

ASTI's six steps to better education

The ASTI has developed a six point strategy for the development of second-level education in Ireland.

The strategy - which is set out in the ASTI publication *A Quality Education for All* - outlines the areas in most need of development within the second-level education sector.

ASTI 6-point strategy - in brief

- Increase capitation grant above inflation
- Lab assistants for science teachers
- Special Needs Co-ordinators in schools
- More support to address indiscipline
- Educational support to foster inclusive schools
- Reduce class sizes in core subjects

A Quality Education for All has been widely circulated and all TDs and Senators have received a copy including the Minister for Education and Science Mary Hanafin.

The document states that "in order to enhance quality in education and to address the existing deficits, the government needs to put in place a strategy for development over its lifetime. Such a strategy is essential if we are to develop the knowledge-based society agreed by the Council of Ministers in Lisbon". ♦



Paraic Duffy, Director General of the GAA presenting the first GAA Schools Plaque to ASTI President, Patricia Wroe (see page 2).



The ASTI is supporting a campaign for a new school building for St Angela's College in Cork. See inside for full report.

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eLearning seminars for principals, ICT co-ordinators

Agreement reached on CID contracts for chaplains

Agreement has been reached that chaplains previously employed on annual renewable fixed-term contracts will be entitled to receive contracts of indefinite duration. An appeals process to protect a chaplain against arbitrary movement or dismissal by the nominating authority (diocese) is to be developed between the teacher unions, the Episcopal Commissioner and the management bodies.

This is the culmination of a long-running campaign by the ASTI to get some security of tenure for lay chaplains, as is available to other teachers. ♦

The National Council for Technology in Education (NCTE) will provide seminars for principals and ICT Co-ordinators on developing an eLearning strategy for schools this September.

This is an important initiative given that schools are required to prepare and implement an eLearning strategy under the National Development Plan 2007 -2013. Resource allocation for ICT will be directly related to and contingent on the degree to which the school is able to demonstrate concrete actions and strategies for utilising and embedding ICT in teaching and learning. ♦

GAA to honour teachers' contribution

At the ASTI Annual Convention in Killarney, GAA Director General Paraic Duffy, a former second-level teacher and ASTI member, announced that the GAA is to honour the contribution of second-level teachers to Gaelic sport by presenting a specially-commissioned plaque to their schools.

The GAA plaques for schools initiative will be launched in the coming weeks. A plaque will be presented to all second-level schools where ASTI teachers have worked with pupils to make a contribution to Gaelic sport. ♦

Course fee refund scheme

The Teacher Fee Refund Scheme provides funding towards the cost of course and examination fees for teachers undertaking in-career development courses approved by the Department and school authorities. Courses must be subject to certificate/ award by an appropriate accreditation authority recognised by the Department. The scheme excludes courses which result in a qualification in respect of which an allowance is payable. Serving teachers who are fully registered with the Teaching Council in 2008 are eligible under the scheme. This includes permanent whole-time, temporary whole-time, part-time teachers, substitute teachers, teachers holding CIDs, and teachers holding fixed-term contracts who are employed for the full school year. Teachers on secondment are eligible to apply. Teachers on career break/ unpaid leave can also apply on return to school. The scheme only applies to teachers paid by the State. For further information visit www.mie.ie/refundoffees.htm or email: madge.bulger@mie.ie. ♦

Pictured right: Presenters at a recent ASTI Health and Safety Training Seminar (from left) Pat King, ASTI Assistant General Secretary; Paula Lawlor and Beverly Webster, Webster Lawlor Associates, who gave a presentation on conflict resolution; and Ann Marie Ryan, ASTI Staff Officer, Industrial Relations.



Resolutions adopted at Convention 2008

Class size - Motion 56

That the ASTI establishes a policy of maximum class size of 20 for all subjects.

Section 29 of the Education Act - Motion 71

That the ASTI negotiate with the Department of Education and Science to amend Section 29 of the Education Act to place the emphasis on the right of the majority of pupils to be taught and the teacher to teach without disruption.

Length of salary scale - Motion 2

That the ASTI adopt as a key priority the achievement of a significant reduction in the length of the teachers' basic salary scale in any future pay negotiations with the Department of Education and Science, e.g. a new national pay deal, benchmarking exercise or negotiations held under the terms of free collective bargaining.

Special needs qualification / allowance - Motion 8

That the ASTI campaign that the current diploma allowance in Special Education Needs payable to qualified teachers working as Special Needs Teachers be also made available to teachers who have:

- (a) a graduate diploma in Learning Support;
- (b) equivalent qualifications in Special Education, acquired in third level institutions either within or outside of Ireland, or
- (c) undergone comprehensive training organised by the Department of Education and Science prior to such training being accredited by third level colleges or institutions.

Post of Responsibility / teaching hours - Motion 13

That, in view of the increased responsibility and burden of accountability which arise as a result of recent legislation, the ASTI through negotiation with the Department of Education and Science and the Managerial Authorities seeks to ensure that the teaching hours of Assistant Principals in all schools are reduced to 18 per week and the teaching hours of Special Duties Teachers are reduced to 20 per week and that schools are compensated for this with an extra staffing allocation.

Retirement strands - Motion 18

That the ASTI seek to maintain that Strand 1, 2 and 3 be maintained permanently and improved.



ASTI General Secretary, John White and ASTI President, Patricia Wroe, pictured during Convention proceedings.

Class size

Discipline

Teachers' pay

Special needs allowance

Teaching hours

Retirement strands

Inspections

Teacher absences

Parent-teacher meetings

Project work

Special educational needs

Home school liaison
teachers

CID teaching hours

Delegates from the Carlow Branch pictured during Convention proceedings, (from left), Patrick Coffey, Fiona Lennon and Maurice Browne.

Inspections - Motion 34

That the ASTI seek an undertaking from the Department of Education and Science that inspectors will not carry out inspections of schools in the final term of the school year due to the unnecessary disruption of the exam preparation.

Teacher absences - Motion 50

That the ASTI negotiate with the Department of Education and Science that, at the end of each school year, they will automatically issue all teachers with a detailed list of their absences for that particular year and that a system be put in place to rectify any inaccuracies which may show up.

Parent-teacher meetings - Motion 31

That ASTI undertakes a review of parent-teacher meetings outside school hours on the grounds of health and safety, also to take into account parity of arrangement as pertains for primary teachers.

Project work - Motion 77

That the onus on the class teacher to sign off on project work for state examinations be discontinued.

Special educational needs - Motion 67 - Composite Motion

That the ASTI:

- (a) supports the principle that all schools should have in place policies which actively support equality of access and participation so that all schools cater for SEN students in their catchment area, in order to ensure that the practice of some schools "cherry picking" their intake and other schools bearing a disproportionate number of SEN students would cease, and
- (b) the ASTI calls on the Department of Education and Science to audit the intake of students with Special Educational Needs and either to accord incentives to those schools who are educating these students, and/ or put in place a penalty system for those schools who are effectively discouraging the enrolment of these students.

Home school liaison teacher allocation - Motion 62

That all schools be allocated an ex-quota home school liaison teacher.

CID teaching hours - Motion 46

That the ASTI would make as the one issue in future pay discussions with the Department of Education and Science the bringing of non-permanent teachers and existing CID holders up to full teaching hours.



IEPs - Motion 74

That this Convention calls on the Department of Education and Science to:

- (a) clarify the position regarding the introduction of IEPs;
- (b) outline arrangements for the provision of a comprehensive inservice programme for all teachers;
- (c) proceed with the appointment of an ex-quota IEP co-ordinator for each school;
- (d) define clearly the role, if any, that the learning support/special needs co-ordinator will be expected to undertake in relation to IEPs.

English language for newcomer students - Motion 72

That the ASTI vigorously engages with the Department of Education and Science to establish an appropriate school based facility to ensure an adequate competency in the English language for each newcomer student prior to their inclusion in mainstream classes.

Rule 14(b) - Emeritus members - Motion 86

Amend Rule 14(b)(i) by inserting the words 'as a member of Standing Committee,' immediately before the word 'or'.

Rule 14(b) to read as follows:

Emeritus members shall have the power to exercise all the rights and privileges of all members except the right

- (i) to act as a Branch Officer, as a member of Standing Committee, or as a representative on the Central Executive Council
- (ii) to vote on any ballot on industrial action or to be a candidate in any election for Trusteeship of the Association.

ASTI Principals and Deputy Principals - Motion 92 - Composite Motion

That this Convention elects a sub-committee to investigate and report on the role of Principals and Deputy Principals within the ASTI, this sub-committee to report back to CEC in January 2009.

Vetting of teachers - Motion 108

That the information provided from the vetting of teachers should be contained within the structures of the Teaching Council accreditation system.

Convention elections

That this Convention elects a sub-committee to examine, review and make recommendations on the organisation, procedures and conduct of elections at ASTI Conventions and report to CEC in January 2009.



Right: Delegates voting on a motion during Convention.

We deserve a better school

The ASTI is supporting a campaign for a new school building for St Angela's College in Cork.

Working together with 40 ASTI members in the school, the ASTI aims to ensure the Department of Education and Science gives St Angela's a clear commitment and time frame for a new school building as a matter of urgency.

In 1999 the Department of Education and Science sanctioned a feasibility study to develop a plan for the refurbishment of the two main school buildings at the school, both of which were built in the 19th Century. However, no progress was made on the delivery of the plan, with the Department expressing concerns about the confined school site. Then, in February of this year, the Department of Education bought the adjoining site to the school - comprising the Ursuline Convent building. Despite this, St Angela's is still waiting to hear what plan the Department has for the refurbishment of the school.

"The Department has agreed that we need a new school building. That's not the problem. But what they are not saying is that we need it urgently," states school principal Rosalie Moloney.

Damp and mould

Each day more than 500 pupils and their teachers are crammed into small classrooms with poor lighting and ventilation. In the winter the school is damp. In summer there is little air to

breath. Mould grows on the walls all year round.

Many of the corridors and stairways are so narrow, students have to walk single file.

Makeshift desks

Despite the Government's stated goal of improving science education at second-level in Ireland one of the school's laboratories is so cramped that some science students have to sit in makeshift desks.

A Department of Education and Science Home Economics inspection carried out in 2006 noted that "immediate and ongoing investment, in both the kitchen and its facilities and equipment, is urgently required. . . . refurbishment of the kitchen is pertinent not only in light of the practical-work ... but also because of the current potential risks posed to the health and safety".

Rosalie Moloney says despite the unacceptable conditions, parents are supportive and keep sending their children to the school. "Already we have 360 applications for 90 places for September 2009. We have a reputation for delivering an excellent education in Cork City."

"It's a great school and a great staff," says school steward Ann Galvin. "But to have to work in these conditions every day, after having spent so long campaigning for something better is just demoralising". ♦

Right: Deputy Principal, Geraldine Quilter demonstrates a narrow and hazardous stairway in the school.



Right: The computer room has no natural light and a pillar in the middle of the room means it is impossible for a teacher to see all students during class.



ASTI visit confirms appalling conditions

St. Angela's has been visited by ASTI President, Patricia Wroe; President Elect, Pat Hurley, and Head Office officials who found:

- The main corridors and stairs in the school were dark and narrow.
- Some areas of the school have had to be closed off for safety reasons.
- Classrooms are located in 8 separate buildings.
- Almost 50% of base classrooms are in prefab structures.
- Some of the classrooms are separated by thin glass partitions installed in 1888.
- Makeshift desks have to be used to accommodate students in one of the science labs.
- There is mould on walls, stairways and corridors.
- The main staircase was designed for use by a family, not hundreds of students.
- The PE hall is a mere 10th of the recommended size for the school.
- The two school secretaries share a desk due to lack of space.
- The art room is located in a prefab and has only a minimum of natural light.
- The school is forced to hire outdoor sports facilities on a weekly basis.
- The staff kitchen is located in a corridor.
- The cramped Home Economics kitchen must be accessed by a dangerously steep flight of steps.
- The school is totally inaccessible to staff and students with any physical disability.



Above: The staff kitchen is located in a corridor.



Left: Bernard Moynihan, ASTI Industrial Relations Official and Ann Galvin, St. Angela's School Steward next to a "No Entry" sign over a hazardous stairway.

Below: Students in the science lab work on makeshift desks made out of pieces of wood.

Right: The staff of St. Angela's are united in their campaign for a new school building.



Left: The ceiling of the school's former changing room. The room has become unusable due to the extent of the dampness and mould.

Officers elected at Convention 2008



Pat Hurley, 2007/2008 Vice President and member of Cork South Branch, was elected President Elect at Annual Convention 2008.

Joe Moran, Tipperary Branch, was elected Vice President.



The ASTI Honorary Treasurer, Ray St John was re-elected uncontested.

A full report on Convention 2008 will appear in ASTIR

Teaching Council meetings

As a follow up to the series of regional meetings for teachers which took place in 2006 and 2007, the Teaching Council is currently planning a second series of information meetings in counties which were not covered in the first series. The meetings will provide an opportunity for discussion on the work of the Council including the establishment of the register of teachers and, in particular, the Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers.

Meetings will take place on:

Mon, 12 May	7.00 - 9.00 pm	at Blackrock Education Centre
Tues, 13 May	7.00 - 9.00 pm	at Laois Education Centre
Wed, 14 May	7.00 - 9.00 pm	at Carrick-On-Shannon Education Centre
Thurs, 15 May	7.30 - 9.30 pm	at County Wexford Education Centre
Thurs, 22 May	5.00 - 7.00 pm	at Tralee Education Centre

See www.teachingcouncil.ie for further information. ◆