

ASTIR

ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS, IRELAND

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The *ASTIR* Editorial Board is interested in receiving feedback on *ASTIR*.

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

ASTI action on cyberbullying of teachers

Following reports of members being targeted online, the ASTI established a Digital Rights Sub-Committee in 2023. The Sub-Committee examined cases of cyberbullying, harassment, and non-consensual sharing of harmful online content. The Sub-Committee engaged with Coimisiún na Meán and An Garda Síochána to develop practical supports for members affected by work-related abuse online. In January, the ASTI launched a digital rights resource (www.asti.ie/digitalrights), supported by a poster circulated to schools and reproduced in this issue. I encourage all members to familiarise themselves with this resource and their rights. Online abuse of any teacher, simply because they are a teacher, is unacceptable.

New year, same issues

As 2026 begins, Ireland continues to face a severe shortage of teachers, making it increasingly difficult for schools to deliver quality education. Principals and deputy principals are tied up resolving vacancy issues instead of leading their school communities. Smaller classes, more staff, and manageable workloads are essential for the future of education. While calling for more teachers during a shortage may seem counter-intuitive, under-resourced schools are worsening recruitment and retention. Graduates must be offered quality jobs in well-supported schools, and current staff deserve sustainable careers.

It is vital that ASTI members engage with Senior Cycle Redevelopment public consultations on new and revised subject specifications. The consultation period on the draft specifications for my own subject, Design and Communication Graphics, is currently underway, closing on Friday, January 23. ASTI is encouraging members to get involved in NCCA Senior Cycle Redevelopment consultations on subject specifications and programmes, including elective modules for the Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes, closing at 5.00pm on Friday, January 23. The consultation period for Music runs from January 5 until March 2. Please have your say and represent the vital teacher voice. We have fought hard to ensure that all members of Subject Development Groups have full access to this feedback. It is essential to safeguard our subjects. I recently attended the Institute of Education, DCU CREATE-sponsored Teacher Occupational Wellbeing think tank, a collaborative initiative exploring the causes, impacts, and solutions to teacher burnout. Teaching is an incredibly busy and stressful profession, with 86% of teachers reporting moderate to high levels of personal burnout. In this context, I wish all teachers a happy, healthy, and successful new year. Enjoy your teaching and take care of yourself in the year ahead.



Padraig Curley

ASTI President

National Education Convention – opportunity knocks?

The National Education Convention being held this year represents an opportunity to reflect critically on the future direction of education in Ireland. For the ASTI, meaningful engagement in this process must be grounded in the lived realities of teachers working daily in post-primary schools, under increasingly challenging conditions. While dialogue is welcome, the Convention must move beyond aspirational rhetoric and confront systemic issues that continue to undermine educational quality, equity, and sustainability.

Teachers are central to any successful education system. Yet, the profession is experiencing escalating workload, chronic staffing shortages and inadequate resourcing. These issues directly affect students' educational experiences and outcomes. From an ASTI perspective, any discussion about what is 'working well' must also honestly acknowledge the pressures placed on schools by overcrowded classrooms, insufficient special education supports, and a growing administrative burden that detracts from teaching and learning.

The Convention's focus on transitions within education is particularly relevant at post-primary level. Transitions from primary to secondary, between Junior and Senior Cycle, and to further education are increasingly shaped by assessment overload and a narrowing of the curriculum. The ASTI has consistently raised concerns about reforms that proceed without adequate resourcing or regard for teacher workload. Redevelopment should be meaningful, properly funded, and respectful of teachers' perspectives. This has not been our experience.

Representation is another key concern. It is essential that teachers' voices are not diluted within broader stakeholder groupings. Teachers bring collective expertise and a deep understanding of how policy decisions translate into classroom practice. Genuine social dialogue requires that teacher unions are listened to, not merely consulted, and that their contributions meaningfully influence outcomes. The ASTI also emphasises the importance of education as a public good. The Convention should resist market-driven approaches that frame education primarily in terms of skills for economic competitiveness. While preparation for work is important, education must also foster critical thinking, creativity, citizenship, and social justice. Public investment, democratic governance, and respect for the professionalism of teachers are essential to achieving these aims. Finally, the value of the Convention will ultimately be measured by its impact. If the Convention is to inform a new long-term strategy, there must be a clear commitment to implementation, transparency, and ongoing engagement with education unions. The ASTI will engage constructively with the Education Convention, while continuing to advocate firmly for teachers and their students. Real progress requires not only listening to teachers, but acting on what they say. Further information is available at the link below:

www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/campaigns/convention-on-education-and-national-conversation/



Kieran Christie

ASTI General Secretary

Fáilte curtha roimh thacaíochtaí don Ghaeilge, ach níl aghaidh tugtha go fóill ar mhéid na ranganna

Supports for Irish welcome, but class size remains unaddressed

D'fhoilsigh an Roinn Oideachais agus Óige Plean Gnímh don Ghaeilge i Scoileanna Meán-Bhéarla i mí na Samhna 2025.

Tá sé mar aidhm ag an bPlean feabhas a chur ar theagasc, ar fhoghlaím, agus ar úsáid na Gaeilge do bhreis is 900,000 dalta i scoileanna meán-bhéarla trí: mheonta dearfacha i leith na Gaeilge a chothú, úsáid na Gaeilge a mhéadú, thacú le rochtain ag gach leanbh agus duine óg ar fhoghlaím na Gaeilge, agus thacaíochtaí don Ghaeilge a chomhtháthú.

Cuirfear tacaíochtaí ar fáil faoin bPlean Gnímh lena n-áirítear deiseanna foghlama gairmiúla do mhúinteoirí, forbairt acmhainní, agus deiseanna níos fearr a chruthú do leanaí agus do dhaoine óga chun an Ghaeilge a úsáid.

Dúirt Uachtarán ASTI Padraig Curley, cé go gcuireann sé fáilte roimh thacaíochtaí nua do mhúineadh agus d'fhoghlaím na Gaeilge, go bhfuil easpa sonraí ann maidir le conas a mhaoineofar cuspóirí agus gníomhartha. Dúirt Uachtarán ASTI freisin gur constaic mhór atá roimh mhúinteoirí Gaeilge i méid na ranganna; saincheist nach bhfuil pléite sa Phlean Gnímh: "Léirigh an taighde is déanaí a rinne ASTI ar mhéid na ranganna go bhfuil 26 dalta nó níos mó i mbreis is 40% de ranganna Gaeilge na Sraithe Sóisearaí, agus go bhfuil idir 21 agus 25 dalta i mbéagnach 40% díobh. Agus béim mhéadaithe ar an nGaeilge labhartha sa tSraith Shóisearach agus sa tSraith Shinsearach araon, ní mór aghaidh a thabhairt ar cheist na ranganna móra".

Tá polasaí nua foilsithe ag an Roinn freisin, maidir le hoideachas lán-Ghaeilge lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht. Gníomh lánach den pholasáí is ea bunú Tascfhórsa ar Mhúnlai Soláthair don Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge.

Bhí forbairt an Phlean Gnímh don Ghaeilge i Scoileanna Meán-Bhéarla treoraithe ag próiseas leathan comhairliúcháin náisiúnta. Ghlac beagnach 700

rannpháirtí páirt, lena n-áirítear 200 páirtí leasmhar náisiúnta agus breis is 500 duine aonair ar leibhéal na scoile – ina measc leanaí, daoine óga, múinteoirí, ceannairí scoile, agus tuismitheoirí.

Is suntasach gur leanaí agus daoine óga iad breis is leath de na rannpháirtithe ar leibhéal na scoile. Chun na dearcthaí seo a ghabháil, d'uillmhaigh SEALBHÚ in Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath dhá mhiontuarascáil.

Beidh an Plean Gnímh don Ghaeilge i Scoileanna Meán-Bhéarla i bhfeidhm ó 2025 go 2027, faoi stiúir na Roinne Oideachais agus Óige i gcomhpháirtíocht le scoileanna, múinteoirí, tuismitheoirí, daoine óga, agus eagraíochtaí Gaeilge.

Déanfar príomhbhearta a phíolótú i réigiúin roghnaithe sula gcuirfear i bhfeidhm iad go forleathan, agus socrófar athbhreithnithe agus tuarascálacha meastóireachta bliantúla cuntasach a dheimhniú.

Tá an cur chuige céimnithe seo ceaptha chun cleachtais inbhuanaithe a leabú agus feabhsuithe intomhaiste a bhaint amach i múineadh, i bhfoghlaim, agus in úsáid laethúil na Gaeilge.

gluais – glossary

rochtain – access

comhtháthú – integration

gníomhartha – activities

páirtí leasmhar – interested parties

dearcthaí – viewpoints

intomhaiste – measurable

Beidh an Plean Gnímh don Ghaeilge i Scoileanna Meán-Bhéarla i bhfeidhm ó 2025 go 2027.

Le haghaidh tuilleadh eolais, téigh chuig:

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/2f2e9823/IrishInSchoolsReportEnglish_s_P.pdf

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/db58465e/Policy_for_Irish-Medium_Education_outside_of_the_Gaeltacht29.pdf

<https://www.gov.ie/ga/an-roinn-oideachais/foirseachain/plean-gnimh-don-ghaeilge-i-scoileanna-mean-bhearla/>



Photo credit: Department of Education and Youth

New Minister for Education and Youth

Having formerly served as Minister of State attending Cabinet at the Department of Children, Disability and Equality with special responsibility for Disability, Hildegard Naughton TD has been appointed Minister for Education and Youth. Minister Naughton also previously served as Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach as Government Chief Whip, and at the Department of Education with responsibility for Special Education and Inclusion. She has also served as Minister of State in the Departments of Transport, Health, and Justice.

Minister Naughton was first elected as a TD in 2016. She has served on a number of Oireachtas committees, including the Committee on the Future of Healthcare, and the Committee on Arrangements for Budgetary Scrutiny. In 2016 she was appointed as Chair of the Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment. Minister Naughton was a primary school teacher and was elected to Galway City Council in 2009, later becoming mayor of the city in 2011-2012. She also served in Seanad Éireann from 2013 to 2016.

Teacher shortages are a “threat to young people’s education”, ASTI warns Oireachtas Committee

The ASTI has warned the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education that Ireland’s teacher recruitment and retention crisis is no longer a temporary fluctuation, but a systemic challenge that threatens the quality and equity of education for students.

Addressing the Committee, ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie told members that ASTI/RedC research showed that two-thirds of school leaders had reported having unfilled vacancies despite multiple rounds of advertising. Approximately three-quarters of schools said they had sought applicants for posts that ultimately attracted no candidates.

In its submission, the ASTI called for a series of measures to tackle the shortages. These included: improved access to full-time, permanent posts for new teachers and those returning from abroad, as well as reducing the Professional Master of Education (PME) from two years to one year to lower financial and time barriers for new teachers.

The ASTI also sought a shortening of the teachers’ pay scale, the restoration of key allowances and the recognition of relevant overseas experience for returning teachers. Additionally, the ASTI urged the restoration of promotional posts to ensure adequate middle management in schools and to make teaching a more sustainable career.



Furthermore, the ASTI called for targeted housing for key workers, including ring-fenced affordable accommodation to help stabilise the workforce.

ASTI Global Solidarity Seminar

The ASTI Global Solidarity Committee (GSC), established in 2022, will host its inaugural ASTI Global Solidarity Seminar in the Hotel Riu Plaza, Dublin, on Saturday, February 28, 2026.

This seminar will focus on humanitarian issues across the world, and educational and other challenges being experienced in war-torn countries, among other subjects. A number of guest speakers, both Irish and international, will present on various topics of importance. The ASTI has signed up to Comhlámh’s ‘Say No to Orphanages’ campaign. Comhlámh will be in attendance, outlining why, although well intentioned, orphanage volunteering and visits help to sustain a system that puts children at risk and harms their long-term development.

The seminar will strive to be as inclusive as possible of those attending, and there will be many Q&A opportunities throughout the day, as well as a highly engaging panel discussion with a number of interesting guests speaking on contemporary humanitarian issues. Branches are invited to each nominate two delegates to attend this seminar. Attend your January branch meeting to be nominated to attend.

The brief of the ASTI GSC is outlined in its terms of reference. It aims to:

- raise awareness among ASTI members of the challenges faced by teachers and their representative associations across the globe,
- promote the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”,



- promote the principle of equality in all aspects of education and the teaching profession globally,
- promote the right to education,
- promote the rights of workers, especially teachers, and their unions where they are being victimised and/or denied human rights or trade union rights,
- enable the ASTI to express solidarity on humanitarian issues, in the context of global challenges such as world poverty, growing inequality, human rights abuses, denial of trade union rights, and climate crisis, and
- support the rights of children, both nationally and internationally, to education, to water, to food, to shelter, to medical assistance, and to freedom from violence and murder.



Senior Cycle update

Last May, ASTI members voted to reject the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures*. Following this, the ASTI referred the matter to the dispute resolution mechanisms of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026.

After an initial dispute resolution process (which did not result in agreement between the ASTI and the Department of Education and Youth), the dispute was referred to the Teachers' Conciliation Council, as provided for in the process.

As this *ASTIR* goes to print, the ASTI is engaging with the Department under the auspices of a facilitator from the Workplace Relations Commission.

In parallel with this, the ASTI continues to seek to negotiate substantially improved supports for schools and teachers for the implementation of Senior Cycle Redevelopment.

The ASTI has consistently raised the key concerns of its members, including:

- the continuing lack of clarity regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in Leaving Certificate Additional Assessment Components (AACs), including authentication issues,
- the inappropriateness of the allocation of 40% for the AACs in some subjects,
- the reported lack of adequate laboratory storage space for AAC projects/laboratory equipment, and lack of access to laboratories and IT facilities in many schools,
- the inadequacy of the current Science Laboratory Health and Safety Guidance (1998, amended 2001),
- the lack of adequate and timely training for teachers,
- workload issues and lack of professional time,
- the need to spread assessment loads for students, and
- concerns about the exacerbation of inequality among students.

AI concerns

The ASTI has expressed its significant concern at the manner in which the issue of use of AI by students completing AACs is being addressed.

In October 2025, the Department of Education and Youth published the Guidance on Artificial Intelligence in Schools.

The following month, November 2025, the State Examinations Commission published Coursework Rules and Procedures 2025-2026.

Neither of these publications sufficiently addresses ASTI concerns

regarding teacher authentication of Leaving Cert coursework, potential inequities between students as a result of access to/use of AI in AACs, and the implications of AI use in AACs for the integrity of the Leaving Cert.

Tranche 1 and 2 subjects

The ASTI continues to press for early access to resources for teachers implementing new/revised subject specifications under Senior Cycle Redevelopment. Teachers of Tranche 1 subjects have now received:

- AAC guidelines,
- four sample examination papers (two Higher Level, two Ordinary Level),
- State Examinations Commission Coursework Rules and Procedures,
- sample Additional Assessment Component Briefs (eight subjects), and
- Tranche 1 AAC briefs (for students sitting the Leaving Cert in 2027) are being circulated this month (January 2026).

Teachers of Tranche 2 subjects have now received:

- AAC guidelines (except English and Accounting).

Sample exam papers for Tranche 2 subject specifications will be circulated in April 2026. The introduction of English and Accounting subject specifications has been postponed until at least September 2027. All other Tranche 2 subject specifications remain scheduled for implementation from September 2026.

CPD for Tranche 1 and 2 specifications

Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 professional learning is continuing throughout January 2026.

ASTI members are asked to provide realistic feedback at the end of any professional learning event (via feedback forms provided), so that any concerns of ASTI members arising from the CPD can be considered.

Tranche 3 and 4 subjects

Tranche 3 and 4 subject specifications are in development and/or consultation stages. See page 8 of this edition of *ASTIR* for further information, including a list of the consultation processes that are currently open.

Senior Cycle Redevelopment – call to action!

Engaging with the public consultation on Senior Cycle Redevelopment is your chance to influence the future of your subject.

It is vital that ASTI members engage with Senior Cycle Redevelopment public consultations on new/revised subject specifications. The ASTI has fought for and achieved access to all submissions made during public consultations for members of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) subject development groups (SDGs).

The ASTI’s achievement of full access for SDGs means that your feedback to the consultation process as an individual teacher is more important than ever.

Following a lengthy campaign by the ASTI, the NCCA has arranged to provide access to the feedback and submissions made by individuals and groups to NCCA SDGs (from September 2025). ASTI representatives and other teachers sit on the SDGs. These groups play a key role in decision-making about new/revised subject specifications for the Leaving Cert, and it is vital that they have access to all relevant information.

The ASTI’s achievement of full access for SDGs means that your feedback to the consultation process as an individual teacher is more important than ever. If your subject is currently up for (or due to be up for) an NCCA public

It is teachers who will be tasked with implementing new subject specifications, and this is your chance to influence what is taught and learned in your classroom in the near future.

consultation process, please make sure to engage with that process. It is teachers who will be tasked with implementing new subject specifications, and this is your chance to influence what is taught and learned in your classroom in the near future.

The ASTI regularly posts information and links to current consultation processes on the ASTI website and social media channels.

ASTI Curriculum and Assessment page:

<https://www.asti.ie/education-and-curriculum/curriculum-and-assessment/>

Draft curriculum specification consultation currently open:

- Design and Communication Graphics – closes January 23, 2026: <https://ncca.ie/en/updates-and-events/consultations/>
- Music – closes March 2, 2026: <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/music/>

In addition, the public consultation on the remaining elective modules that will form part of the complete suite of curriculum areas and elective modules for the Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes is open until 5.00pm on Friday, January 23, 2026.

Draft curriculum specification consultations not yet open (at time of going to print):

Tranche 3

- Agricultural Science
- History
- Home Economics
- Mathematics
- Physics and Chemistry

Tranche 4

- Art
- Economics
- Gaelige
- French
- German
- Italian
- Spanish
- Politics and Society
- Technology

ASTI membership increases

ASTI membership has increased by 805 members over the past year: from 20,212 at the end of 2024 to 21,017 at the end of 2025.

The union now has its highest number of members since its foundation in 1909.

2025

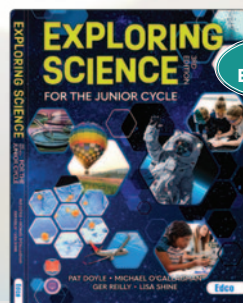
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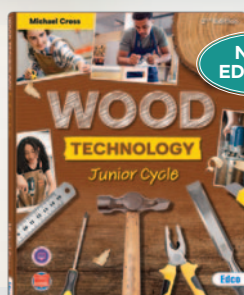
JC Irish



JC Science



JC French



JC Wood Technology



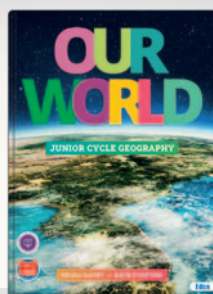
JC English



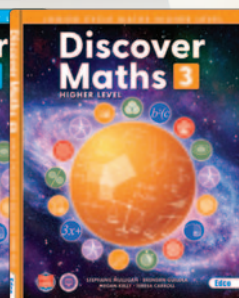
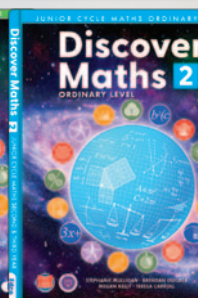
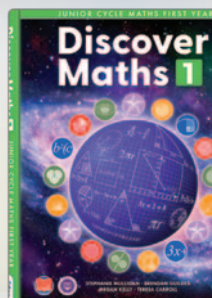
JC Spanish



JC French



JC Geography



JC Maths

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Artificial intelligence classrooms: a European perspective

While the spread of AI in education is inevitable, teachers – through their unions – can shape its impact on teaching and learning. Article by ASTI General Secretary KIERAN CHRISTIE.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is already shaping how lessons are planned, how students complete work, how assessments are designed, and how schools interact with technology companies.

By engaging collectively – locally, nationally and at European level – Irish teachers can ensure that AI is used ethically, democratically, and in ways that genuinely support teaching and learning. AI is not just a technology issue. It is a trade union issue, a professional issue and a public education issue.

Across Europe, including Ireland, governments and education authorities are rapidly adopting AI tools, often in partnership with big tech firms. For teachers and ASTI members, this moment presents both risks and opportunities, and it demands active union engagement. One clear message from recent European discussions within the European Trade

Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) is that AI is not just another ‘edtech trend’.

It challenges core aspects of teaching: professional autonomy, workload, assessment integrity, equity, data protection, and democratic governance. Decisions made now will shape the working lives of teachers for decades.

Many Irish teachers are already using AI, whether formally or informally. International data suggests that around one in three teachers now use AI tools, yet three-quarters say they lack adequate training. This gap is critical. Without clear guidance, training and safeguards, AI risks increasing workload, undermining professional judgement, or introducing tools that are poorly aligned with classroom realities.

At the same time, education authorities across Europe are developing AI guidelines and frameworks, often without full engagement through traditional social dialogue. This means that teachers’ voices are not shaping how AI is introduced, evaluated or regulated.

Most AI tools used in education are developed by multinational tech companies based outside Europe.

These companies set the rules: how algorithms are trained, what data is collected, and how tools evolve over time. Teachers and schools have little control over this.

There are also serious concerns about data protection, digital rights and the long-term risk of ‘tech lock-in’, where schools become dependent on a single provider.



AI is not just a technology issue. It is a trade union issue, a professional issue and a public education issue.

The ETUCE position is that education unions must move from reacting to AI to shaping it. That starts with organising internally: listening to members' experiences, building shared expertise, and ensuring that teachers have access to training and reliable information.

It also means using all available mechanisms to insist that AI policies are negotiated, not imposed.

Practically, this can include:

- demanding clear limits on AI use,
- negotiating protections around workload, data privacy and professional autonomy, and
- ensuring that AI supports inclusion and does not widen inequalities.

AI will be part of education whether teachers shape it or not. The difference lies in whether AI serves teachers, teaching and learning, or serves primarily commercial interests.

By engaging collectively – locally, nationally and at European level – Irish teachers can ensure that AI is used ethically, democratically, and in ways that genuinely support teaching and learning. This is not just a technology issue. It is a trade union issue, a professional issue and a public education issue.

ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie holds the Irish “Country Seat” on the European Trade Union Committee for Education, and is also the elected Treasurer.

Department’s Guidance on Artificial Intelligence in Schools – a big disappointment

The Guidance on Artificial Intelligence in Schools issued in October 2025 is naive and will be ineffective at stopping students from submitting AI-generated assignments as their own. It frames AI as something to be used “responsibly and ethically” with human oversight, emphasising AI literacy and aligning with GDPR and EU AI Act requirements.

No effective deterrent for dishonesty

The guidance relies on *ethical use* and *citing AI by students*, but students have no real incentive to admit AI use and every incentive to conceal it in submitted work.

Detection methods are ineffective

Reports explicitly state that current detection approaches “will not work” against sophisticated AI outputs.

Implementation will vary widely across schools

Without clear, consistent policies and resources at school level, teachers are left to struggle on their own.

Teachers feel untrained and unsupported

Many ASTI members report *insufficient formal training in AI*, and the Guidance does not address how to equip educators to assess the *validity* of student submissions or distinguish AI work from student work.

Guidance adds to workload without solutions

Teachers are already overwhelmed. The Guidance adds another layer of expectations around AI literacy, policy design and oversight without practical support, which is frustrating and time-consuming.

Real-world classroom concerns not addressed

Unregulated AI use is already undermining homework, essay writing and project work because students can easily produce material that looks authentic but is not their own.

Professional anxiety and risk

Teachers feel they lack the confidence or authority to evaluate AI use fairly. When current detection methods “will not work”, as experts have said, they fear falsely accusing students and damaging trust.

Wider ethical and practical AI risks ignored

The Guidance does not fully grapple with the genuine classroom issues that teachers have raised, such as data privacy, bias, and unequal access to technology.

In short, many ASTI members see the guidance as too vague, too high level and too resource light to be meaningful, especially when the day-to-day reality is that AI is already being used by students to produce work they do not understand while teachers have no practical framework to manage it.

YOU CAN SAVE MONEY BY JOINING THE ASTI!

Teachers who become members of the ASTI can access a wide range of financial benefits upon joining. Below is a summary of the financial benefits of membership.

ASTI REWARDS FOR NEW MEMBERS



The ASTI/Cornmarket Rewards programme provides exclusive offers, discounts, and freebies to new ASTI members, including:

- 12 months' free access to MyDoc, a service that provides access to a GP via video and phone consultation,
- a collection of discounts on financial products and services administered by Cornmarket,
- access to exclusive competitions and webinars on topics to support financial and personal well-being,
- a free mortgage advice service, and
- a free one-to-one financial health check – including what's in your payslip.

To access the Rewards programme, when applying to join the ASTI, teachers need to tick the opt-in box for Rewards on the ASTI application form.

For more information on ASTI/Cornmarket Rewards, please see: www.Cornmarket.ie/rewards

For more information on the benefits of ASTI membership, please see: www.asti.ie/join/

Cornmarket Group Financial Services Ltd is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

FREE ASTI MEMBERSHIP



New ASTI members in their first year of teaching can enjoy their first year of membership at no cost.* This means that you can enjoy all the benefits (including the financial benefits) for free!

*Subject to criteria.

For more information, please see: www.asti.ie/join/

ASTI STUDY SUPPORTS



The ASTI has a range of study grants, including:

- members undertaking further third-level education can apply for the ASTI Centenary Scholarship, which awards two annual scholarships of €2,000,
- study grants are available for members undertaking certain trade union studies courses, providing funding of up to €1,000 towards approved diploma, certificate or degree programmes, and
- children of ASTI members who are attending or commencing full-time undergraduate third-level courses can enter a draw for a bursary worth €1,000, with five ASTI Annual Student Bursaries awarded each year. The Miriam Duggan ASTI Bursary, worth €5,000, is also awarded annually to one student (child of an ASTI member or staff member) undertaking an undergraduate or PME course leading to a teaching qualification.

TRAVEL INSURANCE



Howden Ireland provides comprehensive travel insurance to ASTI members, ensuring peace of mind – whether it's a single or multi-trip. For ASTI members, the worldwide multi-trip cover premium is €65 for an individual, €81 for a couple, and from €121 for families. However, if you have approved private medical insurance, these premiums will fall by 30% each.

What's covered:

- medical cover up to €10 million,*
- trip cancellation up to €5,000,*
- 24/7 assistance,* and
- baggage protection up to €2,000.*

Exclusive benefits for ASTI members:

- cover available up to 79 years of age,
- over 50 sports and activities free of charge,
- winter sports and scuba diving included free of charge, and
- 30% discount if you have private health insurance.

*Terms and conditions apply.

For more information on travel insurance offered by Howden, call 01-913 1077, or see: www.howdeninsurance.ie/personal/travel/travel-insurance-benefits?utm_source=ASTI&utm_medium=web site&utm_campaign=ASTI

This is not an ASTI scheme. The ASTI advises all members to seek full details on any financial scheme they may be considering.

ASTI AIB AFFINITY CREDIT CARD



The ASTI has partnered with AIB to offer an Affinity credit card with a reduced rate, issued exclusively to ASTI members and staff.

Benefits of the card:

- up to 56 days of interest-free credit,
- special introductory annual interest rate on purchases and balance transfers,*
- cash advance facility,
- 24/7 customer service for lost, stolen, or misused cards,
- non-AIB customers can apply for an ASTI credit card,
- no annual bank fee,** and
- share the benefits with a second card.

*Rates applicable for the first 12 months from account opening date. After 12 months, the interest rate reverts to the monthly rate for purchases applicable to the product at that time.

**Please note that all accounts will be charged an annual Government stamp duty of €30.

Application procedure

To apply for an ASTI AIB credit card, please contact 01-668 5500 or email cc.sales@aib.ie.

Terms and conditions apply. Credit facilities are subject to repayment capacity and financial status and are not available to persons under 18 years of age. Government stamp duty of €30 is charged annually. Allied Irish Banks plc is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

This is not an ASTI scheme. The ASTI advises all members to seek full details on any financial scheme they may be considering.

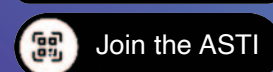
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF ASTI MEMBERSHIP PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE.



This article is part of a series on the financial benefits of ASTI membership. The next article, in the March 2026 edition of *ASTIR*, will cover additional benefits of ASTI membership, such as:

- the ASTI Sickness Fund,
- the Cornmarket car insurance scheme,
- the Cornmarket health insurance comparison service,
- the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme,
- the VHI Scheme, and
- the free financial planning service for ASTI members.

TO JOIN THE ASTI PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE.



MyUnion: information and updates for members

You can access branch information, update your personal details, and find much more on the exclusive members' area of the ASTI website.

The MyUnion section of the ASTI website contains a wealth of information for members. Here is an outline of what's on offer, and updates on new pages in MyUnion.

MyUnion – the members' only area

Teachers who sign up for ASTI membership will be able to access MyUnion, the members' only area of the ASTI website. Once a teacher has created an account, they will find a hub of convenient information about their membership. This includes:

- the personal information the ASTI holds for the teacher, such as their name, phone number, and school,
- the teacher's school steward's name and email address,
- the teacher's industrial relations official's name and their email address,
- the names and email addresses of the teacher's branch, and
- the name and email address of the teacher's Standing Committee Regional Representative.

How to create a MyUnion account

To create a MyUnion account, teachers must first go to www.asti.ie/my-union/ and use the 'Account Activation' prompt. To register for an account, members must ensure that the email address they use to sign up matches the one we have on our membership database. If you do not receive an

activation email, this may be because we do not have your current email address. Contact info@asti.ie or phone 01-604 0160 if you believe this may be the case.

Updating your personal information

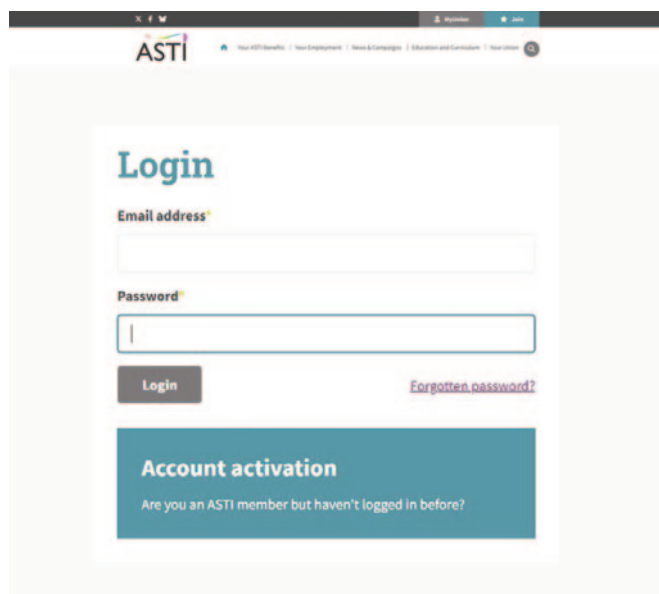
Once a teacher has set up a MyUnion account, they can update their personal details directly in the MyUnion area – for example, their home address – and this change will be reflected in the ASTI's membership database for future correspondence. Members can include the subjects they teach in order to receive relevant notifications, such as subject-specific surveys.

Mailing preferences

Signing up for a MyUnion account will give members the choice of opting in or out of ASTI research surveys, and opting to receive ASTI publications such as *ASTIR* and *Nuacht* via email instead of in hard copy. Members can also access the latest *Members' Updates* through their MyUnion account, and can choose whether to opt in to receive the ASTI wall planner and diary.

Sick leave calculator

A sick leave calculator is available to members who are logged in to their MyUnion account. Simply answer a few questions about what sick leave you have previously taken to calculate your sick leave entitlements.



Additional benefits for activists

Members in activist roles such as school stewards and branch secretaries/chairs receive additional benefits by logging into their MyUnion account.

School stewards

ASTI school stewards can see an up-to-date list of the members in their school, including each member's name, membership number, membership type (Live/Subs Waived/Applicant/Student), and mailing preferences.

School steward circulars page

This page shows school stewards all the recent school steward circulars uploaded to the ASTI website, which they can filter by keyword or year of publication. School stewards can use the filter function to see which members have opted in to receive printed copies of ASTI publications such as *ASTIR* and *Nuacht*. School stewards can also see which members have opted in to receive the ASTI wall planner and diary by using this function.

Branch schools page

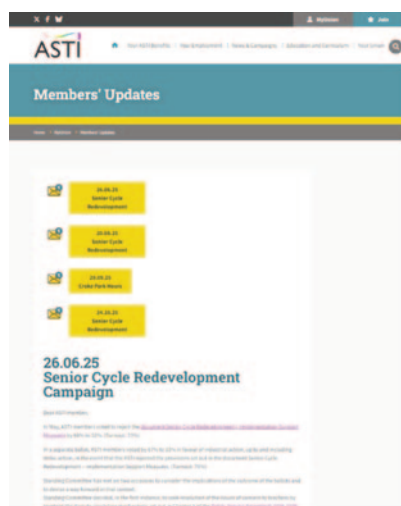
Branch secretaries and branch chairs can view the list of schools in their branch, including each school name and address, school steward name and email address, list of members in each school, their membership number and membership type, ASTI industrial relations official name, and support staff email address(es).

The 'Pending Applications' page is visible to branch secretaries. Here they can view the list of members waiting to be ratified. Branch secretaries must enter the date of the branch meeting at which these members were ratified.

New pages now available in MyUnion

Members' Update

Members can now access the *Members' Update* newsletter in their MyUnion account. The *Members' Update* serves as correspondence from the union on internal matters, and informs members of the latest updates on current issues, such as the Senior Cycle Redevelopment campaign. *Members' Updates* can be accessed by teachers through logging into their MyUnion account. Teachers can find this newsletter by clicking the side bar on the right-hand side of their account page. These updates are regularly emailed to members' inboxes, and members can access all updates that have been sent out to date by logging into MyUnion.



School Stewards' Updates

ASTI school stewards can now access all of the *School Stewards' Updates* on one page. School stewards can find these updates by logging into the MyUnion area and clicking the side bar on the right-hand side of their account page. The updates are regularly emailed to school stewards' inboxes, and they can access all updates that have been sent out to date by logging into MyUnion.

For more information and to sign up for a MyUnion account, please see: www.asti.ie/my-union/



CONSTANT CHANGE IN IRISH SECOND-LEVEL EDUCATION HAMPERS TEACHER AGENCY

Curriculum change without adequate resources, along with initiative overload, is having an enormous impact on teachers' ability to truly meet students' educational needs. Article written by ASTI member CONOR MURPHY. This article was published originally in *Worlds of Education* on August 18, 2025.



Skibbereen Cathedral stands on a hill on the left-hand side of the road as you enter the town. This slight elevation means that you have to walk up two flights of steps to get to the entrance. It also means that, no matter how nice the weather, there's always a breeze, always a slight chill.

During the summer just gone, I found myself standing among staff and students of my secondary school, forming a guard of honour for a student who had sadly passed away. We stood there, under the heat of the sun, listening to a mother's grief carried on the cold breeze. The Cathedral had been packed – the guard of honour, consisting of members of the school community and members of various local organisations, lined the walkway to the hearse and all the way down the main road. Hundreds of people but only one sound.

As I stood there watching students that I teach, that I have taught, following the coffin of their friend, it occurred to me that for some, this was their third funeral, the third funeral of a student attending their school.

More than a place of work

As educators, we are often blinkered in our thinking and approach. Because school is a place of work for us, we often treat it as such for our students. This isn't the case. Our students are living their lives now; we should remember that and try to help them feel fulfilled now, and not just at some vague point in the future.

Teaching has so many moving parts: the intellectual development of the student, giving the student a solid base in the knowledge associated with each of our subjects, and developing their sense of self and the tools for self-expression. But we should also be conscious of creating an environment

where they can laugh, where they can fail, where they can feel frustrated, where they can be confused. A place where they will be challenged but also a place where they feel comfortable, feel safe. A place where they can enjoy the life they are living now.

The question then is, are we in a position to create such an environment? Increasingly, the answer to that, within the Irish context, is no.

Why not?

Irish second-level education has been hampered by an overwhelming number of new initiatives and rapid curriculum redevelopment. Added to this is the failure of previous curriculum change that has not only stymied the depth of education students deserve, but also created an environment of 'subject first, student second' in our classrooms. Second-level education in Ireland is split into two sections: Junior Cycle (from 13 to 15 years old) and Senior Cycle (from 16 to 18 years old). Students sit exams at the end of the Junior Cycle (called the Junior Cycle exams), and again at the end of the Senior Cycle (called the Leaving Certificate). The college course that students can pursue after second-level education is dependent on the grades they get in their Leaving Cert. The Junior Cycle has gone through a major reform, one that

Irish second-level education has been hampered by an overwhelming number of new initiatives and rapid curriculum redevelopment.



Teachers are now in the frustrating position of teaching a botched Junior Cycle and anticipating a similarly flawed Senior Cycle.

has yet to be reviewed. The main issue here is that, although a course may aim for students to “gain enjoyment and [have] continuing personal growth”, the reality is that the exams at the end of the Junior Cycle have piled on more and more content to be covered. Such a laudable aim is now not only impossible but, seemingly, undesirable. Despite the need to reappraise the Junior Cycle, the former Minister for Education and Youth, Norma Foley, decided to speed up the redevelopment of all Senior Cycle (Leaving Cert exam) subjects. After imposing a number of blanket assessment models, she also decided that the redeveloped subjects would be rolled out without any test run to fix unseen issues. Teachers are now in the frustrating position of teaching a botched Junior Cycle and anticipating a similarly flawed Senior Cycle.

A chance for creativity

Drama, Film and Theatre Studies is a new Senior Cycle subject that started in September 2025, a subject where students will find the space to develop their creativity in a way never before seen in Irish second-level education. We’ve never had a drama course, nor a film studies course. This feels like a subject where I will be able to create the environment described above – one where students can laugh and fail in safety. One where students can express themselves and live in the moment.

In order to facilitate the new subject, the Department of Education and Youth promised an abundance of necessary equipment: computers with editing software, cameras, sound equipment, lighting, etc. We were to get these from February 2025, so that teachers could have the classroom set up and familiarise themselves with technology that many of us have never used



before. The first batch finally arrived two months into teaching the new course: cameras and sound recording equipment. But no headphones to listen to the sounds you were recording, and still no computers to actually edit a film together. At the time of writing, we’ve been promised that the headphones and lighting equipment will arrive soon; but there is not a word on computers. This is not conducive to creating a suitable environment for students, and is raising stress levels among myself and my colleagues. And then there is the abundance of new initiatives.

Influx of change

Teachers have been bombarded with initiatives and policy changes. An updated child safeguarding policy, updated dignity in the workplace policy, Bí Cineálta (new anti-bullying policy), well-being initiatives, and many more changes have been presented to us over the last couple of years.

All of these initiatives, taken by themselves, are important, but when they arrive one after another, they become overwhelming. This is not only confusing for teachers, it devalues the initiatives themselves as we struggle to get our heads around exactly what they mean. But, above all, they distract us from our core responsibility – teaching students.

Teachers worried about the volume of subject content, the rushed curriculum changes, and studying an ever-increasing number of policy changes are teachers that are stressed, vulnerable, lack agency, and become less confident in their pedagogy and classroom management.

I’m looking forward to going back to my students. I’m looking forward to teaching them for their future but, more importantly, to creating an environment where they feel that life is continuing, not pausing until they get home. I just wish the Department of Education and Youth would help me and not hinder me.

To read the original article in Education International’s *Worlds of Education*, go to:
www.ei-ie.org/en/item/30196:constant-changes-in-irish-second-level-education-hamper-teacher-agency

A CREAKING SYSTEM



Teacher recruitment and retention, Senior Cycle Redevelopment, and the need for more guidance counsellors were among the issues recently highlighted in the media by the ASTI.

"[On the teacher recruitment and retention crisis] ... There are bigger problems in education than the Department spending €9m on mobile phone pouches. At the top of the list is addressing the teacher recruitment and retention crisis. There is a recruitment and retention crisis in teaching and we have schools that have subjects available but no teachers to teach the subject. That is not a fit-for-purpose education system and that needs to be examined before we look at phone pouches."

Aaron Wolfe, ASTI member

Today with David McCullagh, RTÉ Radio 1, December 10, 2025

"[On the use of drugs among second-level students] Early intervention is the key in this – teachers are on the front line and can see a change in students, whether it's academically, in their mood, or in how they interact with the other students. Teachers notice these things but we're only trained to refer it, and unfortunately there's a lack of resources when it comes to guidance counselling and referrals thereafter; people can be stuck on the usual long waiting lists ... Admitting there's a problem to someone is so important, and sometimes if there's one teacher they trust, that can make a huge difference."

John Byrne, ASTI member and Standing Committee Representative Region 6

The Echo, December 10, 2025

"[On the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme] ASTI members are observing the creaking of the system. Science labs are not ready and unable to cope, and it's going to get worse as time progresses, as the difficulty and the expanded requirements of the courses are rolled out."

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

The Irish Examiner, December 11, 2025

"[On the teacher recruitment and retention crisis] Unfortunately, the Department's approach seems to be waiting for the demographic figures to drop even though we have the highest number of students transitioning from the primary sector to the post-primary one. At the same time, we have high levels of highly qualified teachers emigrating to jurisdictions such as Abu Dhabi in search of better working conditions, better buildings, better resources and better pay."

Padraig Curley, ASTI President

Limerick Today, Limerick's Live 95, December 12, 2025

"[On the teacher recruitment and retention crisis] Our very bright and educated graduate teachers that have spent huge amounts of money and up to six years to get qualified in some cases, are heading off to Abu Dhabi

and other jurisdictions and those countries are benefiting from the education that we as a country have invested in the training of these people. It's a concern for parents and students as well, and as teachers we are advocates for students and we want a great education system. We want the best for our students and it is certainly affecting students in terms of subject choice and large class sizes. I hear a lot of young teachers out there still struggle to get full hours and struggle to get permanent contracts despite this crisis."

Padraig Curley, ASTI President

News, Ocean FM, December 15, 2025

"[On toxic masculinity and adolescent boys] I think we need to support boys. I would obviously agree that digital literacy education is one of the tools, but I have to caution listeners that bringing issues into schools has often been treated as the solution to all of society's problems. We need to be a little more realistic and there must be a full spectrum of support for these measures, including far greater resources for schools. There need to be people like Richard Hogan in schools, and we need many more guidance counsellors."

Padraig Curley, ASTI President

The Hard Shoulder, Newstalk, December 18, 2025

"[On the need for expanded school guidance counselling services] What we are looking for is a restoration in the number of guidance counsellor posts, which were cut between 2011 and 2012. Previously, guidance counsellor posts were ex quota. Every school is entitled to a guidance counsellor and we would like to see a restoration of the number of posts available. We would like to see ring fencing so that the guidance counsellor posts are not included in the teacher allocation numbers that schools get every year."

John Conneely, ASTI Assistant General Secretary: Education and Research

The Agenda, LMFM, December 19, 2025

"[On the teacher recruitment and retention crisis] Two-thirds of school leaders are reporting unfilled vacancies even after multiple rounds of advertising. Seventy-five per cent of schools say they have advertised posts for which there has been no applicant, so there definitely is a problem. There are a lot of reasons as to why teachers are not taking up these posts, and pay and work conditions are important factors, as well as the cost of living and housing, job opportunities in other sectors, and the ability to work abroad, especially for younger teachers."

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

The Pat Kenny Show, Newstalk, December 21, 2025

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SUPPORTING GLOBAL EDUCATION

The ASTI Development Aid Fund helps to support a number of projects in the developing world. Article written by DIARMAID DE PAOR, ASTI Deputy General Secretary.

The ASTI, through its Development Aid Fund, provides support to aid agencies and projects throughout the developing world. In addition to disaster relief in response to war, famine, natural disasters, and other tragedies, the fund aids work that supports development, and in particular, education development.

In 2025, the ASTI made significant donations to many aid organisations working throughout the developing world. Details of some of these donations are outlined below.

Organisations supported in 2025

On March 28, 2025, Myanmar was devastated by a powerful earthquake that struck near Mandalay. The earthquake and aftershocks struck communities already grappling with conflict, mass displacement, and deepening poverty – further intensifying a crisis that had already left more than 6.5 million children in need of humanitarian assistance across the country. The ASTI provided a grant of €10,000 to UNICEF to assist them in their vital work, which includes:

- delivering life-saving supplies, including medical kits, tents, and nutrition products,
- providing temporary access to safe water – primarily through the rapid delivery of water purification supplies – and supplying critical hygiene items,

- distributing essential learning packages and roofing sheets for temporary learning spaces, and
- providing mental health and psychosocial support through child-friendly spaces, community outreach, and trained volunteers.

Some other significant recipients in 2025 have been the following organisations:

- **Action Aid Ireland:** an international charity that works with women and girls living in poverty,
- **Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary:** a group of Catholic religious sisters working across four continents with the poor of the world to shape communities of gentleness, justice, and peace,
- **Ethiopiaid:** an Irish charity that raises funds for local Ethiopian charities to transform lives and achieve lasting change,
- **Street Children of Bucharest:** a Wexford-based charity that provides shelter and support to children living on the streets in Bucharest – a city with one of the highest numbers of street children in Europe, and
- **Vita Impact:** a 36-year-old Irish development organisation delivering climate justice, social impact, and gender equality in Ethiopia and Eritrea through innovative, community-driven programmes.

The ASTI has also made significant donations to Médecins Sans Frontières, Concern, and again to UNICEF to provide support for the long-suffering people of Gaza. These donations amounted to €18,000 in total.



The ASTI Development Aid Fund has contributed funding towards the construction of a secondary school building in the Rothana community in Sierra Leone.

In 2025, the ASTI made significant donations to many aid organisations working throughout the developing world.

Major project in Sierra Leone

In recent years, the Development Aid Fund has begun to support individual projects that require a more substantial amount of money. These projects are funded out of a sum of money that has accumulated through underspending in past years.

Last year, the chosen recipient was a project to build a secondary school in the Rothana community in Sierra Leone. The project, which is currently underway, is being undertaken by the Schools and Health Foundation (SHF) – a registered charity founded in 2016 to advance education and health in Africa. It has no full-time staff in Ireland, and all of its work is carried out by experienced volunteers who cover all administrative and travel expenses. Apart from bank and audit fees, 100% of funds raised in Ireland are spent on projects in Africa.

Rothana community, Sierra Leone

According to the United Nations Human Development Index, Sierra Leone is the ninth least developed country in the world. Some 18% of children in Sierra Leone under five years of age are underweight. In Sierra Leone, 40% of people have no access to clean water.

The Rothana community is in the Buya Romende chiefdom in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone, located 15km from Lunsar town. It has 52 houses, mostly of corrugated iron sheets, and a few thatch houses, and has a total population of 485.

This community is engaged mainly in farming activities, and their main crops are rice, groundnuts, and cassava. Other community members are engaged in vegetable cultivation and small-scale trading.

The primary school in this community, which was funded by the SHF, has been doing well in the national primary school exams. The successful



Once completed, the secondary school will serve 250 students from Rothana and surrounding villages.

pupils in the public exams seek admission into secondary schools in big towns.

Two years ago, the Rothana community leaders recognised the need to establish a junior secondary school within the community, and they approached the SHF to construct a secondary school building to accommodate the Rothana community primary school pupils moving into secondary school.

Beneficiaries

The school facilities will serve 250 secondary school students from Rothana and surrounding villages.

Social benefits

The construction of the secondary school building will increase the learning performance levels of pupils, who will no longer spend hours travelling to outside towns.

This, along with other factors such as an effective educational system, the presence of competent teachers, and the availability of appropriate learning materials, will increase the literacy of students who can contribute to the socio-economic development of society.

Community involvement

The community will supply sand, stones, and labour for the construction. The school is currently under construction.

When finished, it will include:

- a five-classroom school building with an office, a store, and three toilets,
- a lined water well with a hand pump, and
- furniture (chairs, tables, desks, cupboards, blackboards, and bookshelves).

The ASTI has provided over €40,000 towards this project, which is approximately two-thirds of the total cost.

Remaining funds

At the time of writing, there are funds that still remain to be distributed, and this distribution will have taken place by the end of 2025.

ASTI CELEBRATES OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS

The ASTI Awards evening recognises teachers for their outstanding contributions to the ASTI and to their branches. This article is part of a series on the ASTI Awards.



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Geraldine O'Brien (Thomas MacDonagh Medal recipient), and Donal Cremin (ASTI Immediate Past President).



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Pat Knightly (Thomas MacDonagh Medal recipient), and Donal Cremin (ASTI Immediate Past President).

Thomas MacDonagh Medal

The Thomas MacDonagh Medal is awarded to members who have given distinguished service to the ASTI.

This outstanding service includes representing members either within the structures of the ASTI or on an outside body, and taking an action or position that generates significant benefits for other ASTI members.

This award recognises the outstanding service of activists who devote their time to representing their colleagues and standing up for teachers' working conditions.

The 2025 Thomas MacDonagh Medal recipients were Geraldine O'Brien from Clare Branch and Pat Knightly from Dungarvan Branch.

ASTI Awards include the ASTI Achievement Awards and Honorary Life Membership. For more information, please see: www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants/



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Margaret McGagh (PJ Kennedy Award recipient), and Donal Cremin (ASTI Immediate Past President).



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Padraig Carbury (PJ Kennedy Award recipient), and Donal Cremin (ASTI Immediate Past President).



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), James Breslin (PJ Kennedy Award recipient), and Donal Cremin (ASTI Immediate Past President).



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Eleanor O'Doherty (PJ Kennedy Award recipient), and Donal Cremin (ASTI Immediate Past President).



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Chris Halligan (PJ Kennedy Award recipient), and Donal Cremin (ASTI Immediate Past President).

PJ Kennedy Award

The PJ Kennedy Award is awarded to members who have given valuable service to their branch or to members of their branch, such as a long-serving and diligent service as a school steward or branch officer.

The award is named after PJ Kennedy, who was one of the three founders of the union alongside TJ Burke and Thomas MacDonagh, and who later became the first President of the ASTI.

This year's recipients were James Breslin, Padraig Carbury, Chris Halligan, Margaret McGagh and Eleanor O'Doherty.

The award is named after PJ Kennedy, who was one of the three founders of the union alongside TJ Burke and Thomas MacDonagh ...

ASTI Centenary Scholarship

The ASTI inaugurated an annual scholarship for members in its centenary year of 2009. The scholarship is awarded to assist any ASTI member undertaking further third-level education on a full-time or part-time basis. Two scholarships of €2,000 are awarded each year. ASTI members undertaking further studies can apply at any stage during the school year. The closing date for submission of applications for 2026 is Thursday, April 30. Applications will be reviewed by a selection committee composed of the ASTI Officers. The criteria for selection are:

- relevance of proposed course to the professional lives of teachers and second-level education,
- potential for study to inform the ongoing policy agenda and work of the ASTI, and
- potential for research to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

Members can apply at any time throughout the duration of their programme, even if they have already commenced their studies.

THE ASTI EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The ASTI Education Committee engages with educational policy developments and issues.
Article written by BREEDA SLEVIN.



The ASTI Education Committee. Back row (from left): Aodán Mac Cárthaigh, Niall Duddy, Éamonn Cashin, Jennifer Mannion (Chair), and Conor Murphy. Front row (from left): Marion Stack, Jacinta McGarry, John Conneely (Assistant General Secretary: Education and Research), and Joe Cummins.

The members of the ASTI Education Committee are Éamonn Cashin, Joe Cummins, Niall Duddy, Aodán Mac Cárthaigh, Niall Mahon, Jennifer Mannion (Chair), Jacinta McGarry, Marion Stack, Conor Murphy, Padraig Curley (ASTI President), and Richard Bell (ASTI Vice President). John Conneely, Assistant General Secretary: Education and Research, supports this committee.

The Education Committee is elected every two years at Annual Convention, with the most recent election held in April 2025. The Committee convenes up to seven times per year, and discusses matters referred by Standing Committee, and ongoing educational policy developments and concerns.

A key focus for the Committee this year is the area of inclusion in schools.

Also on the committee:



Padraig Curley



Richard Bell



Niall Mahon

For further information on the work of the Education Committee, please visit: www.asti.ie/about-asti/structure/committees/

The Committee is particularly interested in the impact of generative AI on the Additional Assessment Components (AACs) in the Senior Cycle.

The Committee also prepares submissions in response to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and other public consultations.

The Education Committee monitors educational policy developments and other policies that affect teachers, schools, and the curriculum. The Committee also serves as a forum for reflection on national and international societal trends in education and their implications for teachers' working conditions.

This profile outlines the ongoing work of the Education Committee and its priorities for an ambitious and busy year ahead.

Focus on inclusion

A key focus for the Committee this year is the area of inclusion in schools. In June 2025, the Department of Education's Review of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 was published.

This extensive review included over 28,000 submissions. The Committee has been exploring the results of this review and the implications for teachers, students, parents, and managers. The area of inclusive education is developing quickly, and this review will have a significant impact on future policy changes.

The Committee will monitor these changes, including any new approaches to school inspection.

This extensive review included over 28,000 submissions. The Committee has been exploring the results of this review and the implications for teachers, students, parents, and managers.

Senior Cycle curricula

Additionally, curriculum development remains an important priority for the Committee. The Committee provides support to the ASTI Subject Development Group nominees on the NCCA and monitors

developments in the processes by which curricula are reviewed and developed by the NCCA. This year, the Education Committee is focusing on Tranche 3 and Tranche 4 subjects, which are due to be introduced into the post-primary Senior Cycle curriculum in 2027 and 2028, respectively. The Committee continues to give close attention to Tranche 1 subjects, which were introduced in 2025 and included two new subjects, and Tranche 2, which will proceed in 2026 and 2027.

Monitoring policy

The Education Committee discusses matters referred by ASTI Standing Committee and ongoing educational policy developments and concerns. A key priority of the Committee is to monitor the provision of appropriate resources for teachers to support the implementation of any changes in the curriculum.

According to John Conneely: "The Committee reviews the reports from the NCCA Subject Development Group meetings to ensure that teachers are supported in terms of the processes that take place on the development of the subject specifications".

More broadly, the Committee also intends to review the influence that the CAO system has on curriculum choices. In the context of subject development, the area of artificial intelligence (AI) and digitisation is particularly relevant to the Committee's work. The Committee is particularly interested in the impact of generative AI on the Additional Assessment Components (AACs) in the Senior Cycle.

The Committee recognises that in some subjects there will be an increase in the workload for teachers, which may have an impact on their well-being. The implications for teachers authenticating students' work and the overall effect on the integrity of examinations are also areas of concern. Ongoing developments and issues for the Committee in the broader Irish educational context are retention and recruitment, the teacher supply crisis, and changes to the Professional Master of Education (PME).

Committee Chair Jennifer Mannion says she is "proud to lead a committee whose members bring such a wide range of subject expertise and professional insight to our work". She adds: "Our shared interest in Senior Cycle development reflects our deep commitment to supporting teachers and students through educational change.

The dedication and collaboration of each member make me proud and optimistic about the impact we will continue to have in the year ahead".

ASTI ANNUAL CONVENTION 2026

Every Easter, approximately 500 ASTI members attend Annual Convention to discuss and vote on the Association's policies for the year ahead. This year, ASTI Annual Convention will take place in Whites Hotel, Wexford on April 7-9.

Where can I get information about Convention?

The ASTI website – www.asti.ie – is where you will find all of the information you need about Convention 2026. Go to the Events section of the website, where you will find the Convention 2026 page.

Attending Convention

Delegates to Convention are selected at branch meetings, usually in January. Each branch is entitled to send a number of delegates to Convention, depending on the number of members in their branch. Branches must submit the names of their chosen branch delegates to ASTI Head Office not later than January 31. In addition to branch delegates, members of the ASTI Central Executive Council and Standing Committee also attend Convention as delegates.

If you wish to attend Convention 2026, you should go along to your next branch meeting. If you are unsure about when or where your branch meets, ask your school steward for your branch's meeting schedule. When attending Annual Convention, you must be either a delegate or an observer. Please note that only delegates are allowed to speak on and vote on Convention motions.

Costs involved

The cost of travel and an overnight allowance is paid to all delegates attending Convention. There is also a registration fee of €30 per delegate, which is deducted from quarterly branch payments after Convention.

Where to stay

Convention 2026 is being held in Whites Hotel, Wexford. Accommodation for delegates to Convention will be available at Whites Hotel. Please be advised that Convention hotel accommodation is limited and is allocated on a first come, first served basis. Delegates who wish to stay in Whites Hotel are required to use the reference number 055964 when making their booking to avail of the special accommodation rate.

There are several other accommodation options in Wexford. Details of other hotels and guesthouses that are located in the surrounding area are available on the ASTI website – www.asti.ie.

ASTI play centre

Childcare will be available each day during Convention hours. Places must be reserved in advance, not later than Friday, March 6. Further information relating to childcare facilities can be found on the ASTI website.



Convention dinner

A Convention dinner will be held on Tuesday, April 7, in Whites Hotel. The cost of a banquet ticket is normally €60 per person, but if your branch reserves a table of 10 before March 26, it will cost only €500 – a saving of €100. If your branch wishes to join with another branch for a table, please book under one branch's name by emailing info@asti.ie with the reference 'Annual Convention Dinner'. Book early to avoid disappointment.

Teachers in the spotlight

Key debates on education, teachers' terms and conditions, and the ASTI's role as a trade union take place during Convention. The ASTI Annual Convention attracts significant media attention and provides opportunities to highlight some of the main issues for second-level teachers – for example, conditions for recently qualified teachers. Coverage focuses on key speeches made during Convention, including the President's address on Tuesday evening, and on important debates throughout the conference.

Topics for debate

Topics for debate are dictated by motions, which are submitted and selected at ASTI branch meetings. In other words, ASTI members get to decide what is debated at Annual Convention. Motions are presented to Convention and delegates speak to these motions. Branches normally decide on the topics they would like to see discussed at Annual Convention at their branch meetings in the preceding November. A Convention Steering Committee, which consists of classroom teachers elected by Annual Convention each year, prepares a list of motions received from branches. The list is circulated to all branches before January. Branches are asked to prioritise motions for inclusion on the Convention Agenda not later than January 31. They can also propose amendments to any of the motions circulated. Motions and amendments are considered again by the Convention Steering Committee in early February, and a final agenda is drawn up.

Connect at Convention

The ASTI encourages the use of social media during open debates (some debates are closed sessions and delegates may not discuss these debates on social media). Using social media platforms X, Facebook and Bluesky allows the ASTI and delegates attending Convention to spread the news to their colleagues who cannot attend, and to highlight important Convention issues to their followers.

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- Get support from ASTI

For more information scan the QR code





Birthday celebration of a cherished member

The Dublin Branch of the RSTA recently honoured former President of both the ASTI and RSTA Louis O'Flaherty on his 90th birthday. BERNADINE O'SULLIVAN, Chair of RSTA Dublin Branch, describes the gathering.



From left: Terry Dolan (Branch Vice Chair), Bernadine O'Sullivan (Branch Chair), Louis O'Flaherty (Former ASTI and RSTA President), Marie O'Flaherty, Eddie Mc Carthy (Branch Treasurer), and Margaret Grogan (Branch Secretary).

There was celebration and jubilation recently in the Dublin Branch of the RSTA when Louis O'Flaherty, former ASTI President, former RSTA President, and active member of the Branch, celebrated his 90th birthday. Louis is highly regarded in the RSTA and was awarded an Honorary Life Membership in 2014 in recognition of his invaluable research and publication of a history of the first 50 years of the RSTA. In it, he traces the background of the emergence of a pension scheme for teachers, the circumstances and events that led to the foundation of the RSTA, and the significant advances achieved in those first 50 years. Upon his retirement from teaching, Louis played a key role in expanding the Association and establishing branches around the country. Up until then, it had been Dublin based. There are now 18 branches across the country, and hopefully this number will grow.

Louis was President of the ASTI in 1985, a historic year when the three teacher unions united and marched to Croke Park. This led to an improvement in the pay and pensions of teachers. His deep interest in education resulted in his book *Management and Control in Irish Education: The Post Primary Experience*. The book was one of the most-thumbed tomes by students pursuing qualifications in HDip and management courses. His

lectures in Trinity College Dublin on the topic were both erudite and entertaining. Louis was also a frequent contributor to newspapers and journals. However, his writing was not confined to educational matters. His book *Drumcondra and its Environs*, launched in the Mansion House by the then Lord Mayor of Dublin, is now used as an essential source by academics and local historians.

His indomitable spirit and *joie de vivre* inspire camaraderie throughout the Association. While the RSTA was originally established to gain pension rights, its aim has also been to enrich the lives of members through togetherness. Again, Louis was to the forefront in this – ensuring that meetings in branches are followed by refreshments so that members, especially new members, can mingle and chat. Visits to places of interest in Ireland and abroad are organised; Christmas and summer lunches, book clubs, and golf outings, among other activities, are offered to members.

Louis loves music. His wife Marie is an accomplished piano player, and they both enjoyed our annual visit from the Pentettra String Quartet, followed by mince pies and mulled wine. We wish Louis, Marie and family, all members of the RSTA, and all members of the ASTI – hopefully prospective members of the RSTA – a happy and healthy new year.

ICTU Retired Workers Committee



Denis O'Boyle (West Mayo Branch) and Ger O'Donoghue (Limerick South Branch) were recently re-selected by ASTI Standing Committee to represent the ASTI on the ICTU Retired Workers Committee for 2025 to 2027. Pictured are (from left): Jimmy Whelan (Chairperson, ICTU Retired Workers Committee), Dr Laura Bambrick (ICTU Secretariat to the Retired Workers Committee), Denis O'Boyle (West Mayo Branch ASTI), and Ger O'Donoghue (Limerick South Branch ASTI).

TechnoTeachers Association National Conference



Pictured at the 2025 TechnoTeachers Association National Conference at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Limerick were (from left): Padraig Curley (ASTI President), Pádraig Cawley (TechnoTeachers Association), Suzanne Scanlan (TechnoTeachers Association), Richard Bell (ASTI Vice President), and Donal Cremin (ASTI Immediate Past President).

Study finds 85% of teachers experience burnout

A recent DCU study has reported that 85% of teachers experience burnout. The study states that teaching is a highly relational and emotionally demanding profession, resulting in teachers being at increased risk of stress and burnout in the workplace.

DCU carried out a mixed-methods study that examined work-related burnout among Irish primary and secondary school teachers, drawing on data collected from over 1,000 participants during the 2024-2025 period.

The findings indicate extensive experiences of burnout – with workload, organisational factors and unrealistic expectations emerging as key contributors.

Key findings:

- **85% of teachers reported moderate to high levels of work-related burnout**, indicating that burnout is a widespread issue across the profession,
- **85% of teachers identified workload as a contributor to burnout**, highlighting the unsustainable demands made of teachers,
- **48% of teachers reported the structure of work and organisational issues as a key contributor**, and
- **40% of respondents identified unrealistic expectations from their school** as another factor contributing to feelings of burnout.

You can find the full DCU report at:
https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/inline-files/dcu-create_teacher-burnout-think-tank_summary-report.pdf

Teen-Turn supporting girls in STEM

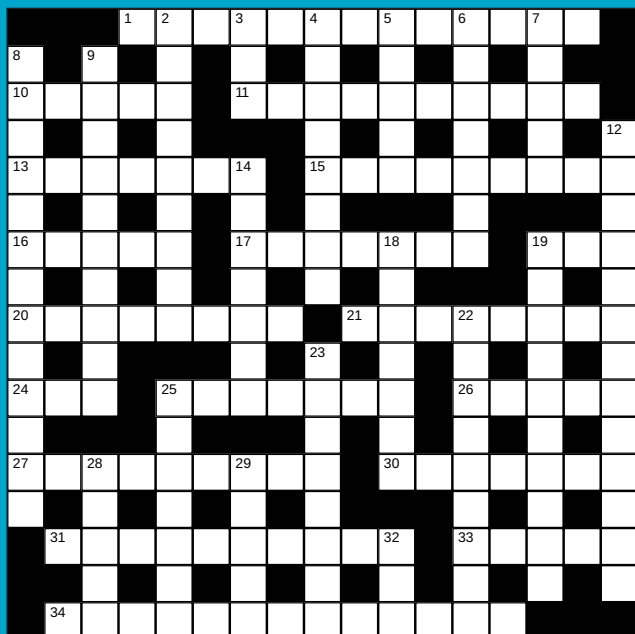
Teen-Turn is an Irish non-profit organisation that provides teen girls, particularly those from underserved communities, with the opportunity to gain hands-on STEM experience and the support to acquire qualifications and jobs.

When Fatima Bibi finished school at Coláiste Nano Nagle in Limerick, she knew her future was in science having taken part in Teen-Turn's after school programmes and revision clubs. Fatima benefited from Teen-Turn's

partnership with the Irish Youth Foundation (IYF), which provided her with a €2,500 annual scholarship for her STEM degree. She is now in her final year of a BSc in Drugs and Medicinal Product Analysis and has earned first-class honours every year.

More information on Teen-Turn's activities and the support they provide to girls is available at www.teen-turn.com.

Win €250



ACROSS

1. Sharp teacher or barbed wire expert? (7,6)
10. Chemical bond resulting in charged particles (5)
11. Affected or hypocritical holiness (10)
13. Different variety of 3 down (7)
15. Queen of ancient Egypt, wife of Akhenaten (9)
16. Doyle involved in Swiss singing? (5)
17. Loss of sense of smell (7)
19. Measures ratio of height to weight (1.1.1)
20. Creation of chemical process (8)
21. Light summer cover for noggin (5,3)
24. Could be war, far, or full (3)
25. Mushroom eaten by a pig? (7)
26. Dragon eradicator could be doomed (5)
27. Adorn, beautify, garnish (9)
30. Unlikely to be needed for 12 down (4,3)
31. Profession of Woodward and Bernstein (10)
33. Convention month (5)
34. Celestial phenomenon seen while filming celebrities? (8,5)

DOWN

2. Stool of former superior national teacher (9)
3. Mathematical function involving lettuce (3)
4. Company that does not allow employees to organise (8)
5. Dominant or recurring theme (5)
6. Associated with Judea in the Bible (7)
7. Sudden nuisance might result in boredom (5)
8. Disney cartoon character from Pinocchio (6,7)
9. Device designed to cause fire (10)
12. Floridians call it 'Putt putt' (9,4)
14. Pizazz, oomph, sex appeal (7)
18. I leave mitigant for coarse fabric (7)
19. Where publicans work, inside (6,4)
22. Pasta similar to spaghetti (5,4)
23. Equipment promised to Conor Murphy (8)
25. Colourless modus operandi could be island capital (7)
28. Footwear in cubicle (5)
29. Nationality of Saddam Hussein (5)
32. Engineering university in Boston (1.1.1)

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ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 2601

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. 2601,
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, February 13, 2026.

Solutions to Crossword No. 2505

ACROSS

1. Condensed milk
10. Unite
11. Detachment
13. Tendril
15. Cuticular
16. Rasta
17. Empathy
19. MIA
20. Irishman
21. Climatic
24. Gig
25. Soda pop
26. Terra
27. Reservoir
30. Airlock
31. Card reader
33. Alter
34. Grilled cheese

DOWN

2. Overreach
3. DCD
4. Netscape
5. EPCOT
6. Mimicry
7. Lendl
8. Butterfingers
9. Witnessing
12. Cream crackers
14. Leeward
18. Tilapia
19. Motormouth
22. Materials
23. Sporadic
25. Strudel
28. Stair
29. Obese
32. Ree

Did you miss?

Financial benefits of ASTI membership 12
ASTI Development Aid Fund 20

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the winner
of Crossword No. 2505:
Mary Jo Delaney, St Michael's
College, Ailesbury Road, Dublin 4.
Dublin South 1 Branch member.



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