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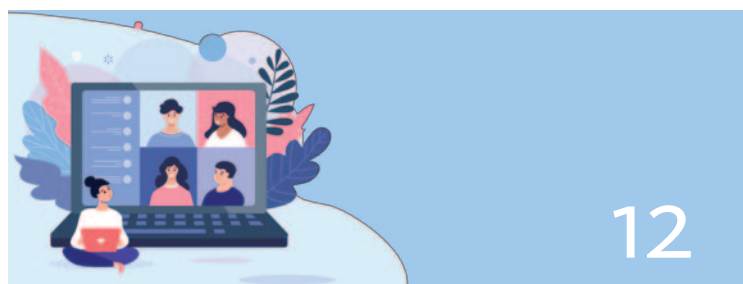
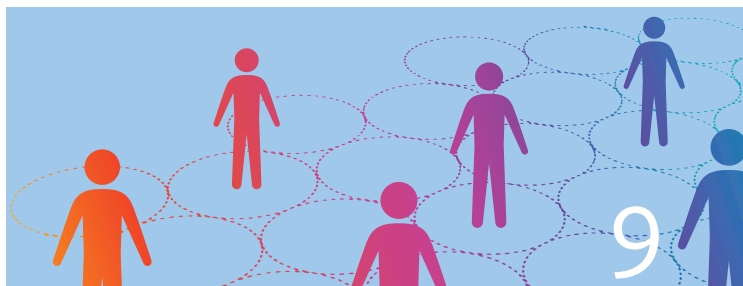
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Members can email astirfeedback@asti.ie or text 087-9349956.



POWER OF EDUCATION

“Intelligence plus character – that is the true goal of education.”

Martin Luther King

Teachers know the power of education; its benefits are immeasurable. Education is a passport to realising dreams, goals and attaining personal success. It is also the channel to intelligent and productive societies. Teachers long to teach and to be in schools with students.

The disruption of ‘normal’ education was swift and unimagined. As schools reopen, it is imperative that boards of managements take first-class precautions to maintain health, and to show care in the most dutiful manner to all. Each student, teacher, staff member, parent and others must take responsible measures to protect everyone.

It is not good enough to suggest that masks replace social distancing. One metre for students without exception and two-metre distancing for adults is essential to suppress coronavirus. Thorough cleaning of hands is required. Sanitisers must be widespread and filled frequently.

The ASTI sought a review of public health advice, and the subsequent introduction of masks in schools is a further precaution to safeguard health. It is a simple demand to place protective screens around teachers’ desks in all schools. The ASTI discourages large groups at staff meetings and assemblies to protect everyone in schools. Minister Norma Foley expressed a preference for “small cohorts”. The role of the Lead Worker Representative is crucial in monitoring school safety.

Rapid testing is essential in case of outbreaks. Schools must be presented with detailed, clear instructions on what to do in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak. Some teachers are in the high-risk category and their lives may be in danger if they contract Covid-19. The ASTI has demanded that these teachers have provisions made to allow remote teaching. The union will continue to prioritise the health of workers. An ASTI survey of principals has reconfirmed that major investment in school infrastructure is required. The potential unavailability of substitute teachers was also raised as a concern.

Leaving Cert 2020 results are being standardised. While grade inflation is unwelcome, students must not be unfairly disadvantaged or disproportionately marked down. We require an assurance on an alternative contingency plan for Leaving Cert 2021, which may be needed; the calculated grades process was a once-off commitment.

The immediate future of second-level education is unpredictable. A back-up arrangement is necessary with adequate technological resourcing for teachers and students, lest a lockdown situation arises again. Take care in your workplaces. Your dedication is respected and appreciated by all as you pursue the goal of student education.



Ann Piggott

ASTI President

PAY, PENSIONS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

While managing the fallout from school closures in March and engaging with the prospect of re-opening schools has been all consuming lately, it is important not to take our eyes off other key developments that will be happening soon. Uppermost in that list of items is the forthcoming negotiations on a successor to the Public Service Stability Agreement, which expires at the end of the year. I referenced this in my address at the remote Annual Convention, as detailed elsewhere in this edition.

The new Programme for Government states that the Government “will seek to negotiate a new public pay deal with the public service unions”. It also commits to a “bargaining clause” in order to “make progress on sectoral issues”.

The ASTI will prioritise unequal pay, maintenance of pension parity and a defence of members’ conditions. We will seek to enhance members’ pay and ensure a decent and acceptable outcome for our members.

Some of the more intractable issues remain and will require attention and resolution. These include Equal Pay for Equal Work, the timing of Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings, plans for so-called reform of the Senior Cycle, and the introduction of a student and parent charter. We face a very full agenda.

Covid-19 has provoked an unprecedented health, social and economic crisis. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to move on from the past and imagine a new world. This one is likely to be no different.

In education, the impact on students, staff and schools has been profound. While teachers adapted fast to support learners and communities, without training or adequate resources and with a professionalism that was demonstrably second to none, inequalities in our society were laid bare. Whether it was broadband access or poverty, the cultural milieu that was exposed was far from desired.

The closure of schools in March underlined and exacerbated existing inequalities and fractures, which the ASTI has been highlighting and fighting against for years. The vital social role of the education system and of teachers is now clear and finishes any sterile arguments that were used to underpin a reluctance to invest in education. Society has been reminded just how skilled the teaching profession is and that teacher–learner interaction is essential in quality education.

The fundamental flaws in the way we have been managing our public services – especially education – must be addressed. The policies that undermined equality in education and drove many teachers from the profession must never be re-enacted. This new Government must rise to the challenge. A new social contract must emerge that reshapes our society.



Kieran Christie

ASTI General Secretary

ASTI ELECTIONS

ASTI Vice President elected



Eamon Dennehy

Eamon Dennehy has been elected as Vice-President of the ASTI for 2020/21. The election was held by postal ballot in accordance with a motion adopted by the remote ASTI Annual Convention 2020.

Eamon is a teacher of Engineering and SEN at Heywood Community School in Laois. Eamon has previously held a number of roles in the union, including school steward and branch secretary of Laois ASTI. At the national level, Eamon has served as Standing Committee representative for Region 10 (Carlow, Kildare, Laois) and as a member of the ASTI Education Committee.

The ASTI Vice President is elected annually by Convention. For more information about ASTI elections, see www.asti.ie.

Honorary National Organiser elected



Michael McGrath

Michael McGrath has been elected as Honorary National Organiser of the ASTI for 2020/21. A motion adopted by the remote ASTI Annual Convention 2020 stated that nominations for eligible candidates were to be submitted to the General Secretary by July 31. Only one nomination – Michael McGrath of the Dungarvan Branch – was received by the General Secretary by the due time and date. Accordingly, Michael's nomination was ratified by Standing Committee.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Held annually on October 5, World Teachers' Day commemorates the anniversary of the adoption of the 1966 International Labour Organisation (ILO)/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. This Recommendation sets benchmarks regarding the rights and responsibilities of teachers, and standards for their initial preparation and further education, recruitment, employment, and teaching and learning conditions.

In 2020, World Teachers' Day will celebrate teachers with the theme 'Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future'. The day provides the occasion to celebrate the teaching profession worldwide, take stock of achievements, and draw attention to the voices of teachers, who are at the heart of efforts to attain the global education target of leaving no one behind.

This year, in view of the current situation, the celebrations will take place online. As well as the World Teachers' Day Opening Ceremony and UNESCO-Hamdan Prize Awards Ceremony on October 5, there will be a series of national, regional and global events throughout the week.

For more information see:
<https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/worldteachersday>.

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New Minister for Education



Kerry TD Norma Foley has been appointed as Minister for Education. Minister Foley was elected to represent the Kerry constituency in the 2020 general election. Until her election to the Dáil she worked as a secondary school teacher in Presentation Secondary School, Tralee. Minister Foley was previously a member of Kerry County Council for the Tralee area, serving from 1994 until her election to the Dáil in 2020. She also served as a member of Tralee Urban District Council until its abolition in 2014 and has held the position of Mayor of Tralee on three occasions and Mayor of Kerry in 2018-2019.

Speaking to RTÉ News upon her appointment as Minister for Education, Ms Foley said that as a teacher herself, she “values the expertise and talent” of teachers, SNAs, principals and deputy principals. “I see them as very valuable,” she said, adding “but equally so I see the parents as valuable and important stakeholders. They too must be engaged with”. Ms Foley said that her goal as Minister will be to make decisions that have the best possible outcome for the children and young adults that she serves.

Photo courtesy of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Teaching Council update

Renewal of registration

Teachers must renew their registration annually. Each year before the renewal date, the Council will send a reminder notice and renewal form to all registered teachers at their last notified correspondence address. The process is continuing to return to normal and teachers are being asked to renew on time. Should a teacher’s registration lapse they are then not eligible to receive a State-funded salary and must re-apply for registration. This may include vetting and provision of qualification documentation if the Council does not already hold valid documentation for the teacher. Furthermore, it is not possible to backdate re-registrations to cover periods of non-registration.

Expiring conditions and extension requests

Given the exceptional nature of the past few months, the Council has extended the timeframe for all teachers with conditions expiring between March and September. All the teachers involved were communicated with and their records updated. In line with re-opening the country, teachers with conditions expiring in October and November 2020 have been asked to either forward evidence that they have completed their conditions or to request an extension to that time. Extension request forms (EXT-01 Forms) with supporting documentation can be submitted by email as soon as possible to conditions@teachingcouncil.ie.

Re-vetting

The mainstream re-vetting of teachers will remain on hold. This process will recommence in the new school year and notifications will be issued to the relevant teachers six months in advance of their renewal dates. Teachers who are currently registered or previously registered with the Council may submit the required documentation, including a scanned signed consent form, by email. Standard vetting and vetting for employment purposes are progressing as normal.

CROÍ eBook

The Teaching Council was delighted to launch the CROÍ eBook this summer. The CROÍ eBook contains short videos with information on the resources the Council makes available to registered teachers under its CROÍ initiative. These resources include: the John Coolahan Research Support Framework, through which the Council makes €100,000 available each year for registered teachers engaging in and with research; the online library, which includes thousands of articles and journals, and a collection of eBooks that are made freely available to registered teachers; access to all previously broadcast Teaching Council research webinars and ezines; and, information about T-REX, a new online space for teachers and other educational researchers.

Click on ‘CROÍ eBook’ under the ‘Research’ tab on the Teaching Council’s website to find out more.

FÉILTE online

The Teaching Council has announced that FÉILTE will take place online this year. FÉILTE will take place on Saturday, October 3, from 10.30am to 4.30pm. FÉILTE 2020 will feature a programme full of live and interactive content, as well as live connectivity with speakers, participants and fellow attendees.

The theme of this year’s festival is Connecting to Collaborate – Empathy with our Communities. Mary Robinson will be live in studio from 10.30am for her keynote interview. Attendance is free, and you can register now at <https://hopin.to/events/feilte2020>.

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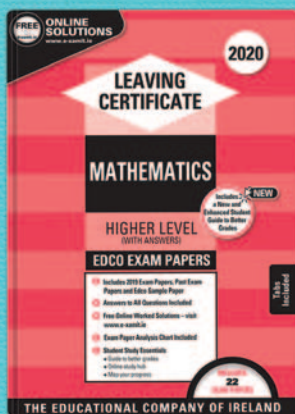
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ASTI General Secretary nominated to Education International OECD Advisory Committee

Earlier this year, the British and Irish Group of Teachers Unions nominated the ASTI General Secretary, Kieran Christie, to serve on the Education International OECD Advisory Committee.

The mandate of the Committee includes examination of aspects of globalisation and the recognition of education as a key instrument to enhance social and economic development.

The OECD'S profile and influence on the education policies of many countries has increased significantly as a result of its key international studies, including 'Education at a Glance', the 'Programme for International Student Assessment' (PISA), the 'Teaching and Learning International Study' (TALIS), and the 'Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies' (PIAAC). The OECD's influence over domestic policy is also reflected in its decision to act as an education consultancy for some member states.

The ASTI is an affiliate of Education International (EI). Since EI's creation in 1993, meetings have been convened of member organisations in the OECD countries on a regular basis with the purpose of discussing education policy developments in these countries and developing common strategies to meet ensuing challenges.

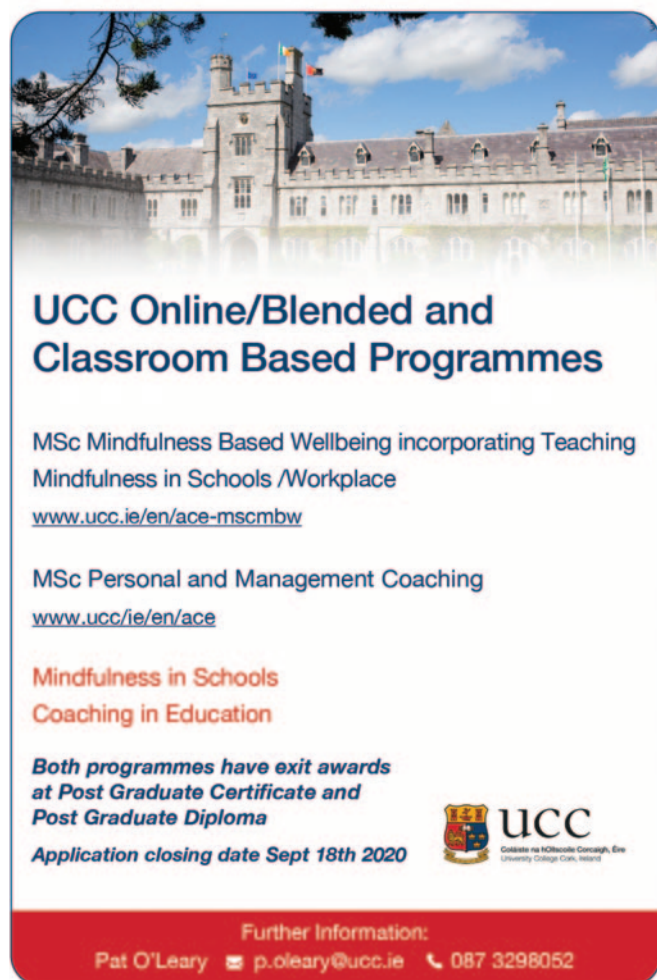
The EI's OECD Advisory Committee was established by the Executive Board in 2011 in order to provide more focused guidance for EI work on the OECD's activities and work programme. The tasks of the Committee are:

- to advise the Executive Board on EI advocacy at the OECD and on responses to initiatives and policies on education developed by the OECD, and to initiate relevant research, including collecting information on best practices and reforms, and
- to help ensure that the work of the OECD is monitored and evaluated.

The Committee has now been asked to advise on the implications of the OECD's response to Covid-19.

Crossword winner

The winner of the ASTI Credit Union crossword competition, which appeared in the May issue, is Joe Keating, Our Lady's Bower Secondary School, Retreat Road, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, Westmeath Branch.



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Survey reveals infrastructure challenges

An ASTI survey* carried out in late July/early August found that school principals faced serious infrastructural challenges as they were preparing to reopen their schools in line with the Government's Roadmap and the Covid-19 response plan for the safe reopening of post-primary schools. Findings from the survey include:

- 84% of principals said their school did not have a dedicated ventilation system, and
- 25% of principals said their school did not have warm water in the school's toilet facilities.

With the number of students attending Irish schools increasing this year, principals also expressed concerns about the feasibility of social distancing for students throughout school buildings. More than 70% of principals surveyed rated the feasibility of social distancing in school corridors and other communal areas, such as staff canteens, as weak. In addition, principals surveyed said that while the appointment of additional second-level teachers is to be welcomed, the measure is inadequate in terms of achieving manageable class sizes and cover for Covid-19 sick leave during the pandemic. Commenting on the findings, ASTI President Ann Piggott said: "This pandemic has put the spotlight on our underfunded schools. It is now glaringly obvious that Irish second-level schools operate on a shoestring budget, with most schools having to fundraise to meet some of their day-to-day running costs. This lack of investment must be addressed if schools are to continue to operate safely in the context of Covid-19".

*The survey was carried out by Europlan Group on behalf of the ASTI.

For the full survey report see www.asti.ie.

RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS

ASTI Deputy General Secretary DIARMAID DE PAOR sets out the plans for the re-opening of schools in September.



For those of us working in the ASTI it's been a long hot summer (if only metaphorically). Your representatives have been working assiduously, together with the other education partners, to try to ensure two things. Firstly, that schools could re-open in September as fully as possible, and secondly, that schools could re-open in September as safely as possible.

Base decisions on expert guidance

During these discussions, the ASTI was insistent throughout that advice from the health experts, in particular advice from the HSE and the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), should guide us in all decisions. Neither the ASTI nor the Department are health experts and we insisted that the health experts should never be second guessed.

Time is of the essence

It has to be acknowledged that the Government has backed its plans to re-open schools with substantial funding; whether it is enough remains to be seen but it is to be hoped that if more is needed, more will be provided. Spare a thought for our school leaders, principals and deputy principals (let us not forget these are our members too) who have had an extraordinarily difficult few months up to now, with little or no time off, and are now heading into a very difficult and challenging opening of schools.

ASTI secures funding

Arising out of these discussions, the ASTI managed to secure funding, *inter alia*, for the following:

- a new Minor Works Grant to Post Primary Schools to Support Full Implementation of Covid-19 Response Plans
- funding for schools to employ an aide to help with school reopening logistics
- a Covid-19 Capitation Grant to provide for enhanced cleaning, hand sanitiser and PPE
- an adjustment to the PTR 0.6 whole time equivalents (WTEs) – over 1,000 teachers
- increased guidance provision – approximately 120 WTEs
- enhanced supervision supports
- a pause in curricular reform, and
- a pause in school self-evaluation.

Other measures included a nationally mandated enhancement to all school codes of behaviour to deal with the special circumstances arising out of Covid-19 and most recently, a decision that the wearing of masks will be mandatory for secondary school students.

Lead Worker Representative

Every workplace in the country is required to appoint at least one Lead Worker Representative (LWR). In schools, a second LWR will be appointed where there are 40 or more staff (that is all staff, not only teaching staff).

The LWR will work in collaboration with the employer to assist in the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19, to monitor adherence to those measures, and to be involved in communicating the health advice around Covid-19 in the workplace.

The role of the LWR is separate to that of the Safety Representative under health and safety legislation. However, the Safety Representative may act as the LWR if selected to do so by the staff.

The school staff are entitled to select staff members for the LWR position(s). The LWR(s) represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role and must be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts. In this regard, where a school has two LWRs, the roles should be spread between teaching and non-teaching staff where feasible.

The LWR does not have any legal responsibilities. They do not have any duties in relation to Covid-19 other than those that apply to employees generally. In other words, the LWR is not responsible for the control measures within an organisation, which remain the employer's responsibility.

Where the LWR is a teacher, the LWR will receive protected time of two hours per week from timetable to enable them to carry out their duties in that role. In the rare instances where the appointment of a teacher selected to be the LWR would cause curricular/timetabling difficulties that cannot be resolved, school management will examine internal and external possibilities to enable the teacher's appointment as LWR. Where the matter cannot be resolved, management will set out the reasons why this is the case. In this circumstance, an alternative individual must be appointed as LWR.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan, control measures, or the adherence to such measures by staff, students or others, they should contact the LWR, who will engage with school management. It is important that concerns are raised in this way, through the LWR, and not directly with the principal.

Full details of the Roadmap, relevant DES Circular letters and all other documents related to school re-opening are available on the ASTI website – www.asti.ie. Also on the website is a comprehensive list of frequently asked questions.

PROTECTING TEACHERS AND EDUCATION

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, the ASTI has continued to advocate for teachers and their students.

Since March this year, workers have been at the forefront of the battle against the coronavirus. Teachers have made a significant contribution to the societal response to Covid-19. 2020 has been an extremely challenging and intense year for school communities. Throughout this period the ASTI has worked to protect second-level teachers and education. We have insisted on continuous and extensive engagement with the Department of Education and Skills. Ongoing engagement with members has included grass roots activities such as online branch meetings and organisation-wide communications such as surveys.

March – protecting substitute teachers

Following the nationwide closure of schools from March 12 and the transition to remote teaching and learning, the ASTI made representations to the then Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh TD and his Department regarding substitute teachers and loss of income. This resulted in a commitment that substitute teachers who had been contracted, either written or verbally, to cover an absence during the school closure period would be paid. In the case of substitute teachers who were not contracted to work with a specific school but who would in the normal course of events have carried out substitution work on a casual basis, the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment was paid. Later in March, the ASTI put on record its objection to the Department of Education document Guidance on Continuity of Schooling, which was issued without consultation with the teacher unions. The ASTI subsequently issued its own guidance for members, available at www.asti.ie/news/continuity-of-teaching-learning-asti-advice/.

April – State Cert for JC students

In April the then Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh TD announced the cancellation of the 2020 Junior Certificate examinations and the implementation of procedures for assessment and reporting of students' Junior Cycle learning. In response, the ASTI called on the Minister to award a State Certificate to these students in recognition of their participation in and completion of three years of Junior Cycle. The Minister later confirmed that Junior Cycle students will receive a State Certificate from the Department of Education.

May – indemnity for teachers of LC

In May the ASTI stated that the indemnity available for teachers undertaking work as part of the Calculated Grades for Leaving Cert 2020 process fell short of what the ASTI required. ASTI legal advice warned that the indemnity provided meant that teachers could be exposed to personal liabilities in certain circumstances.



Following the **nationwide closure** of schools from March 12 and the transition to **remote teaching and learning**, the **ASTI** made representations to the then **Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh TD** regarding **substitute teachers and loss of income**.

Second CBAs

Following representations made by the ASTI to the Department of Education and Skills in relation to difficulties being experienced by students and their teachers in seeking to complete classroom-based assessments (CBAs) in current circumstances, the completion dates were postponed. New arrangements have been introduced for these students who are now third years.

June/July – safe schools

During June and July the ASTI made strong representations in relation to the re-opening of second-level schools. This included addressing the Special Oireachtas Committee on Covid-19 and participating in a series of stakeholder discussions with the Department of Education. Key issues for the ASTI were:

FAQs on the Re-Opening of Schools

28 July 2020

The successful reopening of schools for the coming school year is going to be an unprecedented and difficult undertaking. ASTI will provide information on this page as updates become available. ASTI has insisted that the safety of students, teachers and everyone within the school community must be protected.

Latest FAQs:

- **What protocols are in place to assist in ensuring a safe return to work for ASTI members?**
- **What health advice has been issued to ensure that schools can be reopened safely?**
- **Has the Department of Education issued any roadmap or guidance to assist in preparing for the successful reopening of schools?**
- **Has the Department of Education committed to providing the necessary capital investment for the successful reopening of schools?**
- **Has the Department of Education committed to providing additional teaching posts to support social distancing requirements necessary for the successful reopening of schools?**
- **Has the Department of Education committed to providing additional support for school leaders to assist them in putting in place the necessary requirements for the successful reopening of schools?**
- **Has the Department of Education committed to providing additional supervision resources which will be necessary for the successful reopening of schools?**

- ensuring the health, safety and well-being of students, teachers and other school personnel
- adherence to the medical advice in relation to social distancing and hygiene measures
- implementation of the provisions of the Return to Work Safely Protocol in every school
- attending to the needs of vulnerable members of the school community, and
- ensuring that initiative overload and inspection processes do not become a barrier to the efficient re-opening of schools.

Many of the ASTI's demands were addressed in the *Roadmap and Covid-19 Response Plan for the Safe Re-opening of Schools*, which was issued in late July. However, the ASTI expressed concern about the short time scale between the publication of the Response Plan and the re-opening of schools. The union also warned about the sustainability of the Plan given the expected duration of the pandemic. Greater clarity was sought on a number of issues.

August – face coverings reviewed

Following representations by the ASTI, the Minister for Education Norma Foley TD announced the adoption of new advice from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) regarding the use of face coverings within schools. Interim HPSC advice on the re-opening of schools issued on July 1 recommended the use of face coverings by teachers and students. The ASTI wrote to the Minister for Education on July 30 seeking a review of the interim advice ahead of schools re-opening in late August. The ASTI pointed to recent Government policy decisions to delay Phase 4 of the re-opening of the country and on the use of face masks on public transport and in other enclosed spaces. At the request of the Minister, the HPSC reviewed and updated its advice in early August and recommended to the Minister the implementation of face coverings for both teachers and students in second-level schools.

Keep up to date with Covid-19 issues for teachers at www.asti.ie.

UNION ACTIVISM ONLINE

With group gatherings restricted due to Covid-19, ASTI members have been using online methods to stay in touch with each other and keep the union moving forward.

ASTI activists used online platforms in new ways to share information and opinions during lockdown. Activists at all levels including school stewards, branch officers, Standing Committee representatives, Convention delegates and members of other national committees adapted and innovated in order to represent the interests of their colleagues during these extraordinary times.

Branch meetings

With in-person meetings impossible, many ASTI branches began using online platforms to host branch meetings. Andrew Phelan, Standing Committee Representative for Region 15 (Dublin North West/Dublin South West), says that the branches he represents have used video conferencing platform Zoom during the Covid-19 lockdown: “We used it both to give information out of what was happening and get information in. We were looking at social media and there seemed to be a lot of misinformation that people had as to how the union operates and what was going on, so we decided to have a few Zoom meetings to let people know exactly what was happening”.

Chair of the Galway Branch, Cian O’Grady, says when lockdown happened, the branch knew it needed to meet: “We had two meetings with just the branch officers on the normal Zoom account and then the information needed to be given out”.

Cian says Niall Duddy, Galway Branch Secretary, and Richie Bell, Standing Committee Representative Region 3, were instrumental in enabling the branch to move online for Zoom meetings.

School stewards

Adrienne Healy, School Steward at St Dominic’s, Cabra, says a WhatsApp group was invaluable for the teachers in her school. They shared articles and information on digital learning, along with many other things from the informative to the humorous: “Everything from trying to boost each other by sending jokes to letting people know if there was a radio interview coming up or a newspaper article in relation to what was going on”.

The principal of Adrienne’s school keeps in touch with teachers by email, so teachers could discuss issues on the WhatsApp group before responding: “When you can have a group chat about it, it’s great to know how other people are feeling before you give feedback to the principal”.

Adrienne says WhatsApp provided the best way for her as a school steward to give feedback on the views of the members in her school: “We felt very isolated being at home, especially when there were very big issues happening, such as around Junior Cert and Leaving Cert. Our Standing Committee representative asked me to contact our members for feedback for Standing Committee meetings”.

National Committees

Since March, ASTI Standing Committee continued to meet regularly via the Zoom platform, and several special meetings were called when key decisions had to be made. As always, Standing Committee representatives needed to hear the views of the members they represent in order to make decisions. As school visits and physical branch meetings were not possible, feedback was sought from members using a variety of online methods.

The ASTI has a number of other important committees, which meet regularly. These committees are integral to the running of the ASTI and contribute to the overall policy and governance of the organisation. Many committees met remotely during lockdown, making decisions and advising Standing Committee. Committees that met remotely include:

Education Committee, Equal Opportunities Committee, Non-Permanent Teachers Advisory Committee, Principals’ and Deputy Principals’ Advisory Committee, Safety Health and Welfare Committee, Teaching Council Advisory Committee, Steering Committee, Standing Committee, *ASTIR* Editorial Board, and Benevolent Committee.

Advantages and disadvantages of online

Andrew, Cian and Adrienne agree that some things are better online, but that it’s hard to replicate some of the important aspects of in-person meetings. One obvious advantage of online meetings is that they are easier to attend.

Cian says that for the Galway Branch, there are issues beyond the union’s control in getting people to attend meetings, the



What is the ASTI Standing Committee?

Standing Committee consists of 23 ASTI members and includes the President, Vice-President, Honorary Treasurer, Honorary National Organiser, President Elect or Immediate Past President, and 18 regionally elected representatives. Standing Committee meets regularly to look after the business of the union when neither Central Executive Council nor Convention is in session.

We felt very **isolated** being at **home**, especially when there were very **big issues** happening, such as around **Junior Cert** and **Leaving Cert**.

main two being the size of the county and chronic traffic problems in the city. He says the online branch meeting was better attended than a normal meeting: “There were over 30 people signed in to it and the advantage of the Zoom meeting is that everyone kind of feels that they have a voice in it. When you’re in your normal meeting, you might have a top table and have people sitting in rows. In the last year, we’ve been moving to a round table setup, but on the platform with Zoom, everyone is equal. We found that we got a bit more engagement from people, that people spoke up a bit more. Going forward, I think we do intend to maybe have one in every three meetings on Zoom”.

Adrienne also found it helpful to be able to type in questions during Zoom meetings she attended and believes people could speak more freely. However, she also says from speaking to other teachers: “We are really looking forward to the next branch meeting in person, because of the social aspect. We really miss that. There’s nothing like the lunchtime or the after school union meeting, where you see your colleagues”.

Andrew says that in-person debate is still better than Zoom meetings when it comes to the union making decisions: “The union is about collectivism and collective thought and there have been people in the past saying ‘why don’t we just move everything online?’. For example, asking why do we have ballots in school after a staff meeting, rather than just sending everybody individually an email and leave people to ‘make up their own mind’. I think that voting and how the union reaches decisions is better done on the back of debate. People can only make informed decisions after hearing debate. For example, I might have a particular view on why we might take strike action on an issue and others might not have heard that view. Or I might not have heard the reason they don’t want to go on strike, etc. That might then change my opinion ... Having said all that, a blend of the two is very good”.

Regardless of the pandemic, the union needs to embrace digital methods

more to attract younger teachers, says Cian: “For the long-term survival of the union, if we’re not attracting those younger members or those that have just started teaching, ultimately the union will be in trouble”.

Cian is a lesser-paid teacher and says that the issue hasn’t gone away. It is the responsibility of younger teachers to get involved in the union but the officers must try to engage with them as well: “That’s why having a Zoom meeting every now and again would encourage younger people to join. I know when I went to my first meeting I was nervous enough going in. You don’t know what’s ahead of you and it can be intimidating, especially when you have teachers who have been teaching 30, 40 years, with the knowledge that they have”.

Digital Convention 2020

Convention is the supreme governing body of the ASTI, meeting annually at Easter to decide on ASTI policy for the year ahead. This annual meeting of almost 500 teachers was unable to go ahead as usual in 2020 because of Covid-19 restrictions. However, a remote Convention was held online on Friday, July 24. Members could log in to vote on motions, and all sessions, except the private session, were livestreamed. Cian took part in this year’s remote Convention: “It was a bit different obviously. The Convention is always an enjoyable few days. You hear lots of different views. To try and convert that into a one-day online conference was always going to be a challenge. It did give people a chance to hear some of the important issues at the moment”.

A full report of Convention 2020 is available on pages 18-22.

Online training for activists

With restrictions on many types of group gatherings likely to continue for the rest of the year, the ASTI will provide their annual training for school stewards online for the first time this autumn. Moira Leydon, Assistant General Secretary: Education and Research, speaks about the ASTI’s move to online training: “The ASTI is moving to online union training for members who serve as school stewards and who represent staff on boards of management. This training will build on the good practice already developed by trade unions around the world. The pandemic has underlined the vital necessity of trade unions in the workplace. Globally there is a surge in trade union membership and workers in Ireland, including teachers, are turning to their unions for advice, support and solidarity. I would urge all members who are school stewards or staff representatives on boards of management to register for our training. Information on how to register for these training sessions is available on the ASTI website”.

The ASTI would like to thank all activists who organised online engagement activities during Covid-19, and ensured that ASTI activism and democratic decision-making was able to continue during the pandemic.

INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS ISSUES IN TEACHING

ASTI General Secretary KIERAN CHRISTIE reports on the International Virtual Summit on the Teaching Profession, which highlighted significant areas of discussion on education and teaching in a post-Covid world.

The International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP) is organised by Education International (EI) and the OECD, and brings together education ministers, union leaders and other teacher leaders from education systems across the globe to review how best to improve the quality of teachers, teaching and learning. The ASTI is an affiliate of EI. The ISTP's unique feature continues to be that it brings together ministers and union leaders without the mediation of ministry officials.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that the tenth ISTP, hosted by the Spanish Government and scheduled for June 2020, was held virtually. Nineteen Ministers for Education from OECD countries attended, and I was delighted to represent the ASTI.

Learning the lessons of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on education systems and starting to discuss a roadmap for the future were the twin overarching themes of the Summit.

Three themes

The central section of the Summit discussion focused on three themes:

Discussion theme 1

What has been the quality of dialogue between ministries and the teaching profession during the crisis?

Discussion theme 2

How have new measures been implemented during the crisis and how has the teaching profession responded?

Discussion theme 3

How have disadvantaged students been supported during the crisis and what support should be given?

Social dialogue emerged as a major strand of discussion. EI member organisations emphasised that consistent dialogue between unions and governments was essential in order to enable a safe return for students and staff to schools.

Another consistent discussion strand was on digital learning. Member organisations said that digital learning had limitations despite the necessary emergency teaching initiated by teachers themselves. For some with systems in place, the transfer to emergency teaching was relatively smooth. I pointed out that in Ireland it was tough because of the lack of guidance, resourcing and planning. I noted that teachers had been faced with additional workload when remote learning took place. There is a need to respect teachers' working hours and holiday periods, and for a heightened focus on teacher well-being.

Another strong theme focused on schools as the centres of their communities. Participants emphasised that they were essential for teaching social skills. One member organisation highlighted the damaging effect on student learning and

Education International General Secretary David Edwards emphasised the need for trust in education. He reiterated a member organisation's view that the response to the pandemic had to be characterised by humility.

local communities of school closure, which could be made permanent by austerity policies post Covid.

Another strong strand was how the crisis had highlighted the importance of teacher professionalism and that this had won recognition.

The way the crisis had exacerbated student disadvantage was also discussed. The crisis highlighted the deficits in education systems. The impact of poverty on student engagement was huge. Student well-being was a major issue. There was a need to focus on students' social, emotional and mental health, and on the provision of psychosocial support. Child poverty levels must be reduced.

Another strand emerged on the need to protect education as an effective public service, and to protect its funding. Some member organisations warned against the introduction and penetration of privatisation during and after the pandemic.

Trust

In his closing remarks, EI General Secretary David Edwards emphasised the need for trust in education. He reiterated a member organisation's view that the response to the pandemic had to be characterised by humility. He said that we had all had to be in the crisis together and that there was a need to respect the pain everyone had shared. He said that evidence must inform education and that a collaborative approach to enquiry had a much greater chance of success. He emphasised that health and safety was of high importance for everyone. He said that the teaching profession had responded to the challenge. He stressed that the quality and equity we want for education systems can only be built by teachers with the right tools, adequate time to train and collaborate, and a climate of mutual trust between systems and schools.

Overall, member organisations and ministers brought new insights to the process of reviving education systems, particularly in the areas of teaching profession/union/government relations, the effects of digitalisation and remote learning, student well-being, and learning and research.

The issues that emerged in the Summit – social dialogue, digitalisation, blended learning, disadvantage and student well-being, schools at the centre of their communities, research, school funding and privatisation – are at the centre of EI's policy development.

SCHOOL STEWARD TRAINING

The ASTI has introduced online school steward training for the first time ever this year.

Online training for school stewards

ASTI school stewards training has moved online! School stewards should register for training for the course in their geographic area. The online training day will provide an excellent opportunity to engage with senior officers and local industrial relations (IR) officials. The training agenda includes:

- role of the school steward
- contracts
- leave for teachers
- disciplinary and grievance procedures
- conducting school ballots, and
- update on national issues.

ASTI school steward training

Dublin	Tuesday, September 22
Cork	Tuesday, September 29
Kilkenny	Thursday, October 1
Limerick	Tuesday, October 6
Dublin	Thursday, October 8
Athlone	Tuesday, October 13
Dundalk	Tuesday, October 20
Donegal	Thursday, October 22

To register, contact Eileen at eileen@asti.ie.

NEW ASTI WEBSITE

A new ASTI website with enhanced functionality will be launched later this year.

New improved website

The ASTI's new and improved website will be launching later this year.

The new website will have enhanced functionality, making it easier for members to stay connected to their union. ASTI members will be able to register and log in to see and, if necessary, update their personal details. This includes being able to choose to receive a range of ASTI publications by email or post. New ASTI members can join the union online, making the joining process easier. Information on all aspects of your employment will be available on the website, so that you can stay informed of developments, as well as checking in on the ASTI's ongoing campaigns. You can check the dates and locations of upcoming ASTI events with our Events and Training calendars. Keep an eye out for the new website at: www.asti.ie.



NAVIGATING THE WORLD OF REMOTE TEACHING

Assistant General Secretary: Education and Research, MOIRA LEYDON, presents the results of an ASTI survey on remote teaching and learning.

The ASTI survey was issued to members in early May in order to obtain feedback on their experience of remote teaching and learning. The survey was completed by 3,526 members – equivalent to a very high response rate of 22%. At the time of issue of the survey, schools had been shut for six weeks (exclusive of the Easter holidays).

Unprecedented

The dramatic closure of schools on March 12 precipitated a shift to remote teaching, which was unplanned, unprecedented, and indeed un-thought of. While schools had been closed for several weeks due to severe weather in December 2009/January 2010, this time it was different. The entire country was shutting down and education had to find other ways to ‘go on’.

And go on it did. Teachers responded as the frontline workers in education and supported their students on a dramatic learning curve. This has been challenging. However, teachers were not wholly unprepared. Before school closure, information and communications technology (ICT) was already integrated into classroom teaching – 84% of teachers used ICT in classroom teaching on either a daily basis or a few times a week. At the same time, only 50% of teachers were familiar with their school’s Digital Learning Framework Plan as required under the Department’s Digital Strategy for Schools. Furthermore, only 50% of teachers had been provided with a laptop by their school. Both of these issues must be addressed to support future blended learning.

Challenges

The experience of remote teaching was challenging for almost all teachers on many levels: technological, pedagogical, social, emotional, and well-being. All intersected and, regrettably, in many instances created ‘perfect storms’ of high stress levels and diminished well-being. Poor broadband and inadequate ICT devices for both students and teachers were not the only technological challenges. Teachers had to create content from scratch: a time-consuming process that underlines the need for a radically revamped education portal for schools. Lack of compatibility between students’ mobile phones and teachers’ devices was really problematic and doubled the time spent correcting.

Teachers were challenged pedagogically not just by synchronous ‘live’ teaching, but also by how to differentiate, and how to keep students engaged and, in effect, provide ‘personalised’ learning.

Teachers were challenged emotionally as they worried about students’ declining engagement (sometimes zero engagement). Teachers continued to reach out to these students to make sure that they and their families were OK. Teachers were challenged socially in that their homes became their workplaces and, very frequently, the workplace of their spouse/partner and their adult children. Some 70% of ASTI members are female so it is not surprising that so many teachers found the daily challenge of teaching their students, looking after their own children and helping them with their online learning, and then facing into lengthy night-time corrections, really exhausting. Work-life balance completely disappeared for many teachers: only 30% stated that the impact was manageable or negligible. ‘Overwhelming’ was the dominant word in this regard.

The value of face-to-face teaching

Above all, teachers missed not being in their classrooms with their students. Teaching is at heart built on relationships – dynamic, organic relationships sustained by daily contact with students and colleagues in long-established routines, familiar spaces, etc. Teachers really struggled with questions of identity, self-efficacy and their role as they taught online. Many said that the experience had given them a greater understanding not just of their students but of themselves as pedagogues. This profound questioning will really enrich the profession in the years to come.

Disturbing lack of support

Finally, a profoundly disturbing finding from the survey is the pervasive perception that teachers’ work is unacknowledged and undervalued by society. Negative public discourse in the media and elsewhere is corrosive to teachers’ individual and collective morale and contributes to diminished well-being. The Government, and in particular the Minister for Education and Skills, has a duty to support and appreciate the work of teachers at all times but especially in the current crisis. There has been insufficient leadership to date in this regard, which is out of step with the public appreciation of the work of schools and the high level of contact with families and students during this period of school closure. Teachers will teach – and lead – as society creates its ‘next normal’. Their work and worth has never been so important.



View the slides from the presentation on the ASTI Survey on Remote Teaching by Moira Leydon, Assistant General Secretary at ASTI Remote Convention 2020 on the ASTI website .

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*Kathryn Nerney,
Primary School Teacher*

START DATE: Friday 30 October 2020

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- **Ideal for those acting as decision-makers within schools, for those who wish to advance to that level, and for those with an interest in education law matters**
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The Law Society of Ireland's Diploma Centre is once again inviting applications for its well-regarded Diploma in Education Law. Now in its fifth year, this diploma provides comprehensive coverage of the legal issues and pertinent case law relevant to the day-to-day issues that arise when advising on education law matters or indeed when acting as a decision-maker within a school. The effect of Covid-19 on the educational sector will also be examined.

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WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

This course is suitable for the following:

- Solicitors, barristers, and trainees who advise or wish to advise on education law matters,
- Key stakeholders and decision-makers within the education setting, including school principals, assistant principals, inspectors, teachers at all levels,
- Teachers in management organisations, trade unions, and staff associations.

TO APPLY:

Visit www.lawsociety.ie/diplomacentre

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E diplomateam@lawsociety.ie

CONVENTION ONLINE

For the first time ever, this year's ASTI Convention was a virtual one, but the key issues were addressed, including equal pay for equal work, and ensuring that schools are fully resourced and supported to re-open in September.



Then ASTI President Deirdre Mac Donald and General Secretary Kieran Christie at this year's Annual Convention.

President's opening address

Then ASTI President Deirdre Mac Donald said that teachers' health and safety would remain a key priority for the ASTI.

"You may ask how the decision was made to hold this remote Convention 2020. In line with the Standing Committee motion on Annual Convention, we requested ASTI Steering Committee to re-order the agenda for Annual Convention 2020, to prioritise business, and to protect the structures of the union as far as possible. Following that we had a second motion, that Standing Committee choose a date for the remote commencement of Convention and that the Convention be held as near as possible to that date.

Meeting teachers' needs

I had been looking forward to meeting you in person, and there is no doubt that whether it is a classroom or a convention centre, the live experience is preferable. But that is not to be this year. You have all gone through that experience, with the remote teaching that you have had to engage in with little or no preparation, and with huge lack of funding to prepare you for what was ahead. That was really immense work. The results of lack of funding for education have never been more apparent than in the last number of months. We are 35 out of 35 in terms of expenditure on post-primary education in the OECD, and that lack of expenditure over a prolonged period of time is showing. But we, the secondary school teachers of Ireland, have filled the gap yet again. You have done mighty work and I congratulate you most wholeheartedly.

Health is wealth

Some years ago, I proposed that the ASTI would have a Safety, Health and Welfare Committee, and I took it to be in line with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. Not many unions have a Safety, Health and Welfare Committee and we are the only teaching union, and I am very proud of that because it meant that when the issues came, we were fit for purpose. We had done work in terms of some aspects of the health of teachers. Not all, and certainly we didn't foresee the huge challenge that was put to us, but with that in mind, the Safety, Health and Welfare Committee has been meeting over the last weeks and months, keeping abreast of things and trying as far as possible to

foresee teachers' needs and how they may be addressed. Of course, that comes back to funding.

When, after my term as President, I return to Standing Committee, I intend to put forward a motion from the Safety, Health and Welfare Committee:

"In the light of the coronavirus and in regard to the safety, health and welfare of our members and their students, we the ASTI demand that the Department of Education and Skills does everything necessary to ensure that the health and safety of our workplace is in line with the NPHET advice and HSA guidelines. We further demand the provision of adequate financial resourcing and guidelines, training and additional staff".

This has been the work that myself and the General Secretary have been engaged in for the last number of months and it has accelerated because our single aim is to protect our workers, physically and mentally, because there are going to be huge demands on us. We will not be returning as normal to school in September. There will be big changes and big challenges. I know you will overcome those as you have previously, but it does mean we need serious investment in securing our places of work and the additional resources in those places that will give us the peace of mind and the support that we need at this time.

Our members' health and safety has been our priority from the beginning and this will remain so as we go forward."

[View the full speech at www.asti.ie.](http://www.asti.ie)

General Secretary's address

ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie reiterated that the vital social role of the education system, and of teachers in particular, is now apparent to everyone.

"When we all sat down to our Christmas dinners last year, none of us would have imagined the manner in which matters would unfold in the following months. For teachers, the imposition was particularly acute. However, there is no doubt that the members of the ASTI, the teachers of this country, can hold their heads up high. Their response was simply incredible. Within days of the lockdown and



Then ASTI President Deirdre Mac Donald with Séamus Magann of AVC.



ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie addresses members at Convention.

the closure of our schools, without resources or training, teachers were delivering a service to their students remotely that stands as a massive credit to their professionalism, their commitment to their students and their communities.

Reopening of schools

From an ASTI perspective, one immutable truth is that in each and every instance in our schools upon re-opening, the health advice provided by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and other appropriate health authorities must be implemented in full and at all times. The requirements set out in the medical advice issued recently by the HPSC, and as it is updated, will have to be adhered to. Schools will have to be Covid-19-secure workplaces.

The penny-pinching underinvestment in our schools has gone on for too long, the cuts have been too deep, and if ever there was a moment that the Government will need to step up to the plate it is with the re-opening of schools in the midst of a pandemic. Schools need and will have to receive their very own stimulus package. We have been demanding extra teaching appointments in our schools to break down those large classes and remove us from the bottom rung of the OECD ladder in that respect. There will also have to be additional support to cater for the major enhancements of cleaning and hygiene that are going to be necessary. We all know that a safe return to school will be predicated on robust control measures being in place to keep Covid-19 out of our schools and effective protocols to deal with any suspected cases that might occur. Safety is paramount. We have also demanded some support for our school leaders. We have pointed out that the Examinations Aide model of support is already in existence in schools and school leaders need to be supported using a variant of this model. Putting in place the arrangements for return to school will be a mammoth task.

We have demanded a significant capital investment to support the necessary adjustment of physical infrastructure in schools and the installation of other necessary resources and equipment. A detailed training initiative must be available to allow for a smooth reintegration of all concerned after such a long absence in such egregious circumstances. Indeed, we have also argued the case for a comprehensive and wide-ranging programme of support for staff and student well-being as part of the overall return to school package.

On the curriculum side, there will need to be considerable thought and support provided, subject by subject. The assessment arrangements next year in some instances would benefit from adjustments. Detailed guidance will have to be issued and we are pressing the Department of Education and Skills (DES) for

consultation on this. We have demanded that the brakes be put on the introduction of new subject syllabi and so on. The new art subject specifications and the new Leaving Certificate Applied modules need to be deferred. The initiative overload of the last number of years must come to an abrupt halt. It is the least that they can do this year.

On another front, we have advocated at the current discussions that the DES develop a student's Covid-19 Code of Behaviour template that can be appended to the existing arrangements applied in schools. Schools have to appoint at least one Lead Worker Representative (LWR) charged with ensuring that Covid-19 measures are strictly adhered to. Those undertaking the role must receive the necessary training and have a structured framework to follow within the school to be effective in preventing the spread of the virus. We have been arguing that this is a vital role and have insisted that time off from normal duties for LWRs will have to be allocated to ensure that the function is properly supported.

Public Service Stability Agreement

The Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) comes to a conclusion at the end of 2020. In normal circumstances, a replacement draft agreement would likely have already been negotiated and we would be in the process of balloting on it together with other public service unions. A mixture of the Covid crisis and the delay in Government formation has meant that there has been no progress.

The new Government has indicated that it will honour the final 2% pay restoration under the PSSA in October 2020. We have delivered on our side of the bargain; it is only right that they would deliver on theirs.

The ASTI will once again put the issue of unequal pay up there in lights at such talks. We will, as we always do, fight to maintain the concept of pension parity. We will defend our members from any attacks that will inevitably emerge on their conditions of service, and we will seek to ensure that pay will be advanced and protected. The ASTI will engage with the DES and all the other relevant stakeholders to ensure a decent outcome for our members.

There must be a paradigm shift in Ireland's economic and political priorities. Austerity and neoliberal education policies caused enormous damage over the past decade, undermining equality in education and driving many teachers from the profession. The mistakes of the past must not be repeated."

[View the full speech at www.asti.ie.](http://www.asti.ie)



Running an online Convention was no easy task, but the technical team from AVC made sure everything went smoothly.



Then ASTI Immediate Past President Breda Lynch.

President's closing address

Then ASTI President Deirdre Mac Donald spoke about the importance of supporting teachers in their workplace.

"We have gone through and are going through a crisis. But this crisis cannot be used as an opportunity to allow educational matters to develop in a way that we would not have allowed before this crisis. We must be ever vigilant, because something that was ill conceived before the crisis is still ill conceived; something that was grossly underfunded is even more underfunded now.

Supportive

We need, as we go into the next school year, to be in a position to address the deficits in learning which undoubtedly will have happened. You will notice I said deficits in learning; there most certainly were no deficits in teaching. We are all more aware than ever of the digital divide. We must be in a place to give our time and attention to the core of our work and the core of our work is teaching our subject, our specialty. That is why we became teachers. We have spoken most stridently to the Department on this and we will absolutely be vigilant in making sure that initiatives are frozen and do not add to the burden of teachers, and that the inspection model is a supportive model. I am also very aware that a significant number of our members are managers and have had a horrendous year. They are facing into enormous workloads, and I would ask that we support them. I also ask that they take a collaborative approach with staff. 'Stronger together': we have always said that in the ASTI. Do not assume what the needs of the teachers will be: ask them. Don't talk about us without us.

Old problems have not gone away

There are particular needs that affect some of our more vulnerable members, our younger and newer members to the profession, and particularly our lesser-paid teachers. The issues around equal work for equal pay haven't gone away, and we will as a union be as strident in seeking this as we were when it came on the agenda so many years ago now. The pay talks as we know have to take place because the present pay agreement is about to run out, so that must be prioritised, but there are other important issues around pay. One of these is pension parity. Poverty in old age, no more than poverty at any age, is not pretty and the needs of the older community, as we have seen again in this crisis, have a particular resonance.

We need protocols around remote teaching and learning. The digital era is wonderful, but it also has many pitfalls and we cannot allow our profession to fall into those.

The right to disconnect

In terms of the practising teacher, we need protocols around remote teaching and learning. The digital era is wonderful, but it also has many pitfalls and we cannot allow our profession to fall into those. We have seen that responses to our member survey on remote teaching were completed mostly after 10 o'clock at night and that's when people had a little bit of time for themselves. You cannot have them being pursued by management after their working hours and into their weekends. That time is their time. We must give the teachers the trust that they deserve.

The power of the collective

One thing that we have learned from the crisis is the power of the collective. As a trade union we always knew about the power of the collective: we are stronger together. We saw in the community how people pulled together to keep one another safe. That the importance of caring for others and that is the work of a trade union. This brings me to the issue of membership. We will have an online membership form by the end of August. This will facilitate us growing our membership because we have shown ourselves to be a union of integrity, hard work, fit for purpose, and supporting our members, individually and collectively. I put it to every member here and every member of our union that their work is to grow our membership. We must also see that ASTI policy is implemented in our schools. It is fine for us to say it here at Convention, at CEC, at Standing Committee, but the most important place that ASTI policy must be upheld is in the schools because that's where you do your work.

As I said, we're a trade union that has shown ourselves to be fit for purpose this year. We, through our efforts, allowed the Leaving Certificate class of 2020, a class which went through an enormously stressful time, to progress



Deirdre Mac Donald prepares to address the virtual audience.



ASTI Treasurer Pádraig Murphy.

with their lives, and that's important. We said yes but we needed protection and we needed the protection of complete indemnity in doing that work. When the original indemnity was put before us we said no, that is not sufficient to our needs. You must go and get full indemnity for our members, that is the only way that they will be protected and that is the only condition that we will have our members engage in this work. We have gone through a year no other. We have worked hard,

faced challenges and shown ourselves to our best. We have heard so much about frontline workers and absolutely I thank them for their work; it has been amazing. But what we have seen and what we will continue to see is that we are essential workers and I think that a lot of people would never have seen that before. The future of the economy, the future of our health, all of that comes from an educated cohort. Education is the basis of all."

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MOTIONS ADOPTED BY CONVENTION 2020

The following resolutions were adopted by ASTI Convention 2020 (held remotely in the context of Covid-19).



Deirdre Mac Donald welcomed delegates to this historic Annual Convention.

Motion A

That the sole validly nominated candidate for President of ASTI as of January 31, 2020, Ann Piggott, be declared elected to hold the office in accordance with rule 114 of the ASTI Rules and Constitution.

Motion B

That the sole validly nominated candidate for Honorary Treasurer of ASTI as of January 31, 2020, Pádraig Murphy, be declared elected to hold the office in accordance with rule 127 of the ASTI Rules and Constitution.

Motion C

That the results of Regional Elections to Standing Committee, as presented by the General Secretary, be adopted.

Motion D

That a postal ballot of eligible electors be held to elect the Vice-President of ASTI to hold office in accordance with rule 114 of the ASTI Rules and Constitution. Such election to be held in accordance with the procedures previously circulated to Annual Convention 2020 and the candidates for which to be the validly nominated candidates for Vice-President of ASTI as of January 31, 2020.

Motion E

(a) That the current membership of the following named committees of ASTI be retained to serve in that capacity until Annual Convention 2021:

- Steering Committee
- Investment Committee
- Rules Committee
- Sickness Benefit Committee
- Pensions Sub-committee
- Business of CEC Committee

Motion F

That the statement of accounts for 2019, circulated and presented by the Honorary Treasurer, be adopted by Annual Convention 2020.

Motion G

That the subscription rates for ASTI members, presented by the Honorary Treasurer, be adopted by Annual Convention 2020.

Motion H

That the report of the Trustees, formally presented by the Trustees, be adopted by Annual Convention 2020.

Motion I

That the nomination by the Trustees of HLB Sheehan Quinn to be appointed to carry out the annual audit of the accounts of the ASTI be adopted.

Motion J

That nominations for eligible candidates to contest the election of Honorary National Organiser be submitted on the prescribed form to the General Secretary no later than 4.30pm on Friday, July 31, 2020. That a postal ballot of eligible electors be held to elect the Honorary National Organiser to hold office in accordance with rule 151 of the ASTI Rules and Constitution. Such election to be held in accordance with the procedures previously circulated to Annual Convention 2020.

Motion K

That the current membership of the following named committees of ASTI be retained to serve in that capacity until the next meeting of the Central Executive Council:

- Benevolent Fund Committee
- Awards Committee
- CEC Appeals Sub-committee

Motion L

That the current cohort of Regional Organisers of ASTI be retained to serve in that capacity until the next meeting of the Central Executive Council.

Elections at Annual Convention 2020

 President – Ann Piggott (August 2020-21)	 Honorary Treasurer – Pádraig Murphy
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WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN THE

ASTI



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We provide advice, support and legal representation as needed.



We fight to protect your working conditions and professional integrity.



We have negotiated a range of financial offers for you.

We consult with you through surveys, ballots and our representative network.



We bring you the latest news about your profession through our web, social media, publications, emails and texts.

We provide training.



We achieved 2-year CIDs.

We took strike action to advance equal pay for post 2010 entrants to teaching.



We are the only union working exclusively for second-level teachers.

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NEW TO TEACHING

While this is a year like no other, new teachers starting their careers this September still need to be aware of issues around contracts, pay and conditions.

If you are one of many teachers beginning their career this September, or you are beginning a new role, it is important that you understand the contract that you have and the conditions that go along with it. Most new teachers begin their careers in temporary or part-time roles, covering for teachers on leave or covering concessionary hours.

Contracts

The type of contract you hold depends on the reason for the position being vacant and the type of hours that you cover. Regardless of the type of contract you have, you are entitled to 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.

Always keep a copy of your contract and any related documents as they may be needed in the future. If you are unsure of anything in your contract, ask your ASTI school steward or ASTI Head Office for clarification or advice.

Before you sign a contract, make sure it includes the following information:

- the nature and duration of your employment
- the type of contract under which you are employed – fixed-term or permanent; part-time or whole-time
- the number of hours per week you are contracted to teach
- the subjects and levels you will be teaching

- the reason for the vacancy you are filling, and
- whether you will be paid by the Department of Education and Skills, the school or the ETB.

Non-permanent contracts

Many newly qualified teachers (NQTs) will begin their teaching careers with non-permanent contracts. A non-permanent 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. There are four categories of non-permanent teaching contract for qualified teachers:

A **casual teacher** is appointed where there is a casual need for hours to be covered (less than 150 hours in a school year), usually covering for a teacher on short-term sick leave or parental leave. A casual qualified teacher is paid a standard rate.

A **non-casual part-time teacher** is appointed when a teacher is needed for over 150 hours in a school year but for less than the full school year. Usually, they are covering for maternity leave or carer's leave. The qualified non-casual rate per hour worked is the teacher's own personal point on the pay scale divided by 735.

A **regular part-time teacher** is appointed when a teacher is needed for a full school year, but for less than the full 22 hours a week, for example covering a job share contract. A regular part-time teacher will be paid on the same basis as a whole-time teacher, pro rata to the number of hours worked.

A **temporary whole-time fixed-term teacher** is appointed to work full hours for at least one full school year, generally covering a career break/secondment. They will be paid in accordance with their incremental point on the salary scale.

Permanent/CID contracts

Permanent contract

Permanent teachers are contracted to teach up to 22 hours a week. If you receive a permanent job, you may receive a permanent probationary contract, but once the probationary period has been served you should receive a permanent contract.

Contracts of indefinite duration

A contract of indefinite duration (CID) gives a teacher the same job security as other permanent teachers. The only differences are



that salary is based on the number of hours spent teaching (which can be less than full hours) and the awarding of the contract is normally the result of the teacher acquiring the requisite amount of teaching service in a sustainable teaching post. For more information on eligibility requirements for a CID, see www.asti.ie.

Salary

Your pay depends on:

- when you first started teaching
- your contract
- your hours, and
- your teaching experience.

Teachers are paid based on an incremental salary scale or according to annual rates. If 2020 is your first year teaching you will be on the first point of the post-January 2011 pay scale.

If you are employed by a voluntary secondary school or a community or comprehensive school, you will be paid directly each fortnight by the Department of Education and Skills from their offices in Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

If you are employed by a community college or vocational school, you will be paid by the relevant Education and Training Board (ETB) at least once a month out of funds allocated to them from the Department of Education and Skills.

If you are employed privately by the school, you will be paid directly by the school.

Permanent teachers/full-time CID teachers are paid over 12 months and their salary is based on the relevant point on the appropriate scale. For full details, see www.asti.ie.

Regular part-time teachers, part-time CID teachers and temporary whole-time teachers are paid over 12 months, and their salary is based on a pro-rata fraction of the relevant point on the salary scale, plus any allowances, depending on how many hours they teach. Casual and non-casual teachers will accumulate statutory annual leave to the value of 12% of time worked. Teachers are required to take their statutory annual leave entitlement during the school closure periods, i.e., Christmas, Easter, summer.

Incremental credit


If you have previously taught abroad, you may be entitled to incremental credit. Teachers who are paid incremental salary by the Department of Education and Skills may apply for incremental salary credit for previous service. Incremental credit is awarded at the discretion of the Department of Education and Skills for previous qualified service only – for full details, see Circular 0029/2007. Teachers returning to Ireland from teaching abroad should note that there is currently no scheme for the award of incremental credit for private service given outside of the EU. However, you should retain evidence of any teaching experience, even if it is not currently eligible for incremental credit, in case of future changes to the scheme.

All applications for the award of incremental credit must be made within two years from:

1. A teacher's initial appointment to a department paid teaching position, or
2. from the date of return to service in the case of those who are on career break.

In order to apply for incremental credit the application form available in circular 0029/2007 should be completed and submitted directly to the Department of Education and Skills providing all the relevant/required information.

For the latest news about your profession, keep an eye on the
ASTI website – www.asti.ie.




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SOUND ADVICE

Some words of advice from colleagues for teachers at the start of their career.

Aaron Wolfe

Acting Principal, Coláiste Éamann Rís, Cork City

When starting in a new school I think it's important to ask for help. You'll be surrounded by some very talented and experienced teachers who know the students, and their subjects, and will really be able to help you with planning or dealing with a difficult group. Of course, don't be naïve; some people have their own ideas and agendas – don't get sucked into negativity or staff politics so early. Give yourself time to make your own mind up about people and educational issues. Teaching is rewarding but it can be exhausting. Be prepared for some difficult classes, but don't let it get on top of you. Humour is great; be able to laugh at a situation. Starting out we all make mistakes, but most things are easily fixed. Like any job, it becomes easier the more you become established in a school.

Show your students respect and they'll respect you. Have a laugh, but you're not their friend. If students don't see boundaries you'll quickly lose control. Have standards. If you give a note in a journal, check that the note has been signed the next day. If you don't check it, they won't get the note signed and the whole act will become pointless. Basically follow up on all your actions. Finally, go to your branch meetings. We owe all our terms and conditions to the ASTI, but the union is only as strong as its members. Go to the branch meetings and to Annual Convention, learn about circulars, and get involved in wider educational debates.

Kathleen Burke

Deputy Principal, Presentation De La Salle College, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow – teacher of Home Economics and Biology

Starting out on any new chapter of our lives is both daunting and exciting. As you start this adventure, remember that there are many supports available to you: your colleagues in the staffroom, your fellow teachers in your subject department, subject associations and the ASTI. Your colleagues are a wonderful support. Seek their advice, ask their opinion, share ideas and resources.

Get to know your classes – the students' names, brothers and sisters in the school, their extracurricular interests and who they are. A school is a community and becoming part of that community is key to long-term happiness and success.

Even if you do not have full hours this year, it is a year of teaching experience and a chance for you to get your 'foot in the door' – you never know what will come of it. Every day is a school day. You are at the beginning of what hopefully will be a very rewarding and worthwhile career, and you will be improving and learning each day. Trust yourself, believe in yourself and enjoy the opportunity that you have been given to change the course of many young people's lives with your knowledge, enthusiasm and kindness.

Shane Curran

CBS New Ross, Wexford – teacher of Science, Physics and Chemistry

Never be afraid to ask for help. The hardest part is voicing your fears. It doesn't make you a bad teacher if you aren't sure of the rules, or where supplies are, or managing a particularly unruly class at 9.00am on a Monday morning. Talk to someone, maybe a teacher in your department or your school steward. We all remember being newly qualified, and the fear and anxiety that goes with it.

Secondly, get involved in your union. It's not enough to just sign up. Go to a branch meeting (probably online for the time being). The only way we can effect real change is to draw attention to the issues that affect newer teachers. Be it unequal pay, conditions, or reform, we need to be driving the conversation. It's our union.

Órlagh Nic Eoin

Coláiste Ghlór na Mara, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin – teacher of Maths

1. Ask questions: remember there's no such thing as a stupid question! New jobs and new schools can be daunting but remember that every other teacher was in your position once upon a time and we'll be happy to help!
2. Chat to your principal and get your induction process sorted asap. This is the first year that the Droichead process is in place in all second-level schools. Registering early means that you can attend cluster meetings and get started on your mandatory 200 hours' post-qualification employment and observations as soon as possible.
3. Take the time to become familiar with the curricula and assessment structures in your subjects. This may take a number of years, so don't overload yourself with extracurricular activities to the extent that it puts you under pressure in the classroom.
4. Join the ASTI for your protection and remember to avail of its experience and expertise if you have queries regarding contracts, salary, etc.
5. Enjoy it and don't heed the dinosaurs who say you shouldn't smile until Easter!

YOUR PAYSリップ EXPLAINED

1. Basic pay

This refers to payment for hours worked, and does not include your allowances, if applicable.

2. Deductions

Deductions including PAYE, USC, income levy, Pension Related Deduction (PRD) and PRSI (including health levy) are detailed here. Payments for your pension contribution are also included, along with other at-source deductions such as: additional voluntary contributions to pension; certain savings schemes; certain insurance schemes, including salary protection; credit union deductions; Teaching Council registration fee; and, ASTI subscription.

3. PRSI class

All employees, whether full-time or part-time, are liable for PRSI. All teachers employed before 1995 are Class D contributors. Class A is the predominant rate at which PRSI is paid.

4. Tax credit

This refers to the total tax credit you are entitled to for this payroll period, including your PAYE credit, individual tax credit and other credits based on your individual circumstances. Notice of your tax credits is sent to you at the beginning of each year by the Revenue Commissioners. Check www.revenue.ie for more details of tax credits or to see what you can claim.

5. Cut-off point

Cut-off point refers to the point at which you pay the higher rate of tax. The standard PAYE rate is 20% plus the income levy. You are taxed at this rate on earnings up to your cut-off point. After that, earnings are taxed at the higher rate of 41% plus income levy. The figure here indicates the cut-off point for this particular pay period.

6. Net pay

This figure indicates how much is actually paid into your bank account after tax, PRSI and other deductions.

7. Year-to-date totals

Year-to-date totals let you know how much you have earned, paid or been credited to date in this tax year. The tax year runs from January 1 to December 31.

Department of Education and Skills
Payroll Division
Cornamaddy
Athlone
Co. Westmeath

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Rannán Páirle
Corn a Madadh
Baile Átha Luain
Co. na hIarmhí

Date
Name
Address
Address
Address

Payroll Period	Start Date	End Date	Issue Date	Roll No.	Scale Point
201806	16-JAN-18	29-JAN-18	01-FEB-18	12345A	5
PPSN	1122334L	Payroll No	7654321	Employer Reg No	0081300S

A minus sign beside gross earnings indicates a deduction and a minus sign beside a deduction indicates a refund
'E' in the Tax Code field indicates you are on emergency tax. You should contact your tax office to obtain a current tax certificate.

Gross Earnings		Deductions	
1 BASIC PAY	0000.00	P.A.Y.E.	000.00
		EMPLOYEES PRSI	00.00
		ASTI	0.00
		USC	00.00
		SINGLE PENS. SCH 1	00.00
		SINGLE PENS. SCH 2	00.00
		ADDIT. SUPERAN. CONTR	00.00
Total Earnings	0000.00	Total Deductions	000.00

PRSI Class	Weeks	Tax Basis	Tax Credit	Cut Off Point	Taxable Gross	Pre Tax Deductions	Nett Pay
A1	2	CUMULATIVE	000.00	0000.00	0000.00	000.00	0000.00

Gross Pay YTD	Tax Credits YTD	Cut Off Point YTD	Tax YTD	Pension and/or AVC	PRSI YTD	PRD YTD	USC YTD	LPT YTD
0000.00	000.00	0000.00	000.00	000.00	000.00	000.00	000.00	000.00

Barcode

For more information on your salary and pension, visit the ASTI website – www.asti.ie.

MEET THE NEW ASTI PRESIDENT

New ASTI President Ann Piggott spoke to ASTIR about her background, and her aims for her term as President.



Left: New ASTI President Ann Piggott with General Secretary Kieran Christie. Above: Ann looks forward to her year as ASTI President.

Where do you teach?

Originally, I taught in a mixed secondary school called Holy Cross College in Kenmare with about 250 students. Schools amalgamated in 2001 and I became a teacher in Kenmare Community School.

Where did you go to second-level school?

I went to Ballincollig Community School, which had a most unusual building. There was a central circular courtyard with classrooms spiralled around the core; the outside consisted of various bright shades of orange, yellow and cream glass-reinforced polyester panels. Collectively the shape, colour and material made it a unique school structure, which won European design awards. That building was replaced in 2003. I had several hardworking, dedicated and inspiring teachers.

Being a teacher is **highly rewarding...**
It is a **pleasure** to help pupils do well in exams or assist with problems, **personal or otherwise.**

Did you always want to become a teacher, or did you ever consider another career?

I began by studying civil engineering in UCC. Lectures about drainage and road building did not set my mind on fire, so after a month I changed. I was much happier studying Irish, English, Maths and French. I loved my job enormously when I began teaching Maths and English.

What is your favourite thing about being a teacher?

Being a teacher is highly rewarding. Good moments occur when students grasp a concept being taught, or when enjoyment of a topic is evident. It is a pleasure to help pupils do well in exams or assist with problems, personal or otherwise. As teachers, we too constantly learn from students. Teenagers often inspire and there is great delight in bumping into former students unexpectedly years later.

What was your favourite subject at school?

I have always adored maths since primary school. I worked with the State Examinations Commission for 25 summers, from Examiner to Chief Advising Examiner in maths.

Why did you become involved in the ASTI?

Embodying a life-long respect for trade unions, I like the righteousness they represent. Before CIDs, unfairness sometimes existed in the appointment of teachers to permanent positions. I wanted to have a voice in exposing and opposing wrongdoing.

What positions have you held within the ASTI prior to becoming president?

I have been:

- active in my branch as secretary, treasurer, vice chairperson and equality officer
- a member of the following national committees: finance, equality, anti-bullying and standing committee
- an ASTI representative on ICTU's Global Solidarity Committee, the National Women's Council and the NCCA, and
- ASTI cheque signatory, school steward and President of Cork Trades Council.

I am currently on the Governing body of Cork Institute of Technology and a board member of Cork ETB. I am also on the boards of management of three schools.

What would you say to teachers starting their career this September wondering if they should join the ASTI?

The ASTI has led the campaign on equal pay. The union offers protection if a teacher is wrongfully denied a CID. Should a spurious or vexatious complaint be made, the union will defend. The ASTI provides legal consultations, which might otherwise be unaffordable. The union offers support, advice and educational training.

What has been your proudest moment to date as an ASTI member?

As an ASTI representative on ICTU's Global Solidarity Committee, I learned of persecution against trade unionists in Colombia. Resulting from this, my CSPE students were instrumental in the release of Colombian trade union activist, Rosalba Gavira Toro, who was head of a Women's Movement for Peace and Human Rights. She was imprisoned without trial and her life was at risk. She subsequently travelled to Ireland to meet my pupils. This featured in media stories throughout the world.

What are your priorities for your year as ASTI president?

As I embark on my role amid a pandemic and a looming recession, my concerns include:

- the health and safety of teachers and students
- resistance to any suggested pay cuts
- no imposition of extra work practices, as were enforced during the previous recession, and

- calculated grades must not be a feature of future exams and alternative contingency plans for 2021 State exams need to be prepared.

The following issues are of immediate concern:

- any education charter must include the rights of teachers
- the issues of equal pay and outstanding increments remain to be resolved
- preserve pension parity and safeguard pensions
- right to opt in or out of paid S&S, and
- alleged bullying and harassment of teachers causes severe distress and must be investigated.

What are your interests outside of teaching?

I love to travel. I like to cross paths with other cultures and experience the exotic colours, smells, sounds and customs of foreign places. I enjoy photography, walking, reading and meeting people; one trip can encapsulate so many interests!

Who do you admire?

I have great admiration for Maurice McCabe, who suffered in his exposure of injustice. I admire the journalist Michael Clifford for bringing the story to public attention. I am inspired by Mary Manning, the Dunnes Stores worker whose actions have changed the apartheid regime in South Africa. Another inspirational woman, Louise O'Keefe, took a case against the State at the European Court of Human Rights. As families of the Stardust victims seek a fresh inquiry into the events of 1981, I have high regard for people whose search for justice has taken up much of their lives with huge personal sacrifices.



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BACK TO SCHOOL

ASTI representatives have spoken in national and local media about plans for the re-opening of schools.

“We’ve always said that we will be guided entirely by the health advice that’s provided. What I will make clear, in each and every school, our members will be in attendance provided that the health advice that is available is being followed to the letter of the law. Not nearly followed, because, in the interest of the teachers and the students and the entire school community, nearly won’t do.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary, *Drivetime*, RTÉ Radio One, July 24

“We want to get back to school – teaching is always a difficult job but I can tell you it has been a much more difficult job when trying to do it remotely. Teachers, our members, have done huge, huge work in supporting students as best can be

done remotely. So, we do want to go back but we want to go back safely. The other thing that is very, very important, is that it must be sustainable – you know, we can’t have this for sort of two or three months because as we move into the normal flu season shall we say, there will undoubtedly be absences. We went into work with colds, flus, and that was fine; that can’t happen now, you can’t take the chance.”

Deirdre Mac Donald, then ASTI President, *Newstalk Breakfast*, Newstalk, July 27

“Students will be anchored in base classrooms, and the teachers will circulate to them. Now there are challenges with that. One, we need to be careful about supervision and that’s why I’m very glad that there’s extra provision of supervision. Another thing I’m concerned about, is what about student movement in the classroom? It’s very hard to tell a young person that they have to stay seated in a room for six hours a day.

If in August I’m still looking for teachers that’s nothing new for me. Unfortunately, this recruitment crisis is not a new situation, but we’ll do our best.”

Sarah Green, ASTI member and Principal of St. Dominic’s College, Ballyfermot, *Primetime*, RTÉ One, July 28



“Ireland has experienced a serious shortage of second-level teachers in recent years. The main reasons for this are the high levels of precarious teaching contracts and pay inequality for those who began their careers after 2010. This is why schools are in trouble now, and they are worried they won’t get the teachers. Over the last ten years, working conditions for newly qualified teachers have been so bad, with the difference in pay, and also when some teachers start working, they are given a five to six hours per week [contract]. There must be an emphasis on offering secure teaching contracts with full-time hours.”

Ann Piggott, ASTI President, *Irish Examiner*, August 3

“Significant changes in public policy have been introduced regarding the wearing of masks on public transport and in enclosed spaces since the interim recommendations were made in June. The re-opening of schools must be implemented in a sustainable manner. We need to take all possible measures to ensure that schools remain open in a very safe way. This shall also protect the wider community.”

Ann Piggott, ASTI President, *News at 5.30*, Virgin Media, August 7

“I welcome the Government’s increase in the Guidance Counsellor provision. I see the return this year as an opportunity for pupils, teachers and parents to reaffirm their commitment to schools as both an educational and social environment. Distance learning is all very well for a limited period but mixing with your peers is equally if not more important.”

Paul O’Reilly, Standing Committee representative, WLR FM

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SPECIAL LEAVE WITH PAY

As schools reopen in September, teachers may have questions about what will happen if they are diagnosed with Covid-19 or are advised to self-isolate due to Covid-19. Some of the key questions for those diagnosed with Covid-19 or self-isolating are answered below. A more in-depth Q and A about arrangements for re-opening of schools is available on the ASTI website.

What leave is available to me if I am diagnosed with Covid-19 or recommended to self-isolate?

Employees who have been diagnosed with Covid-19 or have been given medical advice to self-isolate will be granted Special Leave with Pay by their employer. The employee must provide HSE/medical certification to their employer to include estimated date of fitness to return to work.

Where an employee has been granted Special Leave with Pay, their employer may appoint a substitute, paid by the Paymaster.

Will Special Leave with Pay affect my Sick Leave record?

Special Leave with Pay granted by the employer will not be counted as part of the employee's Sick Leave record.

Similar to the general principles applying to the management of Sick Leave, the employee must contact their employer as soon as possible, in accordance with the employer's normal absence reporting arrangements. Where circumstances or diagnosis changes, the employee must also inform their employer immediately.

An employee is not entitled to days in lieu of bank holidays while in receipt of Special Leave with Pay.

It is considered good practice in maintaining a positive well-being culture in schools, to have appropriate contact between the employer and the employee during periods of leave. The nature of this contact should focus on the welfare of the employee and the facilitation of a successful return to work.

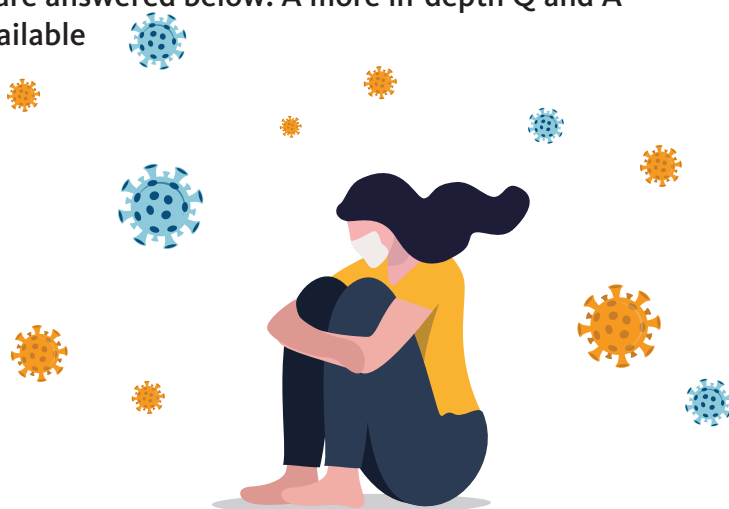
How do I apply for Special Leave with Pay?

If you have been diagnosed with Covid-19 or recommended to self-isolate, in order to apply for Special Leave with Pay you must complete the application form in Appendix A of Circular 0049/2020 and return it to your employer as soon as possible. The completed form must be accompanied by appropriate HSE/medical certification to include estimated date of fitness to return to work. The Application Procedures for Special Leave with Pay together with information on self-isolation, Covid-19 diagnosis and restricted movement are set out in Circular Letter 0049/2020.

If I have been diagnosed with Covid-19 or have been advised to self-isolate, may I still be required to work?

An employee who is medically fit for work and has been advised to restrict his/her movements, or an employee at very high risk of serious illness from contracting Covid-19, is available to work remotely. For more information on those at very high risk of serious illness see Circular 0049/2020.

The work assigned to the employee should be determined by their employer, in consultation with the employee, and may include relevant duties that support the work of the school in developing and delivering its programmes of teaching and learning for pupils. For teachers, these duties may include:



- liaising closely with and supporting the work of the substitute teacher(s) who becomes responsible for the teaching duties of the teacher on Special Leave with Pay
- supporting and engaging, using online technology, the work and progress of very high risk or extremely vulnerable pupils who are unable to attend school
- participating in staff meetings, team/subject planning meetings and all other normal meetings using online technology
- participating in relevant professional development through online media
- developing aspects of the school's teaching resources or teaching plans, and
- undertaking administrative or other tasks associated with a post of responsibility (provided they hold the post in line with relevant DES publications) to the greatest extent possible using online technology.

ASTI work to represent teachers with underlying health conditions

Deirdre Mac Donald (Immediate Past President) and Conor McDonald (Industrial Relations Official) represent the ASTI on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Health and Safety Committee. A significant cause for concern has been the working conditions of people with underlying health concerns and the fear that many could fall through the gaps in employment or face discriminatory conditions. An absence of provisions for workers who are at higher risk of Covid-related health problems has been highlighted by the ICTU Health and Safety Committee and special provisions have been sought from the Government's Return to Work Protocols to protect those individuals.

For more information see the ASTI website and Circular Letter 0049/2020, which sets out key arrangements for employees on the re-opening of schools.

THE NEW REALITY OF UNCERTAINTY

The new normal of Covid has also had an impact on retired teachers.

The new reality of uncertainty marks the return to another school year. This year the Covid-19 restrictions, following the unprecedented school closures in March, on health and safety grounds, created a new normal for everyone. With the new public health protocols in place, it is hoped that the learning process during this new school year continues safely and without interruption.

This new normal is also reflected in the RSTA community. The easing of restrictions and the meeting with grandchildren and loved ones, after weeks of lockdown, was a veritable psychological boost; it re-emphasised the value of human contact with friends and loved ones. The wonders of e-contact were a necessary aid but only a substitute to ease isolation. The retired members who are fit and well are still among the most at-risk groups in society if infected by coronavirus; pupils, teachers and household members with underlying health issues are equally vulnerable.

This insidious virus has demonstrated the delicate balance of life and the importance of one's personal responsibility to maintain good health and protection. Accordingly, the National Committee has drawn up a plan to deal with the routine business of the RSTA while cancelling the National Conference 2020. Office holders have volunteered to continue in their positions, and e-communication has been substituted for meetings.

Directives have been sent to local branches emphasising the importance of adhering to the advice of the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE). Summer outings and coffee mornings, etc., fall within this remit; social distancing, wearing of face masks, coughing and sneezing etiquette, are



Nora Hawkes with flowers presented by Joan Eason on behalf of the President, National Committee and members of the RSTA. Roses were also presented by the Limerick Branch of RSTA.

necessary pre-requisites. Branch AGMs, due to be held before the end of November, have been cancelled for another year.

Local branches continue to maintain contact with colleagues and welcome new members. Thanks to the Limerick Branch for marking the 100th birthday of Nora Hawkes, within the regulations. It was a source of jubilation to all her family, friends and colleagues. She hopes to attend, as usual, the Annual Conference 2021.

RSTA membership application/renewal

Name:

Address:

Home phone:

Mobile:

Email:

RSTA branch:

Annual subscription: €24
Annual renewal date: September 1

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

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

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

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

Standing order set-up form

Please complete in **BLOCK CAPITALS** using black or blue pen.

To: The Manager (Bank name and full address)

I hereby authorise and request you to DEBIT my account:

Account name/s:

IBAN BIC

And to credit the account of:

RETIRED SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

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

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

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

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

Member name and RSTA branch

Signature: Date: ___/___/20___

BECOME A CERTIFIED STORY EXCHANGE FACILITATOR

Narrative 4 Ireland's The Empathy Project is funded by Social Innovation Fund Ireland. It provides free training to secondary school teachers and youth workers to run the Story Exchange in their classrooms and in other youth settings.

The Story Exchange is an evidence-based methodology, which teaches young people social and emotional skills, and improves well-being. The Story Exchange increases peer support and instils a sense of resilience and belonging by reducing feelings of isolation. Getting young people to share stories breaks down barriers, builds trust and reinforces the idea that they are not alone.

The Certified Professional Development training typically consists of a one-day training programme. This is now available online as a virtual training programme and upon completion participants will be able to deliver story exchanges in settings such as classrooms, youth centres, and online via Zoom. The training entails approximately four hours of self-directed learning modules, participation in a two-hour virtual story exchange, and approximately two hours of follow-up workshops, webinars and support conversations. This can take place over consecutive days or over the course of a two- to three-week period. Ongoing follow-up support is provided at no cost to participants.

For more information see <https://narrative4.com/ireland/> or email rachel@narrative4.ie.

POST-PRIMARY TEACHERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

Post-primary teachers are needed for a research project that aims to explore the experience of teachers who would describe themselves as non-religious and who have applied for teaching posts and/or promotion in schools that have a stated religious ethos. (The term 'non-religious' includes those who might describe themselves as 'non-believers' or 'non-practicing', as well as those who would designate themselves as 'atheist', 'humanist' or 'secular'.)

Participants must:

- consider themselves as 'non-religious' currently and at the time of application for a teaching post or a promotion
- be teaching, or have applied to teach, in a post-primary school on the island of Ireland that has a stated religious ethos – this can be denominational (e.g., 'Catholic') or non-denominational (e.g., 'Christian'), and
- be willing to be interviewed about their experience.

If you fit the criteria and would consider taking part, please get in touch with James or Catherine, who will provide you with a Participant Information Sheet. Once you receive the Participant Information Sheet you can then make an informed choice about whether to get involved – only then will you be asked to give your formal consent to taking part.

Confidentiality and anonymity

If you do decide to take part, you or your school will not be named or identifiable in any reports or publications associated with this project. To participate, or for further information, please contact Dr James Nelson, Queen's University Belfast, email: j.nelson@qub.ac.uk, or Dr Catherine Stapleton, Mary Immaculate College, email: catherine.stapleton@mic.ul.ie.

IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM GAISCE

In light of the impact of Covid-19 on schools, Gaisce – The President's Award has introduced a number of allowances to aid President Award Leaders (PALs) in:

- completing Gaisce participants affected by the Covid-19 lockdown in, and
- supporting incoming participants for the new academic year.

A letter will be posted to all PALs and principals in September from Yvonne McKenna, CEO of Gaisce – The President's Award, with further details of these allowances, including flexibility on the Adventure Journey requirements at Bronze and Silver levels. Speaking about the changes, Yvonne McKenna, said: "Gaisce, by its very design, is flexible and adaptable to the young person's goals and ambitions. The year ahead has some very particular and specific challenges, and we'd like to reassure all Gaisce PALs that we are here to help". She continued: "Since March, we've seen Gaisce participants rise to the *Gaisce at Home/Gaisce Sa Bhaile* challenge, continuing to learn new skills, support their local community, and keep physically active. But we understand it hasn't been possible for everyone to keep up their Award. This is why we have created new allowances for those who are close to completing, to help get them over the line".

If you require any assistance or advice, contact your regional development officer directly, or email mail@gaisce.ie.


Holocaust Education Trust Ireland



The Crocus Project

Registration is now open for 2020/21
Participation is FREE!

Remembering all of the children who were murdered in the Holocaust. Schools from 12 countries across Europe take part in The Crocus Project. Teachers can post messages, share photographs and swap stories of their experiences of The Crocus Project on our Facebook group The Crocus Club.

For more information and to download a registration form, visit our website
hetireland.org/programmes/crocus-project/

HETI will send the crocus bulbs and teachers packs to schools in early October.

Co-funded by the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union and Supported by the Department of Education and Skills Ireland




For further information please contact:
Holocaust Education Trust Ireland,
Clifton House, Lower Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.
Tel: + 353 1 6690593 Email: info@hetireland.org www.hetireland.org

Win

€250

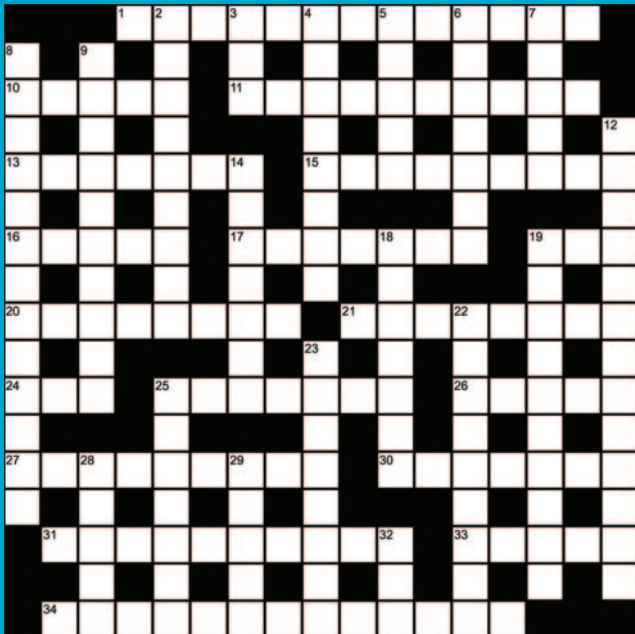


Sponsored by  Cornmarket

ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 2004

The winner will receive €250 in One4All vouchers.

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



Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: ASTIR Crossword No. 2004, Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, September 26, 2020.

ACROSS

1. Live like an unhappy lassie (4,1,4,4)
10. Texas battle of 1836 (5)
11. Long, pointed fencing equipment (6,4)
13. Broad streets or roads (7)
15. Likeable, easy to get on with (9)
16. Hebrew name for God of the Old Testament (5)
17. Worn away by friction (7)
19. Common people, masses: ... polloi (3)
20. On an unspecified future occasion (8)
21. Big gun rules church (5,3)
24. Widdecombe or Bancroft (3)
25. Measurement of land for agricultural purposes (7)
26. Sounds like a dangerous discovery in an oyster (5)
27. Doctrinarians imposing harsh regime with not a stir! (9)
30. Japanese delicacy or raw fish often eaten with soy sauce (7)
31. Daft auntie has fallen in love (10)
33. Unit of heat (5)
34. 1996 'Song for Europe' entry, written by Neil Hannon (2,6,5)

DOWN

2. Salary or fee from employment or office (9)
3. Bad, coarse fish (3)
4. Ridiculously small, inadequate (8)
5. Single ambient light (5)
6. Area below sea level (7)
7. Main language of Iran (5)
8. Syrian scandal for Spanish holiday (6,7)
9. Person receiving instruction in preparation for baptism (10)
12. He played the radio DJ in *Good Morning Vietnam* (5,8)
14. Ms McRea may take your money (7)
18. Makes numb or renders soundproof (7)
19. One who behaves in a wild and unacceptable way (10)
22. Could happiest fools be very different? Not half (9)
23. Most basic or important part of something (8)
25. Main ingredient of guacamole (7)
28. Bug, vex, irk (5)
29. Toughen, accustom to hardship (5)
32. Pair (3)

Solution to ASTIR Crossword No. 2003

Across	Down
1. Pieces of eight	2. Innuendos
10. Ellen	3. CAD
11. Dark energy	4. Sprocket
13. Endless	5. Fleet
15. Catalonia	6. Ideally
16. Yield	7. Hogan
17. Overpay	8. Seven-year itch
19. Uno	9. Bludgeoned
20. Agnus Dei	12. Cat o' nine tails
21. Graffiti	14. Soonest
24. IED	18. Pergola
25. Satchmo	19. Uniformity
26. Crone	22. Factorial
27. Coalminer	23. Charisma
30. Anosmia	25. Sampled
31. Zoologists	28. Alone
33. Intel	29. Nigel
34. Ten dollar bill	32. Sob

Did you miss?

ASTI Convention 2020	18
New to teaching	24

Check out our Irish Aid Centre online resources and workshops at:
<https://www.irishaid.ie/teaching-and-learning/postprimary/>



Ireland's commitment to a world without poverty and hunger

SCHOOL WORKSHOPS ON IRELAND'S ROLE IN FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY AND HUNGER



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development



**For:
Transition Year
CSPE
Junior Cycle
Senior Cycle**

The Irish Aid Centre is currently closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We look forward to seeing you back in the Centre in January, subject to public health advice.

Until then, check out the online resources and workshops at:
<https://www.irishaid.ie/teaching-and-learning/postprimary/>

Over 6,000 teachers and learners from 137 schools visited the Irish Aid Centre in 2019, now we're going online!



Students from St. Mac Dara's Community College, Templeogue enjoy an Irish Aid workshop

To make a booking:
Contact
E Irishaidcentre@dfa.ie

Irish Aid Centre
3 Clonmel Street (off Harcourt St.)
Dublin 2
www.irishaid.ie

Protecting Teachers

It's in our DNA!



Save €80 on your Car & Home Insurance

Offers apply when you buy a new car or home insurance policy online.* Your policy must start between 01/06/20 and 31/08/20. Car discounts subject to a minimum premium of €39976.

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€100 Cashback**

When you purchase or renew a car, home or health insurance policy up until 31st August and also purchase a new Life Product within the following 2 months. Offer available between 27th April 2020 and 31st August 2020. Top ups to existing Life policies are not eligible for the offer.

For more information on the terms and conditions of each offer go to:

cornmarket.ie/covid-special-offers



To learn more
visit [Cornmarket.ie](https://cornmarket.ie)

*Discounts are applied at quotation stage, apply in year one only and are inclusive of Government levy. We are unable to issue discounts retrospectively. The online discount is only available to new car or home insurance customers of Cornmarket. Only one discount can be used with each eligible proposal.

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