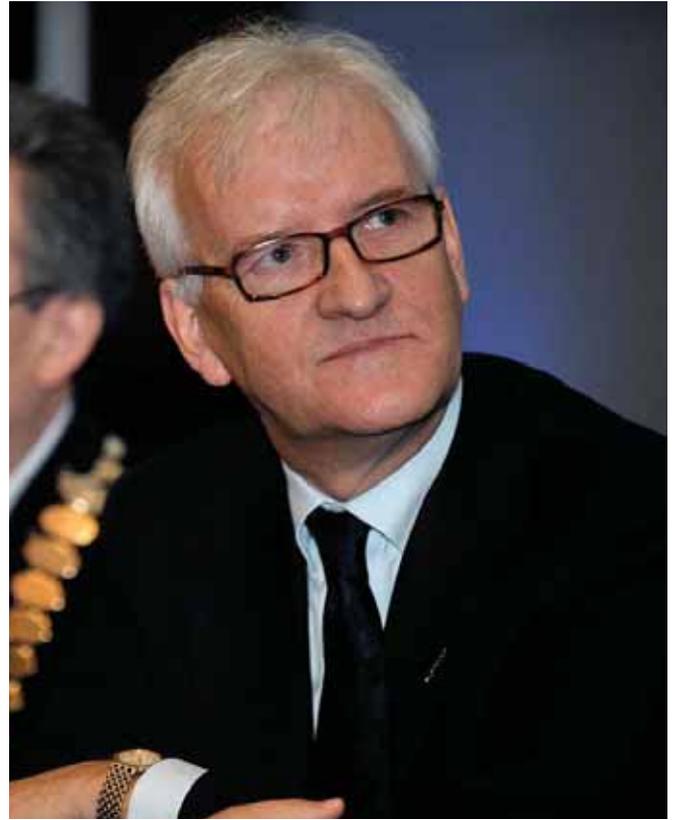
Start planning for 2011 in your ASTI Diary, arriving in schools this month.

A driving force

John White retires as General Secretary of the ASTI this September.

John White has served in the role of General Secretary since 2005. Prior to this he was Deputy General Secretary of the ASTI for 13 years. Before joining ASTI Head Office, John worked as a second-level teacher for 20 years at De La Salle College in Dundalk. He was also an ASTI activist and was elected ASTI President in 1986. John represented the ASTI on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment for a number of years. Passionate about education and trade unionism, John was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Education from the National University of Ireland in 2009 for his contribution, through the ASTI, "as a driving force behind quality in education and teaching".

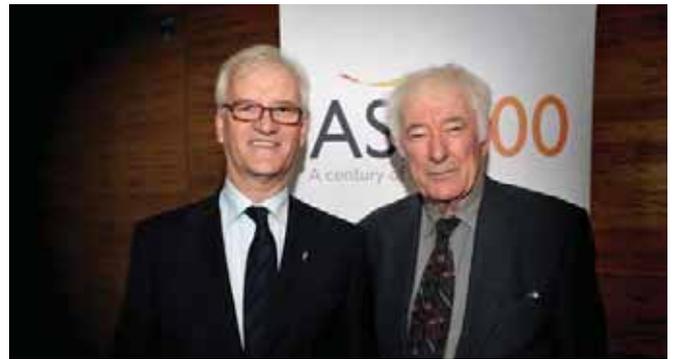
In a tribute paid to John at the May 2010 Central Executive Council meeting, ASTI member Niamh Carroll (Navan) said: "John has always great wisdom, sense and professionalism and is an inspiration to us all". Matt Bermingham (Fermoy) thanked John for his commitment to the ASTI and for "always being personable, approachable, and good humoured".



John White pictured at a Partners in Education meeting during his time as President of the ASTI in 1986-'87. This was the first time management, parents and the ASTI came together to campaign for education resources. Also pictured are Sean McCarthy, then TUI President, and Maurine Gaffney, Deputy General Secretary, TUI.



On the picket line during the 2000 ASTI pay dispute.



John pictured with Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney at the 2009 ASTI Education Conference.



Pictured with President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, during a celebration to mark the ASTI's centenary held in the Mansion House, Dublin. Also pictured is then ASTI President Pat Hurley.



John White speaking at Annual Convention 1994 during his time as Deputy General Secretary of the ASTI.



In 2009 John was conferred with an Honorary Doctorate from the National University of Ireland. Pictured with him are (from left): former ASTI President Pat Hurley; ASTI Immediate Past President Joe Moran; and, ASTI Honorary Treasurer Ray St. John.



John White addresses over 10,000 people at the October 2008 Education Cuts protest.



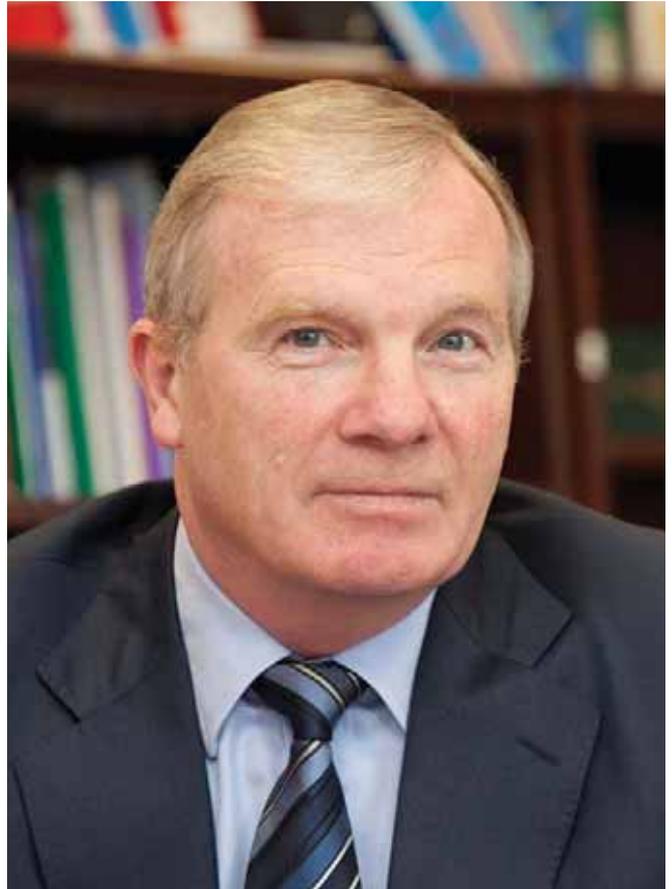
John White pictured with Imelda Taylor and Deirdre Whitlow from Our Lady of Mercy, Beaumont, at a conference for new teachers held in 2009.



All hands on deck: John White helps out making placards for the education cuts march in 2008.

Meet the new General Secretary

ASTIR sits down with the new ASTI General Secretary, Pat King, to find out about his priorities for the role and for the future of the ASTI.



Twenty is a recurring number for Pat King, who assumes the role of ASTI General Secretary this month. He started teaching at the surprisingly young age of 20, took on an industrial relations role in ASTI Head Office 20 years after that and now, 20 years later again, he begins his new position as General Secretary of the union.

With '20/20' vision of the teaching and industrial relations landscapes, and equal reserves of knowledge and experience gained in both careers, the move to General Secretary seems a natural progression. "I am very happy in the appointment. It is a difficult time for the ASTI and a huge challenge for me but I'm not overawed by it. The biggest challenge of all is to maintain the ASTI as a coherent, effective unit so that when the good times come, we will be ready," says the new General Secretary.

"I am very happy in the appointment. It is a difficult time for the ASTI and a huge challenge for me but I'm not overawed by it."

Taking stock and growing in strength

The sensible approach is to use the period we are in to build structures and grow in strength, says Pat, who believes the Convention 2010 decision to examine and evaluate the structures and organisation of the union is one

of the most important taken for years: "We need to look at how we operate, the service we provide, and the involvement of members. My father used to talk about the importance of going to trade union meetings. I didn't pay much notice back then, but I see now the value of involvement and activism. Both are very much absent in today's world and trade unions have suffered as a result. We need to work to reverse the trend. People need their unions now more than ever and for the ASTI, it's a time to evaluate what we do, strengthen our structures, update our services, and awaken new member involvement".

Pat himself was heavily involved in the ASTI as a member while teaching, his interest initially awakened during the pay campaigns of the 1980s. He acted as school steward in Presentation Terenure for seven years; he was a branch organiser and chairperson; and, one of the founders of the ASTI Credit Union. For five years from 1985 until he began work in Head Office he took on the role of Honorary National Organiser, assuming responsibility for recruitment and conducting training courses around the country. Much of his work, including writing the first ASTI Members' Handbook, was done from his living room, and his three children spent many of their evenings packing ASTI leaflets into folders.

Supporting education and supporting members

During this ASTI involvement Pat continued to teach, a career he says he always found extremely satisfying: "It is very rewarding to be a teacher. It's exhausting too of course; the students have a way of draining every ounce



"A union is a group of people who support each other. People who are employees are in a position of vulnerability. People who are employers are in a position of power. The most effective way of balancing the two is through trade unions."

of energy out of you, but they rejuvenate you too – young minds keep you alert. The ASTI is unusual in that as well as traditional trade union issues, we take an interest in the professional role of our members; we are interested in the development of the education service and curriculum. We have to make sure we continue to have an influence there. We need to set the agenda because we, the practitioners, have the best interests of students at heart". Pat takes a straightforward view of the value of trade unions to their members: "A union is a group of people who support each other. People who are employees are in a position of vulnerability. People who are employers are in a position of power. The most effective way of balancing the two is through trade unions. Nobody is ever beyond needing the backing of their colleagues or their union to make sure they are treated properly". Ensuring that individual ASTI members were properly treated is what Pat did for 20 years and it's a job he says he will miss: "When things work out, when you succeed with a case, when somebody's job is saved,

CV

Pat was educated at Synge Street CBS and University College Dublin. He taught English and history at Presentation Secondary School, Terenure, from 1970–1990. He was Assistant General Secretary and Senior Official, ASTI, from 1990.

it's an extraordinary moment and it gives you a wonderful sense of satisfaction. I'll miss it, but I'll still be very interested in that side of things in my new role because, as I say, that is what the ASTI is all about – supporting members".

"It's a time to evaluate what we do, strengthen our structures, update our services, and awaken new member involvement."

Spare time? What spare time?

Golf: "It's not physical exercise but mental exercise – it does wonders for my sanity."

Sport of any shape or size: "I'm an utterly frustrated Dublin GAA supporter. I love rugby; I've been to hundreds of rugby matches but I still fail to understand what goes on in the scrum."

Reading: "I enjoy boring current affairs books. I'm reading *The Far Side of Revenge* by Deaglán de Bréadún at the moment. It's a minute-by-minute account of the peace process. He's a great writer and he sat beside me in Synge Street CBS!"

ASTI supporting new teachers

At a conference for new and young teachers in May, the ASTI called for a review of teacher allocation as part of a sustainable policy for teacher recruitment, retention and employment.



New teachers watch proceedings at the ASTI New Teachers' Conference.



Michael and Jean Mallon from Cork meet the Minister for Education and Skills, Mary Coughlan, at the ASTI New Teachers' Conference.

The present system of teacher allocation is not adequate and is damaging education provision, then ASTI President Joe Moran told the 100 conference attendees: "The current model of allocation does not take into account the complexity of timetabling, and the diverse education needs of a student cohort in individual schools". Mr Moran said the low availability of permanent positions means that the majority of teachers spend a number of years moving from job to job. Many new teachers are employed on an hourly basis, have little job security, and do not receive a full income. Trying to get more hours and seeking tenure become their overriding priority and other countries are benefiting as a result, as our top quality graduates are forced to move abroad to find full-time secure work. Mr Moran told the conference that the issue needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency as the hours culture is becoming permanently embedded in the system.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- 100 new teachers attended the ASTI's conference.
- Supporting and involving new teachers is a major ASTI priority.
- Minister Coughlan told delegates that teachers are fundamental to economic recovery and growth.

Minister's reaction

The Minister for Education and Skills, Mary Coughlan, who was in attendance at the conference, responded positively to the ASTI policy document: "I appreciate what you are saying and we'll talk about how we can streamline these issues in due course ... I want to make sure that in my tenure as Minister we will allow a situation whereby the teaching profession will be absolutely fundamental in the context of our economic recovery and growth".

The Minister complimented the passion of the teachers she met at the conference and told delegates that, despite difficulties, teaching "is a great career, it is one career that is definitely going to keep going ... you have picked a very fine profession to be in".

Your union

Mr Moran reminded delegates that there is no contradiction between the ASTI's two aims: serving teachers, promoting education. He encouraged the young members to get involved in the union and to voice their concerns and issues: "You are very important to the ASTI. We are there for you. The ASTI is your union, it is not a building in Winetavern Street ... there are future presidents and general secretaries here today. Get involved in the ASTI and bring the issues that are bothering you to the table".

[Read the full policy document at www.asti.ie.](http://www.asti.ie)

[See photos from the event in the gallery section of www.asti.ie.](http://www.asti.ie)

ASTI policy on teacher recruitment, retention and employment – the key points

Problems:

- current entry models are potentially undermining schools' supply of sufficient, high quality teachers;
- the current allocation model is based on enrolment in the previous school year and does not take into consideration the individual educational needs of the student cohort; and,
- the proportion of non-permanent teachers in schools undermines staff planning and can leave schools short of teachers.

Solutions:

- a more favourable pupil–teacher ratio for the first 150 students to provide curricular protection for smaller schools and assist schools in responding to student needs;
- specific allocation guidelines for categories of students;
- allow schools to base their allocation on the previous two years' enrolment figures, rather than on the previous one-year figure;
- give effect to the European requirements to consider requests by workers to transfer from part-time to full-time work or to increase their working time should the opportunity arise; and,
- the optimal solution is the introduction of an induction year for all newly qualified teachers.



The graphic features the ASTI logo at the top center, flanked by Twitter and Facebook icons. Below the logo is the text 'Five great reasons to connect with us on Facebook and Twitter'. A central blue bird icon is connected by a white line to five colored rectangular boxes, each containing a reason. At the bottom right, the social media URLs are provided.

ASTI
A century of service

Five great reasons to connect with us on Facebook and Twitter

- Get involved, share knowledge and have your say
- Keep up to date with all the latest news
- Connect with colleagues and other teachers
- Find out about local and national events
- Join in and vitalise ASTI campaigns

www.facebook.com/astiteachers
www.twitter.com/astionion

Mastering ICT-led change

JEROME MORRISSEY, Director of the National Centre for Technology in Education, discusses moves towards greater integration of ICT in schools.

The way learning takes place is going to change fundamentally over the next 10 to 15 years. There is no blueprint as to how, exactly, the processes of change will be sequenced but a number of key building blocks are now being laid down. I think that, in general, we understand that the learning experience of our young people will be enhanced and enriched through the use of technology and digital resources. Once the learning process and the environment within which learning occurs in schools reflects the way young people engage with technology in the rest of their lives, it would seem to follow that learning will be a more engaging, interesting and intellectually stimulating experience. Evidence exists that access to high-quality online content not only helps to deliver curricular objectives but also raises motivation levels and adds to student achievement. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) is now central to practice in most areas of professional life, e.g., surgeons even conduct life-saving operations over the internet from distant locations. We know that young people operate in an increasingly digital world and studies show that the internet is the first destination of most young people when sourcing information or advice. In Ireland ICT has not yet embedded itself in learning and teaching in schools. There are many institutional reasons why this has not yet happened. The use of technology in a truly integrated manner in teaching will happen, but the transition will be evolutionary.

Building blocks

While very innovative practice in the use of ICT is taking place, Irish schools in general are at a relatively early stage of ICT development and

DID YOU KNOW...?

- Access to high-quality online content not only helps to deliver curricular objectives but also raises motivation levels and adds to student achievement.
- This month, 78 second-level schools opened with 100mb broadband connectivity.
- This year Denmark successfully ran its first open online examinations in six subject areas.



the focus is on getting the basics right – updating equipment, technical support, the availability of digital learning content and high-speed internet, and thorough e-learning planning.

An Taoiseach launched the 'Smart Schools – Smart Economy' report in November 2009 and announced an allocation of €150 million over three years to upgrade ICT infrastructure in all primary and post-primary schools. For post-primary schools the 100Mb/s project was included in the Renewed Programme for Government in October 2009. It states:

"We will deliver 100Mb/s to all second-level schools by 2012, and roll out new digital access devices for teachers and students to coincide with this new high-speed broadband capability in our schools".

This facility will be in place this September in the first 78 schools, where the installation of the ICT hardware and 100Mb/s connectivity is already in place. The National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) will provide some key services to these schools.

Classrooms of the future

Planning for the long-term enhancement of ICT infrastructure should be a key concern of schools. In the future, students will bring their own computing devices to class so schools should prioritise good wireless networks throughout their buildings. Smart phones and new portable computers such as the iPad can use the school's wireless connectivity to access online learning content. This capability will present challenges for classroom management of digital technology – how will teachers manage the presence of these devices in classrooms? New pedagogical skills will be required by teachers to incorporate those devices into the classroom setting in ways that assist learning.

Technology can create an enriching and stimulating environment for learning through the integrated use of web-based activity, online data and information, online videos and simulations, and specially edited learning resources. The NCTE's strategy for digital content is to 'build, buy and share'. We work with specialist teachers who are expert in the use of ICT to source and repurpose content for Scoilnet. There are thousands of links to appropriate content on Scoilnet.ie, all sourced, approved and categorised by the NCTE and tagged to subject areas of the curriculum.

The NCTE benefits from shared teaching and learning content through our partnership with the EUN European network. Access to content is also provided by the Library Council of Ireland, *Irish Times* archive, FIS and others. Recently, through Scoilnet, school access was provided to Encyclopaedia Britannica and World Book. These reference works contain good text, videos, animations, simulations and photographs, which cover all subjects on the curriculum and are available to teachers outside of school.

The classroom of the future will extend to the home when out-of-school online learning becomes a structured part of a student's contribution to classwork/homework. In Korea, students complete assignments online and continue their learning in the evenings and over the weekend with the support and mentoring of thousands of ancillary online teachers.

ICT integration and the e-learning plan

Once the technological infrastructure is in place the focus will shift to the deliberative use of digital resources by teachers to meet the curricular objectives set for each subject. This is not just a concern for Irish schools but remains an international one in countries where integration has not been uniformly achieved across the breadth of the curriculum.

It is very clear that successful integration of ICT in schools demands confident and committed leadership from the principal assisted by the school's ICT co-ordinating teacher and an e-learning team. Each school should have an e-learning plan, which presents a pathway for greater integration of available ICT resources and the development of a positive e-learning culture in the school. To assist schools in this regard the NCTE has provided e-learning planning seminars for all schools and has produced 'Planning and Implementing e-Learning in your School: A Handbook for principals & ICT co-ordinating teachers' – a practical step-by-step guide for e-learning planning in schools, which has been distributed to all schools.

Curriculum development and assessment

At the outset, ICT should be 'at the table' of curriculum development as its input will contribute to how a subject will eventually be defined. The early identification of digital resources, methodologies for their use and the provision of ICT professional development should be central to new curricular implementation. The NCTE enjoyed such collaboration when the new T4, geography and history syllabi were being rolled out. This has resulted in much greater use and integration of ICT by teachers of these subjects. Currently we work with Project Maths.

ICT can provide new opportunities to schools to provide more personalised learning environments. Individual student work can be clearly identified and assessed in e-portfolios and project team work. The

Let us know how you are using ICT in your teaching at astirfeedback@astir.ie.

The e-Learning Awards competition organised by European Schoolnet offers teachers the chance to display their best use of new technologies and innovative ideas in education. Entries will be accepted until September 28. You can register at <http://elearningawards.eun.org>.

final portfolio work of T4 students is a good example of this, which is accepted for official assessment by the State Examinations Commission. Throughout most of the western world the nature and procedures of how we assess our students and, more particularly, what we assess, are being questioned. In Ireland, as elsewhere, educationalists, employers and industry representative groups are questioning the relevance and limitations of our existing systems, which seem to place a huge emphasis on recall and transcription of fact and data at the expense of what have come to be known as higher order skills – analysis, evaluation, judgement of relevance, creative response, team working and decision making. This is only partly true as many of these skills are, in fact, assessed at present in examinations.

However, a growing view is that, if the very air around us is saturated with internet-delivered fact, information, illustration and advice, why is assessment still largely based on memorisation and transcription of some of that information? Introducing radical change to final examination and assessment is a notoriously difficult task with many vested interests in opposition. This year Denmark successfully ran its first open online examinations in six subject areas. Students took their internet-enabled laptops into the examination hall, where they freely used online content to help them to answer the set questions. Initial review of this innovation is very positive and the universities have accepted the results achieved through this examination method. A large-scale and significant international study on ICT-facilitated assessment involving the OECD will provide guidance on how countries might reform assessment and what is the place of ICT tools and methodologies in assessment formats of the future.

In summary, ICT and the internet will eventually be a potent force for changes in practice by teachers as it has been for most other professionals. The nature of learning, teaching and assessment will evolve to enable the student to experience and benefit from a more personalised and challenging learning environment. With the right supports I believe that our teachers are among the most capable and confident to accommodate these impending changes. In 2009, approximately 11,000 teachers attended part-time courses in the practical application of ICT in their subject areas. This interest and commitment encourages me to believe that Irish teachers will meet the challenges and opportunities inherent in the incorporation of ICT in their professional lives.

Find out more at:
www.ncte.ie
www.scoilnet.ie
www.webwise.ie
www.ncca.ie/ictframework



Jerome Morrissey

Jerome Morrissey is the founding director of the National Centre for Technology in Education, a former second-level teacher and former principal of Ballyfermot College of Further Education.

Going the extra-curricular mile

Teachers are committed to extra-curricular activities, but are their efforts valued or are they taken for granted? GEMMA TUFFY reports.



All-Ireland School Cup Finals 2010 – U16 Boys B Final: Pobailscoil Inbhear Sceine, Kerry, versus Patrician High School, Monaghan, National Basketball Arena, Tallaght. (Photo: Brian Lawless/SPORTSFILE.)

Earlier this year the ASTI conducted a review of extra-curricular activities. Teachers were asked to list the activities being offered in their schools. An analysis of the feedback provided by the responding schools showed that these schools were engaged in 85 separate extra-curricular activities. Throughout the country, all kinds of interests, abilities and talents are being catered for in the areas of sport, the arts, science and maths, technology, entrepreneurship, languages, and community and charity. One 500-pupil school listed 43 different activities. The feedback indicates that the majority of second-level teachers devote personal time to their school's extra-curricular programme. In most cases the individual teacher's involvement is not confined to one activity; typically a teacher is involved in a number of extra-curricular activities during the school year. A number of teachers and schools submitted comments with their feedback to the ASTI. These included: "extra-curricular activities are a vital part of the ethos of the school"; "they add to teachers' sense of wellbeing"; "they affect the teacher-student relationship"; and, "extra-curricular activities are important to the lives of students".

Throughout the country, all kinds of interests, abilities and talents are being catered for in the areas of sport, the arts, science and maths, technology, entrepreneurship, languages, and community and charity.

Value of extra-curricular activities

Teachers are clearly committed to providing extra-curricular activities, but what are the benefits and are these benefits valued by society?

Much of the research into extra-curricular activities has been carried out outside Ireland. The most commonly cited benefits for pupils include:

- better attendance at school;
- smoother transition from primary to second-level education;
- higher grades;
- more positive self perception;
- less likely to demonstrate problem behaviours;
- less likely to engage in substance abuse;
- increased social confidence;
- increased connectedness to school, family, and community;
- lower drop-out rates;
- more likely to attend third-level/further education;

DID YOU KNOW...?

- Surveyed schools were engaged in 85 separate extra-curricular activities.
- 70% of people believe that teachers make a valuable contribution to communities.
- Studies have found a far higher engagement by students in extra-curricular sports in schools than in PE.

- less likely to commit or be a victim of a crime; and,
- improved mental health.

According to Dr Maeve O'Brien, author of 'Well-being and Post-Primary Schooling', many of the benefits derived are due to the relational aspect of extra-curricular activities. "The relational aspect is key," says Dr O'Brien. Extra-curricular activities that are based on respect and care and allow all participants to have a voice will have a more positive effect on student wellbeing, she emphasises.

"The degree to which this connection develops has a significant impact on key areas of the student's life – their attitude to school, their confidence and their behaviour."

Under pressure

A recent survey by the Teaching Council found that seven out of 10 members of the public, or 70%, believe that teachers make a valuable contribution to communities through their involvement in sporting, cultural and other activities. Despite this recognition, however, many teachers feel that schools are coming under pressure to jettison non-academic activities. In the ASTI survey 'What Price Education?' (2010), 75% of schools said that extra-curricular activities had been affected directly or indirectly by the education cuts. The implementation of the new supervision and substitution arrangements has meant that many schools have had to curtail activities that require teachers and students to leave the school. Schools surveyed for 'What Price Education?' reported that they had withdrawn from certain competitions such as sports competitions and the Young Scientist Competition. Some schools also stated that they had cancelled their annual school trip to a European country or the Gaeltacht. In addition, the reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio has meant that many schools have lost teachers who, apart from their contribution in the classroom, had also been making a valuable contribution to extra-curricular programmes. Dr Maeve O'Brien warns of the gradual marginalisation of activities that cannot be measured by examinations. "Extra-curricular activities are pleasurable for students and teachers and are valued by parents because they want their children to be happy. Employers also say that the skills they are looking for are not only those which are measured by examinations. Interpersonal intelligence, aesthetic intelligence, for example, are fostered by extra-curricular activities. But there is also a constant drive to increase productivity and to improve in ways that can be measured."

There is a huge care dimension to extra-curricular activities, says Dr O'Brien, but the "emotional work" of teachers – while significantly valuable – cannot be easily measured and is consequently undervalued.

Sport

The 2005 study 'School Children and Sport in Ireland' states that: "There is abundant evidence that physical activity is good for children's physical and psychological development and that lack of physical activity can be a contributory cause of a wide range of health problems, both in childhood and as a carry-over into adulthood".

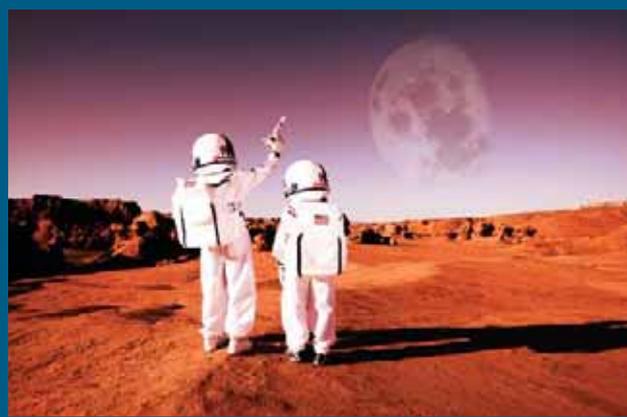
The study found a far higher engagement by students in extra-curricular sports in schools than in PE. The authors claim that a majority of students engage in extra-curricular sport at least twice a week, with almost a quarter of these students taking part four or more times a week. Over 75% of second-level schools take part in Gaelic football competitions each year, according to the study. Forty-five per cent participate in hurling competitions and 35% in camogie competitions. Basketball is also very prominent, with over 70% taking part in competitions. Soccer is somewhat less common, with 58% of schools involved in inter-school competitions, as is rugby, with 28% of schools involved. Almost 70% of schools take part in inter-school competitions in athletics and cross-country running.

Further reading

'School Children and Sport in Ireland' by Toney Fahey, Liam Delaney and Brenda Gannon (download at www.esri.ie).

'Well-being and Post-Primary Schooling' by Dr Maeve O'Brien (download at www.ncca.ie).

Turn to page 34 to read about an after school science club's reach for the stars at an international space conference.





The schools had huge classes, with between 50 and 70 students in each classroom, wall to wall, without aisles.

Global Schoolroom

Earlier this year ASTI Immediate Past President JOE MORAN travelled to northeast India to see the work that Global Schoolroom and its teacher volunteers are doing there. He tells us about his experience and what he saw of education in the developing country.

Northeast India is one of the most remote areas of India, being located between Muslim Bangladesh and Buddhist Burma. Regional and tribal conflicts have also hindered its development. Together with INTO President Jim Higgins and ATL President Andy Brown, I travelled to Guwahati and Shillong in the region last May. Guwahati is a large city (population c. 1 million) in the Assam province. Shillong is a large hill town (population c. 250,000) in Meghalaya province (often referred to as the Scotland of the East). The region is very dependent on Catholic and Presbyterian missionaries to provide schools and education, and one of the largest schools in Shillong is St Edmund's College, founded by the Christian Brothers.

Global Schoolroom

During the summer of 2006 two Dublin-based teachers, Dr Garret Campbell of St Conleth's College, and Gwen Brennan, Deputy Principal at Presentation Warrenmount, facilitated a series of teacher training workshops in northeast India at the request of Fr Anthony Valluran. Global Schoolroom was born from this initiative. The programme is dedicated to sharing educational experience between communities worldwide to help eradicate poverty, promote economic development and support sustainable communities. Global Schoolroom is sponsored by Cornmarket Group Financial Services and is a registered charity supported by the ASTI, INTO and TUI. During July of this year, 20 Irish teachers travelled to northeast India to deliver modules to local teachers as part of a tailored Diploma in Teacher Education designed by Global Schoolroom. The programme is accredited by

UCD and Dr Marie Clarke, Head of the UCD School of Education, has travelled to India to oversee the organisation of the project.

The Don Bosco Institute in the Guwahati region has been a vital resource in the organisation of Global Schoolroom initiatives. It is a centre for human development, leadership and research. Set on a hill overlooking the Brahmaputra River, it is at the heart of educational progress in northeast India. One of Global Schoolroom's most diligent and dynamic activists is Robert Power, who formerly worked in Cornmarket. Robert has developed a strong working relationship with the Executive Director of the Don Bosco Institute, Fr V.M. Thomas. This year the Institute hosted the third national conference for teachers in Guwahati. Jim Higgins, Andy Brown and I were guest contributors at the conference during our visit.

National conference for teachers

The conference ran from May 13 to 15 and over 200 teachers from all over the region attended. It was an education conference rather than a teacher union conference as we have in Ireland. Each of the visiting union presidents gave an address. Andy Brown spoke on 'New Frontiers in Education: steps towards greater professionalism in teaching! Jim Higgins addressed 'The Role of Teachers and their Positive Contribution to Societal and Economic Development'. I spoke on 'Best Practices in Child Protection and Discipline in the Classroom – guidelines for teachers'. Jim and I also gave a joint presentation on 'Building the School Community: harnessing the power of parental and student involvement to ensure the success of



From left: Robert Power, Cornmarket; Andy Brown, Senior Vice President, ATL; and, Joe Moran, ASTI Immediate Past President on a visit to India with Global Schoolroom.



The group met students from a number of schools in Shillong and Guwahati during their visit.

your school! A small excerpt of what I told the conference is as follows: "Both Jim and I are proud to represent Irish teachers and we believe that our teachers are one of Ireland's greatest resources. Your society here in India is increasingly valuing education, as does Irish society. The teacher in Ireland is respected and many of our most able students enter teaching courses at third level. You cannot have a strong education system unless you have an able and professional teaching profession. It is, therefore, in the best interests of education here that you organise effectively and positively influence education policy and developments. A professional teacher is justified in seeking increased resources for education, security of employment and decent pay".

Schools in Guwahati and Shillong

We visited several schools during our visit. In Guwahati we visited a large secondary school run by the Salesian Fathers, a Salesian primary school and a government school. In Shillong we visited a school for the deaf and three other schools where teachers are enrolled in Global Schoolroom's teacher training programmes. With the exception of the school for the deaf, the schools had huge classes. There were between 50 and 70 students in each classroom, wall to wall, without aisles. The learning and teaching resources are basic but the schools are orderly and tidy. Two of the city schools did have well resourced science laboratories. There are 2,500 students in the Salesian primary and secondary schools in Guwahati. The courtesy and welcome we received from the students in all of the schools was inspirational. The church schools are non-profit schools that must raise their own funds to survive as they receive no state support. Teachers in these schools work in orderly learning environments but are poorly paid. Many leave teaching to take up better paid jobs in finance and health. With such limited resources and large class sizes, special educational needs and the provision of assistance for acute learning difficulties are not major priorities.

India has only recently legally abolished corporal punishment but reports suggest that it is still practised in schools. One of the main objectives of

the Don Bosco Conference was to emphasise the advantages of disciplinary processes that respect the dignity of each child. Smaller classes would also have a beneficial impact.

Poverty and education

In northeast India, the poorest section of society is massively impoverished. They live in poorly built sheds and shelters on hillsides, street sides and riverbanks. They live without sanitation facilities, electricity or basic furniture. To see children in perfect school uniforms walking up a hillside towards their parents' squat dwellings is one of the images I will not soon forget. There is a wealthy and affluent sector in northeast India, but there are huge income disparities.

As a young teacher, Jim Higgins spent time teaching in Nigeria. He says that teaching for any period of time in a developing country restores your conviction in the power of education to develop individuals and society. It also restores your faith in how essential good teachers are. The education of children in northeast India, Uganda and many other areas in the world needs our support. Teachers in these countries need the professional mentoring of Irish teachers to develop their own expertise and education systems. Please consider volunteering to help in programmes such as Global Schoolroom. In Shillong, we visited the home of a Leaving Certificate scholarship winner. Despite modest material circumstances, her joy in her achievement and her family's pride imbued us all with hope for the future. Education is the pathway of hope for children everywhere.

Teachers who participate in Global Schoolroom come from all stages in their profession. The projects need more secondary teachers to volunteer. Recruitment for next summer's Global Schoolroom projects in northeast India and Uganda will commence shortly. More information and application forms can be downloaded from www.cornmarket.ie/globalschoolroom. The teachers in the projects are fully trained and prepared for their work in India and Uganda.

Reaching for the stars

MICHAEL HORGAN tells us about leading a group of his Science Club students to third prize victory in a NASA space settlement competition.



The space settlement design competition is just the latest venture undertaken by the Science Club in St Flannan's College in Ennis. We enter projects to compete in the BT Young Scientist Competition, the Scifest and the F1 in Schools car design competition. The Science Club is always on the lookout for interesting challenges for the students. This time last year, I spotted an advert in *ASTIR* seeking a school in Ireland to take part in a NASA project to design a space station settlement. Now, a year later, my students have achieved third prize in the competition and travelled to Chicago to present to a premier space science conference! The notice in *ASTIR* put me in initial contact with Tony Gannon, who is a UCD graduate and Director of Education in the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. Through him, I contacted Kevin Simmons, a Florida teacher who was planning to put together an international team of students from Japan, Ireland, Chile and the USA to enter a joint competition project for the NASA/Ames Space Settlement Design Competition. Kevin Simmons was impressed with the Irish students' standard of work and invited us to join the first ever international team!

DID YOU KNOW...?

- The Science Club at St Flannan's College in Ennis won third prize in the international NASA/Ames Space Settlement Design Competition.
- Their entry was a joint effort with schools in Chile, the USA and Japan.
- Students from first, second and fourth years participated in the competition.

Ready for takeoff

Geography obviously precluded us from working directly with our international team mates, so areas of responsibility were divided among the student groups. In fact, it was only when we presented our project at The International Space Development Conference 2010 last May that we met the rest of our team for the very first time!

The Irish team was given the challenging task of designing the overall space settlement ship structure and its subsystems. The Japanese students were asked to design the power, energy storage and stabilising systems for the space settlement station, and the American team was asked to focus on bio-regeneration, recycling of water, waste disposal systems and farming/food production on the space settlement.

I put together a team of eight students from the Science Club in Ennis and they began work on the project before Christmas 2009. The team consisted of one first-year student, my daughter, Caitlyn Horgan; three second years, Chloe Hayes, Hannah O'Connell and Conor Arkins; and, four fourth years, Benjamin Suarez, Shane Duggan, Kevin Cahir and Bram Siebert.

Teacher support across the school

I started the Science Club in St Flannan's in 2004. The Club has been growing over the last few years and now has many active members. We meet on a voluntary basis after school one day a week but the space settlement project proved to be quite a complex challenge and required a lot of time outside of that. Cross-curricular support from many teachers in St Flannan's was required. The fourth-year students had to apply what they were learning in honours maths and physics classes to design the settlement ship. Their maths and physics teachers, John Conneely and



The Irish, Japanese and USA members of team JICU.

Michael Ryan, assisted them in the application of what they were learning in mechanical physics and maths. They helped with the many problems they encountered in their designs. One of the students, Kevin Cahir, became the CAD expert on the team. Kevin got help from the teachers in the Technical Graphics Department – Tommy Curtin, Pat Lynch and Donal Cahir – to help design and draw the ship to exact industrial specifications using Solidworks software. Science teachers Mick Loughnane and Geraldine Slattery were always ready to offer advice.

Bram Siebert designed the website to promote JICU while Caitlyn Horgan was the artist and project office administrator. She was given time during and after her art classes to work on some of her sketches and her art teacher, Brendan Howard, was there to offer advice whenever needed. The second-year students, Chloe Hayes, Hannah O'Connell and Conor Arkins, did the research work, urban design layout and transport systems onboard.

Chicago – the final frontier

When we learned that we had been chosen in the third prize category, we were astounded and delighted. It was an amazing achievement. We were invited to display and present our project at the Annual International Space Development Conference in Chicago but we almost didn't make it. Because of the prohibitive cost, we had initially decided not to go. At the last minute, however, our largest sponsor, Microsemi Ireland, stepped in with financial support. More financial support came from St Francis Credit Union, Clare County Council and the ESB, plus fundraising efforts from the school, students and parents. Thanks to this support we were able to take off for Chicago last May. On our trip we met Charles Bolden, a former astronaut and currently NASA administrator, and Eugene 'Buzz' Aldrin, who

was part of the first manned mission to the moon. The students also got to visit the renowned Argonne and Fermi laboratories where they learned about the advanced proton source, the Tandem Linac Accelerator System and the search for the Higgs particle. The students got to see the Fermilab Tevatron particle collider, together with scientists at work in the control centre hook-up to the CERN large hadron collider in Switzerland. Inspiring stuff!

I would like to thank the school staff for their ongoing support, particularly principal Colm McDonagh; deputy principals John Minogue and Michael McInerney; office administration staff Anne Carpenter and Tracy O'Donohue; and, catering staff, Mary O'Connor and Mary McAllister. Members of the local community also came onboard to offer advice, assistance and support, in particular Isobel O'Dea, MaryJo Duffy, Paul O'Dea and Caimin Jones.



Michael Horgan

Michael K. Horgan teaches science at St Flannan's College, Ennis, Co. Clare. Educated in Colaiste an Spioraid Naoimh, Bishopstown, Cork, and UCC, he spent two years as a volunteer teaching in the Third World and 10 years teaching in the private and public school systems in Florida, USA.

Project Maths – two views



The Project Maths Implementation Support Group issued its first report in June. The group is an industry–education partnership established to examine how stakeholders can work together to help achieve the objectives of the new maths curriculum.

Among the recommendations of the support group are:

- that every student have a maths class every school day;
- that options regarding the mandatory inclusion of maths as a subject for the calculation of CAO points be explored;
- that the reintroduction of bonus CAO points for higher-level maths be examined;
- that the Department of Education and Skills should work towards ensuring that all second-level students are taught mathematics solely by teachers who hold a qualification in maths by 2018;
- that postgraduate courses to allow unqualified maths teachers to upskill be provided;
- that students achieving C grades at Junior Cert higher level be supported and encouraged to continue to study higher-level maths; and,
- that schools that do not offer higher-level maths be facilitated in doing so through curricular concessions or working with other local schools.

The group will continue to meet and evaluate the progress of its recommendations.



With the new maths curriculum now being taught in every school in the country, *ASTIR* asked two maths teachers for their opinions on the reform.

Following a pilot programme in 24 schools, the new Project Maths curriculum is being implemented on a phased basis in every second-level school in Ireland from this month. Some 5,900 maths teachers and 300,000 students are involved in the reform, which sees the initial two strands of five being implemented for all students. The other three strands will now be trialled in the 24 pilot schools.



Eileen Scanlon says that the change Project Maths brings is necessary and will benefit all students and Irish society.

Research indicates that the learner's view of mathematics affects how they learn. In Ireland it is culturally and socially acceptable, to say: 'I am no good at maths!' But we rarely, if ever, hear 'I am no good at reading and writing!' I don't think this is right. Mathematical aptitude, like language ability, is an innate human attribute. As far back as we can go in history we see that mankind has expressed itself not only in art and language but also through mathematics. In fact, modern transformational and rotational geometry is a reflection of primitive and ancient tribal dances. Mathematical ability is innate and personal.

Necessary change

At the North-South conference on numeracy held recently in Enniskillen, it became abundantly clear to participants that to survive in the world of the future, Irish students would need to be able to cope with uncertainty, rapid change, cultural blurring, and loss of self-identity in an ever-shifting world economy and society.

This is true for all students, whether at pass, honours or foundation level. The way students are taught is an influence – albeit not the only one – on the way they learn. Irish maths teachers over the last 40 years have been second to none and have maintained high standards in maths education. However, the way maths is taught in the classroom needs to change. We need to teach for the modern world and future Irish society. As I once heard Anne Looney of the NCCA say: "Schools need to change from being places where students go to watch teachers work, to places where teachers and students work together".

For students to progress in mathematics, good recall and accurate performance of well-learned techniques are necessary. In the last 20 years or so these aspects of mathematics – in spite of our best efforts – became the dominant force in the delivery of the syllabus to the detriment of other aspects. Problem solving, creativity, communication skills, and dealing with uncertainty must be given equal status if we are to cater for the needs of present day students. A high proportion of the funding allocated for Project Maths will be spent on teacher professional development and, in the coming years, maths teachers will deliver a sea change in the teaching and learning of maths.

Maths for all

Honours maths is not a difficult subject to study, provided sufficient supports such as adequate timetabling, etc., are in place. Studied properly, the subject can enhance the innate logical, creative, critical, aesthetic, and abstract and spatial reasoning abilities of the vast bulk of the population.

I came through a schooling system where girls were deemed not able for honours maths and boys were not allowed to do pass maths. This way of thinking came to an end in the late 1950s. Now, in the year 2010, it is vital to counteract the myth that only very clever people can or should do honours maths. This is an elitist argument as pernicious as saying that only boys are capable of studying higher maths. People with average

ability study honours English, honours French, honours technical drawing, etc. Why shouldn't they also study honours maths?

In tomorrow's world the need for citizens to be numerate, logical thinkers will be far greater than it is today. It is not only desirable but essential that tomorrow's post-primary and primary teachers should be exposed to higher order thinking in their experience of mathematics. Parents of the future who have studied higher maths in school will be better able to bring out the creativity in their own children. Nurses, doctors, musicians, plumbers, electricians, shop assistants: everybody in every profession can benefit from a good education in numbers and geometry. Observe a good rugby, hurling or soccer match and there you see logic in action. Henry Shefflin and Roy Keane certainly know the difference between a straight line and a triangle and I have never seen Serena Williams running around the tennis court in circles! Mathematical knowledge is not confined to the realms of engineering, technology and accountancy.

The programme works

An Irish Maths Teachers' Association meeting held in Athlone in March 2010 was attended by maths teachers from all over the country. At the meeting many of the teachers from the Project Maths pilot schools made the point that Project Maths, although challenging and time consuming initially, is the only way forward. Reference was made to the many positive aspects of the new syllabus and teaching methodologies, while some valid and genuine criticisms of the Project were taken back to the Department of Education and Skills by the officers of the IMTA. This is the first time in the history of Irish education that the professionals, i.e., the teachers in the classroom, are formally influencing the syllabus and how it is taught. This marks a new stage in the development of the teaching profession in Ireland. It is a time to rejoice.

I rejoice also in the fact that after many years of striving by teachers for it, there is now alignment and progression from the primary school curriculum to the junior cycle syllabus through to the senior cycle syllabus. There are no lacunae between JC and LC and the NCCA Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabus committees worked closely together to bring this about. The syllabi are created in such a way that each level of syllabus is a subset of the next level, thus making it easier for students to move around within the syllabus. This is essential if we are committed to the idea of lifelong learning.

To conclude, Project Maths may not be the best or only way forward. But change of some kind is necessary if our young people are to be as capable and as well educated as the students of the rest of the world. How we cope with and implement this necessary change will depend a lot on the supports supplied by society. Principals and boards of management will have a huge responsibility in ensuring that all the supports necessary for the delivery of a good mathematics programme in their schools are supplied. Parents too can play their part by pressuring the Government to put the supports in place. If all of us work together then the future is bright for maths education in Ireland.



Michael Moriarty argues that Project Maths is an unnecessary dilution of gold standard maths, at too high a cost.

"An educated person is one who not only can tell the best from the worst, but who can tell the best from the next best."

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has decided to update the Junior and Leaving Certificate maths syllabi. The word 'update' in no way does justice to the radical overhaul and restructuring of the syllabi that is planned. 'Root and branch' would more accurately describe the planned changes. The syllabi have not, as yet, been finalised, but the following description comes from an NCCA briefing document:

- Project Maths aims to increase the uptake at higher level in the Junior Certificate from the present level of 42% to at least 60%, and at Leaving Certificate, an uptake of 30% is targeted by comparison with the current level of around 18%;
- the skills to be developed through the vehicle of the new syllabus, and the relative values attached to those skills, are intended to differ significantly from those of the old syllabus. They differ from each other to a much greater extent than, for example, the objectives of the syllabi in two different modern European languages;
- accordingly, the project is, perhaps, the complete phasing out of one subject and the phasing in of another, which happens to have the same name and touch on similar content areas, but which is intended to develop different skills in a different group of people from before. Thus it would not be possible to quantitatively equate the standards on the old and the new syllabi in mathematics; and,
- Project Maths strands are being tested in 24 schools before their introduction to the 700 other second-level schools. It is planned that every Leaving Certificate student will be examined in the new maths syllabus in Leaving Certificate 2015. Finally, there will be no choice of questions offered to the students.

Rationale for change

Firstly, the NCCA has found that Irish students seem to be falling behind students from other countries in international comparisons and believes that there is an urgent need to do something about it. Secondly, the NCCA believes that the present approach to teaching maths is too detached from the real world and relies on plugging numbers into formulae. It would rather see the teaching of maths as being relevant to real life and that the emphasis should be on problem solving. Thirdly, the NCCA wants more students to study maths at higher level.

Level of difficulty

Higher-level maths is a lot like Chesterton's description of Christianity: "It wasn't tried and found wanting, it was found difficult and not tried". Higher-level maths is recognised as being a very difficult subject. It requires, at a conservative estimate, at least twice as much study time as any other subject at higher level. Students who do not need higher-level maths for their chosen course at third level are choosing subjects that require much less work to achieve the corresponding grade.

A good example of this is that a distinction in LCVP is equal to a B3 in higher level maths: both are worth 70 points.

The Minister for Education and Skills is again thinking about awarding extra points for higher-level maths. Students are intelligent enough to act in their own self interest so the Minister's rethink may do more to encourage the uptake of higher-level maths than Project Maths ever could.

Problems with Project Maths

In March 2009 the Dublin branch of the Maths Teachers' Association of Ireland held a meeting to discuss Project Maths. More than 150 teachers were present, including teachers from some of the pilot schools. One maths lecturer from Trinity College Dublin was happy with Project Maths as he felt it would make his life easier.

All others who spoke were negative about the project, none more so than the teachers from the pilot schools. Here are some of the problems raised that night, and which have arisen since:

- the cost of introducing the project is €55 million, to change a programme that was good, if not perfect;
- adding content to a programme that is already too large;
- the organisation and content of the original in-service for the pilot schools was criticised;
- vague and long-winded questions;
- students who can express themselves well in English have distinct advantage;
- not enough sample papers;
- presumption that all students have access to IT and the internet;
- no textbook;
- teachers found some of the questions difficult to answer from the way they were asked; and,
- no research has been shown to the teachers to convince them that Project Maths is a better way to teach maths.

Gold standard

I have been involved in Project Maths in one of the pilot schools for two years and, while some new content has been introduced and the approach has been tweaked a bit, choice has been removed, some dumbing down has occurred, and a good command of English is required to answer some questions. Funding of €55 million is being spent on the introduction of Project Maths and it is my opinion that it will not accomplish its aim of getting more students to study higher-level maths. Higher-level maths was and is still difficult and a minority of students choose it. But it was the gold standard in Irish education; it separated the best from the next best. We tinker with the gold standard at our peril.

Let us know what you think of these articles. Email: astirfeedback@asti.ie.

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Your questions answered

ASTI Head Office receives queries on a wide range of issues each day. Here's a round up of some frequently asked questions.



Should I have a contract of indefinite duration (CID)?

This is my fifth year teaching in the same school. The first year I covered for a colleague who was on leave, but since then I have had my own hours. I'm still on a fixed-term contract this year but wonder if I should now have a CID? How do I go about getting one?

In order to qualify for a CID you need to have been employed in a school on four successive fixed-term contracts and there must be a viable need for your position in the school. You would not qualify for a CID if you had been covering for a teacher on leave in your fourth year, but since you were only covering in the first year this does not preclude you from obtaining a CID. You should read Circular letter 0034/09 to make sure you fit the criteria and if you feel you are entitled to a CID, bring this to your principal's attention. Contact us on 1850-418400 to discuss your situation further.

The Review Group can decide to approve your registration or they can confirm or vary the original decision.

Can I appeal a Teaching Council registration decision?

I recently tried to register with the Teaching Council but they told me I am not suitably qualified to teach one of my subjects. Can I appeal this decision?

Yes, you can request a review by the Council's Registration Committee Review Group. You have to request this review within 21 days of the

decision and a fee of €50 is payable (this fee is refunded if the decision is overturned). You can submit additional documentation and information to the review at this stage, if you have it. The Review Group can decide to approve your registration or they can confirm or vary the original decision. You can also appeal the decision to the High Court. Your first step should be to contact ASTI Head Office for advice.

What will my pension be worth?

Retirement is still a long way down the road for me, but since I'm paying for it now, I'm curious to know how much my pension will be worth when I retire.

Your pension value will depend on a number of variables so there's no straight answer to that question. The current compulsory retirement age for most teachers is 65. You can choose to retire before then but this will have an effect on your pension. Retiring at 65, you will receive a lump sum worth 3/80ths of your pensionable remuneration (yearly salary and allowances) up to a maximum of 1.5 times pensionable remuneration. You will also receive a fortnightly pension payment based on a fraction of your pensionable remuneration multiplied by your years of service. This calculation varies depending on what rate of PRSI you pay.

To give you an idea of amounts, if you were a teacher retiring today on a salary of €60,000 with 30 years of service, you would receive a lump sum of approximately €67,500 on retirement and approximately €865 (subject to income tax) each fortnight. If you entered the profession after April 1995, you pay class A PRSI and a reduced pension contribution so you will receive a reduced pension payment, but you may also be entitled to claim the social welfare Contributory Old Age

Pension from age 66.

The Minister for Finance has announced his intention to implement changes to the public service pension for new entrants. The ASTI is opposed to changes to the pension scheme for teachers. Keep an eye on the ASTI website for updates.

This is a very complicated topic, so see the ASTI website – www.asti.ie – for more detailed information, including information on enhancing your pension and early retirement options.

It is a matter for each board of management to determine the grounds on which unpaid leave can be granted – including the notice required.

Advance notice for unpaid leave?

I may need to take some unpaid leave but I've heard that I need to apply six weeks in advance – is that true?

No. It is a matter for each board of management to determine the grounds on which unpaid leave can be granted – including the notice required. The circular governing unpaid leave (35/2010) states that such leave must only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances and

is subject to a maximum of 10 school days in one school year. If you need to take leave, go to your principal and explain the circumstances to him or her. Let us know if you need any assistance.

Remember, unpaid leave does not affect your personal leave entitlement. You can apply to take up to five paid personal leave days each year. See the leave section of the ASTI website for more information.

Who should get the extra hours?

I've heard that if hours become available in a school they should be offered to part-time teachers already on staff – is there a requirement for management to do that?

There is a Department of Education and Skills circular that says schools should seek to increase the hours of part-time teachers where possible. Because it is covered in a Department circular, it is a requirement on the school. This is backed up by European legislation.

The circular has a curricular needs caveat, but management should examine the situation carefully and make every effort to increase part-time hours when they can. If you believe hours could have been given to you and were not, call us in Head Office.

You'll find answers to many more questions at www.asti.ie. Call ASTI Head Office on 1850-418400 or Email info@asti.ie if you have any specific concerns or queries. That's what we're here for!



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ASTI wins for members

The ASTI industrial relations team supports members in a wide range of disputes. Here are two recent cases.



This teacher was represented by Maire Collins, ASTI Industrial Relations Official

Important decision on continuity of service

The ASTI has successfully represented a member at adjudication regarding the Department of Education's failure to approve a contract of indefinite duration.

The Department of Education did not approve a contract of indefinite duration (CID) for an ASTI member teaching in a midlands school on the basis that the member did not have appropriate continuous service in the school. In order to qualify for a CID, a teacher must have in excess of four years' continuous teaching service in one school. The teacher was employed in the school on six successive fixed-term contracts between 2004 and 2010. In October 2009, the school's board of management approved the member's application for a CID, subject to the approval of the Department of Education and Science (DES). This is normal practice; all CIDs for state-funded teachers are subject to the approval of the DES.

Intention of continuity

The DES failed to approve the CID, maintaining that the member did not meet the continuous service requirements as the contract she held in 2007/2008 ran from September 3 to May 16 and her subsequent contract began the following September. At the adjudication hearing, the teacher's ASTI representative, Maire Collins, argued that the teacher did, in fact, meet the requirement for continuity as on the conclusion of her contract on May 16, the teacher was informed by the principal that she would be re-employed the following year. The teacher signed a fixed-term contract in respect of the school year 2008/2009 on June 20, 2008. This, the ASTI argued, verifies the intention of the board of management for the contractual agreements to be continuous.

Definition of continuity

In his judgement, the adjudicator stated that for the purpose of ascertaining the period of service of an employee and whether that service has been continuous, the First Schedule to the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts 1973-2005 applies. This states that:

"The continuous service of an employee in his employment shall not be broken by the dismissal of the employee by his employer followed by the immediate reemployment of the employee."

The adjudicator therefore found that the teacher had established continuity of service and is entitled to a CID for the 22 hours for which she was engaged in the year prior to the issuing of the CID.



This teacher was represented by Bernard Moynihan, ASTI Industrial Relations Official.

Calculation of CID hours

Two recent ASTI cases had important results for the calculation of CID hours. In both cases, which were taken to the Adjudicator on behalf of members, the issue at odds was the number of hours for which the contracts of indefinite duration (CID) were granted, rather than the teachers' entitlement to a CID.

Circular 0034/2009, which governs the granting of a CID, states: "The hours of the CID will be those hours for which the teacher was engaged on a fixed-term contract in the school year prior to the issuing of the CID (other than those hours which are for the provision of temporary cover)".



In the first case, the teacher held a mix of curricular concession hours and hours covering for a colleague on an approved scheme of leave in the year prior to the granting of the CID. The school argued that, based on the above section of the circular, the hours covering for leave should not be included in the calculation of CID hours.

In his judgement of this case, the Adjudicator stated that this argument "must be considered in the context of the application of the Circular as a whole". He cited a hypothetical situation where a teacher has been employed by a school for four years and is offered a fixed-term contract for year five. In the fourth year the teacher was contracted to cover for a teacher on an approved scheme of leave. In the fifth year the teacher is contracted to teach 11 hours, deriving from curricular concessions. In such a case, the teacher is entitled to a CID and, as set out in Circular 0034/2009, the hours are to be determined by those of the prior year. If the argument that all hours of cover were to be excluded, the teacher would be entitled to a CID for zero hours. This would effectively amount to a disqualification from a CID where no grounds of disqualification had been established. According to the Adjudicator, this cannot be the correct application of the legal entitlements.

The situation in the second case taken by the ASTI was, in fact, very

similar to this hypothetical situation cited by the Adjudicator. The teacher was employed for 22 hours to cover for a colleague on career break in the year prior to the granting of a CID. As a result, the school sought to base the CID on his hours in the current year. These hours derived from both curricular concession and covering for approved leave and the school sought to exclude the leave hours from the CID.

In both cases, the Adjudicator found that the hours of the CID should be based on all the hours held by the teacher in the year prior to the granting of the CID, including any hours that were held to cover for colleagues on approved schemes of leave.

What is Adjudication?

Adjudication is the process by which teachers refused a CID can appeal to the Department of Education and Skills.

Teachers can also appeal CID decisions to the Rights Commissioner Service.

Attack on dignity of privately paid teachers

A recent High Court decision has found in favour of a school that paid its privately-paid teachers less than its teachers who are paid by the Department of Education and Skills. The privately paid teachers were not paid in accordance with the teachers' pay scale. This case has the potential to leave hundreds of privately paid teachers open to exploitation, despite the fact that they have the same qualifications and carry out the same work as their Department-paid colleagues.

The High Court decision follows an ASTI-supported case taken by second-level teachers from a Dublin school who claimed that they were being treated less favourably than their Department-paid colleagues and that this contravened the legislation protecting part-time and fixed-term employees. The teachers won their case at a Rights Commissioner hearing and at the Labour Court. The school appealed to the High Court.

The ASTI is considering the outcome of the High Court case. However, the ASTI believes that the majority of schools act as 'good employers' and pay their privately paid staff on the same basis as Department-paid teachers. Where members have reported different pay for privately paid teachers, the ASTI has successfully pursued the matter and achieved equitable salary treatment. The ASTI will continue to fight vigorously for equal rights and entitlements for privately paid teachers. Treating privately paid teachers less favourably is an attack on their dignity.

Check out your rights – www.asti.ie; info@asti.ie; 1850-418400.

RSTA family continues to expand

There are now 16 branches in the ever expanding 'family' of the RSTA.

New branches

The Waterford Branch was set up on April 14. The officers are:

Chairperson: John Cunningham, Ballygarron, Kilmeaden, Co. Waterford,
Tel: 051-399897

Secretary: Henry Collins, 20 Meneval Green, Farmleigh, Dunmore Road,
Waterford, Tel: 051-345787

Treasurer: Kathleen Greene, Woodlands Avenue, Halfway House, Waterford,
Tel: 051-876088

The Donegal Branch was set up on April 29. The officers are:

Chairperson: Gerard Logue, Ranny Road, Kerrykeel,
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Tel: 074-937 9127

Secretary: June Hosty, 64 Thorndale, Magherennan,
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Tel: 074-912 0816

Treasurer: Adrienne Browne, Trimragh, Letterkenny,
Co. Donegal, Tel: 074-912 2472

Congratulations to all those involved in setting up these new branches. All branches are encouraged to forward information on their activities to the National Secretary for inclusion in the newsletter and *ASTIR*. Whether a coffee morning or social outing, lobbying politicians regarding pensions, writing letters, or whatever you have been getting up to, please send the information along – other branches may like to hear what you are planning or doing and follow your example.

If you have access to a computer, you can keep in touch with the RSTA by logging on to www.rsta-ireland.com. If you don't have a computer at home, you can access the internet in your local library.

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Request

The Officers of the National Committee wish to be available to attend as many Christmas lunches as branches request. With this in mind and to avoid a clash, branches are asked to remember that the Dublin lunch will be held on Wednesday, December 1, 2010.



Members of the RSTA and the NASUWT (retired) from Northern Ireland during a recent visit to the Mansion House, where they met the then Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Emer Costello.



Marie Doyle, President, RSTA, with the then Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Emer Costello, who was presented with a Beleek China Vase by NASUWT (Retired) President Lottie Ewing.

A note from the Midland RSTA Branch

In its first year the branch had an introduction to the archives in Longford Library, a very informative guided walking tour of Longford town, a lovely stroll in Derrycassin Woods, a Christmas lunch, afternoon tea and lots of coffee and chat!

The branch would like to thank most sincerely all those who helped it get established this year: staff of Longford Library; and, members of the RSTA, especially Sarah Scott and Marie Doyle, who travelled to Longford to meet and greet branch members. The branch was also delighted to be invited to Dublin Castle to meet members of the RSTA National Executive.

The branch met earlier this month to plan autumn activities. Details will be sent to all existing members and will be available on the RSTA website.



From the Midlands RSTA Branch: Pat Joe McLoughlin, Geraldine Duignan, Martina Kelly, Sean Reilly, Mary Cunningham, Rosemary Kiernan and tour guide Martin during a guided walk around Longford. In the background is St Mel's Cathedral, which was sadly destroyed by fire on Christmas morning.



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Cornmarket Financial Services is running a competition offering one lucky public sector employee the chance to win €8,000 cash. Cornmarket will also give everyone who enters the draw free accidental death benefit of €10,000 for 12 months. See www.cornmarket.ie to enter.



Volunteer opportunities

Viaiores Christi recruits, trains, places and financially supports people on long-term volunteer assignments in areas of need overseas and also on projects here at home. The organisation provides a part-time six-month preparation programme for volunteers and provides a local living allowance while on assignment. Visit www.viaioreschristi.com for more information.

Learn the law

LawEd is a Transition Year course designed to give students a broad educational background in law. The course delivers information on the Irish legal system, and training on consumer rights, employment rights and other aspects of Irish law. See www.lawed.ie for more information.

Translation contest

Juvenes Translatores is a translation contest for 17-year-old second-level students throughout the EU. Students will translate a text in any language pair of their choice from among the 23 official languages of the EU. The winners will be invited on a three-day visit to Brussels. Register for the contest until October 20 at: <http://ec.europa.eu/translatores>.

Schools in changing times

Schools in Changing Times offers a comprehensive overview of the many changes that have taken place in Irish education in recent times. Author Jim Lyons is the former CEO of Co. Clare VEC and has worked as a teacher and school principal. ASTI President Jack Keane recommends the book to anybody interested in education: "Everybody involved in the education process will learn much from the sensitive approach and practical suggestions provided in this book".

Poetry competition

Dóchas – the network of Ireland's overseas aid agencies – and the Irish Haiku Society have teamed up to launch the IHS International Haiku Competition 2010. The winning haiku poems in the competition will be those that express best what it means to live in Ireland at the beginning of the 21st century, and how Ireland can play a role in shaping our global future, as part of a world-wide society of nations and peoples. For competition details, log on to the <http://irishhaiku.webs.com>. The competition deadline is October 31.

Information for school leavers

The Citizens Information Board has published an information leaflet for school leavers. The brief guide deals with some practical topics, including further education options, rights and entitlements, employment law, income tax and social welfare. You can request copies from your local Citizens Information Board. See www.citizensinformationboard.ie for more information.

French exchange ... for teachers



Ever wanted to teach in France? Now is your chance! A French teacher is looking for a partner Irish teacher to participate in the Jules Verne Exchange Programme, which allows fully trained and certified language teachers from outside France to swap posts with a French teacher for a year. Email francine.lenoir@hotmail.fr if you are interested.

Looking for a good book?

Former ASTI member James Lawless has recently published his third novel, *The Avenue*. James has had numerous award-winning short stories and poems published and broadcast in Ireland and the U,K and was nominated for a Hennessy Award in 2010. Described by the *Sunday Business Post* as "a powerful emotive work", *The Avenue* tells the story of Francis Copeland and the hidden world of the suburban avenue on which he lives. The book is available on Amazon and from bookshops.



Anti-bullying campaign tools for teachers

A free anti-bullying website resource for teachers in secondary schools

www.antibullyingcampaign.ie

European energy competition

Teachers and students from all over Europe are invited to take part in U4energy, a new competition for primary and secondary schools. The aim is to encourage them to contribute innovative ideas on reducing energy consumption and to raise awareness on how to use energy more responsibly. Log on to www.u4energy.eu for more information.



Faith inclusion guidelines

The Joint Managerial Body (JMB) has produced 'Guidelines on the Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths in Catholic Secondary Schools'. The document offers practical suggestions to Catholic school communities on how to welcome and facilitate all students, including those of different faiths, while remaining true to the characteristic spirit of their school.

You can download these guidelines at www.jmb.ie.

Science education web resource

Scientix is the web-based community for science education in Europe open to teachers, policy makers and anyone interested in science education. Scientix is operated by European Schoolnet. See <http://scientix.eu>.

Appeal for AV resources

A retired ASTI member is seeking to buy or borrow a complete set of the courses *Bunsraith Gaeilge* and *Téanam Ort!* (Ie Tomás Ó Domhnalláin). These were among the first audio-visual courses supplied to second-level schools in the late '60s or early '70s. Each course consists of a teacher's handbook, film strips for each lesson, and a set of tape cassettes for each dialect. Any help in locating these would be much appreciated. E-mail: bsderoiste@eircom.net, Text: 087-947 5437, or Tel: 01-610 4442.

Distance Masters

UCC offers a Masters in Co-operative and Social Enterprise that allows you to study by distance learning entirely over the web. The course covers areas such as social entrepreneurship, governance issues, education, and marketing for the community and voluntary sector. The next intake of students for the MBS course is October 2010. Contact Noreen Byrne, Tel: 021-490 3356, or Email: n.byrne@ucc.ie for more information.

Environmentalist awards



ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards is an awards programme that empowers young people to become better citizens, build awareness of environmental issues and promote simple lifestyle changes to improve the environment. Since 1999 the programme has had the participation of over 20,000 young people in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Why not get your class involved this year? The deadline for registration is November 2010 and projects must be submitted by the end of February. See www.ecounesco.ie for more information.

Boost your happiness!



The Institute of Child Education and Psychology (ICEP Europe) has developed a new online course – 'Teaching Happiness: Positive Psychology for Behaviour and Learning'. Designed to give teachers the skills and tools to build optimism, creativity, hope and wellbeing in themselves and their students, the course focuses on the powerful and transformative effect of positive emotion on learning, behaviour and our everyday lives. The course will be available online from October 12. For more information or to enrol see www.icepe.eu or call 01-651 0618.

Teaching and Learning Festival

Ireland's first Teaching and Learning Festival takes place in The Citywest Conference Centre, Dublin, on Friday and Saturday, October 15 and 16. The Festival is an interactive conference and exhibition focused on the future of education in Ireland. The event is open to principals, parents, teachers, boards of management and government policy makers. For more information and to register online visit www.itlfestival.ie.

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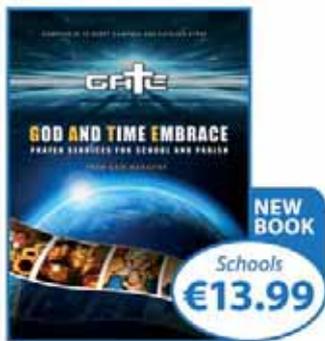
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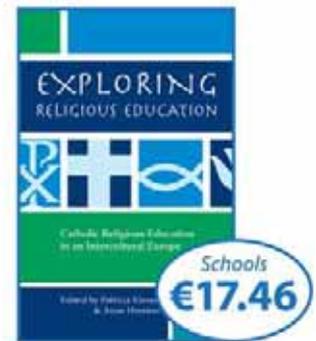
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Entries to: **Astir Crossword No. 1004, Think Media,
The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.**
To arrive by: **Friday, October 1, 2010.**

CLUES ACROSS:

- 1 Pleasant tumble in gail (6)
- 4 Transferred data to a central computer (8)
- 9 Go near fresh fruit (6)
- 10 Latin silver (8)
- 12 "And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him, A chalice for the" (Shakespeare) (5)
- 13 This professional sportsman weighs no more than 51kg (9)
- 14 The Gestapo session pretends to be something else (5)
- 15 "Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild flying" (Tennyson) (6)
- 20 First name of author of *Brighton Rock* and *Our Man in Havana* (6)
- 21 A cheap fruit (5)
- 24 A neat tramp could live here! (9)
- 27 An advance, we hear, on its own (5)
- 28 This extinct reptile is around (8)
- 29 A drive could be wide-ranging (6)
- 30 Through which one breathes and smells (8)
- 31 An island in Malaysia known as The Pearl of the Orient (6)

CLUES DOWN:

- 1 2010 American comedy film about five best friends (5,3)
- 2 Closeness ensnares (8)
- 3 "Allah is on our side. That is why we will beat the" (Saddam Hussein) (9)
- 5 See 22 down
- 6 A bathrobe seeks to disguise the grossly overweight (5)
- 7 Second childhood dog eat dog (6)
- 8 See 16 down
- 11 "To regret deeply is to live ..." (Thoreau) (6)
- 16 down and 8 down:
His downfall was shattering (6,6)
- 17 And please walk along the shoreline (9)
- 18 Could be a camellia (8)
- 19 Babe (in the movie) wanted to be one! (8)
- 22 down and 5 down:
Pat and Gerry organised this get together (6, 5)
- 23 Puts on a coat! (6)
- 25 Stare at the stun gun (5)
- 26 "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created" (Thomas Jefferson) (5)

Solution to ASTIR crossword No. 1003

Across

- 1. Antithesis
- 6. Bard
- 10. Heron
- 11. Loopholes
- 12. Multiple
- 13. Not to
- 15. Ukelele
- 17. Olympus
- 19. Yashmak
- 21. Toucans
- 22. Adept
- 24. Slapdash
- 27. Symmetric
- 28. Abhor
- 29. Rite
- 30. Blasphemed

Down

- 1. Ache
- 2. Torturers
- 3. Tenet
- 4. Ellipse
- 5. I come to
- 7. Allot
- 8. Dispossess
- 9. Thank you
- 14. Bury Caesar
- 16. Enmities
- 18. Praise him
- 20. Kestrel
- 21. Trances
- 23. Emmet
- 25. Death
- 26. Brad

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 1003:
Denis Dunlea, Patrician Academy, Mallow, Co. Cork, Desmond Branch member.

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