

Protecting education and teachers

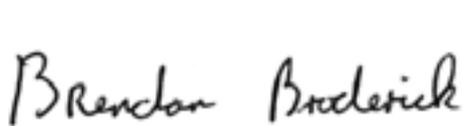
Dear members,

The weeks and months ahead will be a most challenging time for ASTI members. Over the past 15 years Ireland's investment in education as a proportion of public expenditure has dropped from 19% to 16%. During this time Ireland continued to invest less of its wealth on second-level education than almost all other OECD countries. This is why the introduction of Budget cuts since January 2009 has had such a devastating effect on second-level schools.

In the weeks and months ahead we face the Government's expenditure review, the Budget estimates, Budget 2012, and the proposition of a range of educational changes at a time of severe resource restrictions in schools.

This Nuacht contains an update on the key issues facing us as teachers and trade union members. We will endeavour to keep you informed on these issues as often and as quickly as possible via the ASTI website, on-line communications, Nuacht and at Branch meetings.

Your participation in the ASTI and within ASTI structures is more important now than ever before. We must remain united and determined as we face these challenges so that the teaching profession can remain a relevant and respected voice for education.



Brendan Broderick,
ASTI President



Pat King,
ASTI General Secretary



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Brendan Broderick



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Pat King

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Opposing cuts

In June of this year the Department of Education and Skills invited the teachers unions to engage in a consultation process with the education partners in relation to "how best to achieve savings on teacher payroll costs for the school year 2012/2013".

The consultation process is part of the National Recovery Plan. The Plan sets out savings to be achieved by each Government Department in order to meet the fiscal requirements set out in the EU/ IMF financial support programme for Ireland. The savings requirement in education is €690 million over the four years of the Plan. As some savings have already been achieved, the Government is looking for the

As this *Nuacht* goes to print the OECD report *Education at a Glance 2011* is about to be published. See our analysis at www.asti.ie

As part of the review of the redeployment process, the ASTI will be seeking the creation of a voluntary redeployment option for teachers.

balance (€350 million) in the period 2012 – 2014. The National Recovery Plan states that “the Department of Education and Skills will consult with the education partners and provide them with an opportunity to contribute to the process of identifying a range of measures that Government can consider. If alternative feasible measures to deliver these savings cannot be identified, appropriate increases in the classroom teacher allocation schedule will be introduced”.

ASTI response

ASTI representatives attended the consultation process and in a written submission clearly stated that:

- Second-level education has been severely under-funded for many years.
- There can be no reduction in teachers’ salaries/ salary allowances as these are subject to the Croke Park Agreement.
- There is no room for further reductions in teacher payroll costs. Any further reductions in teacher allocation or in the provision of teachers will have a hugely detrimental impact on the quality of education provision.

Unions against cuts

The four teachers unions – ASTI, INTO, TUI, IFUT - have publically stated their opposition to further cuts. The unions will be undertaking a number of joint activities in the coming weeks to highlight their opposition to cuts including public statements and direct contact with TDs. ♦ [See www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

ASTI wins for privately paid teachers

Privately-paid teachers who have never been paid by the Department and who are appointed to Department-paid positions, will be paid according to the salary scale for new entrants to teaching (effective since January 1, 2011).

As a result of strong representations made by the ASTI, teachers with privately-paid teaching experience who are appointed to Department posts will be able to claim incremental credit. Initially the Department’s intention was to appoint these teachers to the first point of the salary scale for new entrants to teaching without any incremental credit. The ASTI pointed out that many of these teachers have years of experience teaching in Irish second-level schools. The Department has now agreed to award incremental credit to these teachers.

The ASTI sought and achieved the same provision for teachers appointed to Department paid positions who have recognised teaching service abroad. ♦

Redeployment

Over 100 ASTI members were redeployed during the summer months. This has been a difficult time for these members. ASTI members have been asked to support colleagues who have been redeployed into their schools.

A review of the redeployment process will take place shortly. If you were affected by redeployment this year you can contribute to this review by forwarding your views to:

The Deputy General Secretary, Thomas MacDonagh House, Winetavern Street, Dublin 8. Email: info@asti.ie. ♦

Incidental inspections

On June 15 the Minister for Education and Skills stated that unannounced inspections would commence in second-level schools during the 2011/12 school year. These inspections currently take place at primary level and were the practice at second-level in the past.

The ASTI and the education partners were invited to participate in a consultation process and this process is ongoing. The Education Act sets out the legal basis for school inspection.

At a meeting with the Inspectorate, the ASTI made clear its view that these new inspections are of no real value and their introduction is ironic in the context of the ongoing cuts to school resources.

The ASTI and TUI have made a joint submission to the Department Inspectorate regarding incidental inspection. Statements made to the Department in this submission include:

- There is already a comprehensive evaluation framework in place for second-level schools, including WSE, WSE-MLL, subject inspection and thematic inspections.
- A one-off one-day visit to a school will not allow any meaningful evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of the education service provided in that school.
- The Draft Guide for Incidental Inspection does not include a statement that clearly disassociates incidental inspection from the agreed procedures for teachers experiencing professional difficulties, i.e. that these are not to be used for teacher competency issues. **The ASTI insists that this be included.**

The Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate has stated that the focus of incidental inspection is the evaluation of teaching and learning. It intends to finalise a guide to incidental inspection in the coming weeks and to introduce this form of inspection to second-level schools in October/ November. ♦

www.asti.ie for more information.

Junior Cycle reform

The consultation process on reform of the Junior Cycle is nearing completion and the publication of a framework for reform by the NCCA and Minister for Education and Skills is imminent.

Contrary to some media commentary, the ASTI does not oppose reform of the Junior Cycle. As members of the NCCA, the ASTI has participated in the consultation process. This included a formal submission by the ASTI stating its views.

Throughout the consultation process, the ASTI has made clear its policy that students should not be assessed by their own teachers for state exam purposes.

It has been reported that Junior Cycle reform will include changes to arrangements for the state examinations. In light of this, the ASTI has asked the NCCA to brief ASTI Standing Committee on the reform plans. This briefing will take place on September 16th. ♦

www.asti.ie for more information

ASTI in numbers

550

Number of retirees who attended ASTI retirement seminars last year.

650

Number of calls from ASTI members to ASTI Head Office per week

57

Number of current CID cases the union is taking on behalf of members

€4,300

Amount spent on legal assistance for ASTI members each week

24

The number of radio and TV interviews the ASTI participated in last month

No change to Feb 29 date

The ASTI brought its concerns regarding the February 29th deadline for retirements under the Croke Park Agreement to the Department of Education and Skills and the Teachers' Conciliation Council. ASTI representatives also highlighted the issue in the national media.

Despite this, it has been confirmed that there will be no change to the February 29th date.

POR moratorium alleviation

Applications for alleviation of the moratorium on posts of responsibility at AP level for the school year must be made by Tuesday, September 30. See Department Circular 0053/2011 (available on the ASTI website).

Retiring before March 2012?

Teachers who intend to retire on or before February 29th, 2012 are required by the Department to give three calendar months notice of their date of retirement. Failure to give the required notice could delay pension and gratuity payments. You should advise both your school and the Department of your intended date of retirement.

Retirement Seminars

The ASTI is holding a series of seminars for members retiring in 2011 and 2012. For details see back page of this *Nuacht*.

Need advice re. February 2012 retirement?

If you are thinking of retiring before February 29, 2012 and need advice on your options and what you need to do, call the ASTI at: 01-6040160.

You should also book your place on one of the ASTI retirement seminars (see back page).

If you would like to understand the financial implications of retiring before March 2012 (as they apply to your circumstances), Cornmarket Insurance is providing information to ASTI members (Tel: 01/4084162).

Callers to ASTI Head Office or Cornmarket Insurance should have the following information:

- 1 Current gross and net salary;
 - 2 2009 salary (if you are retiring before March 2012 this is what your pension will be calculated on);
 - 3 Years of service;
 - 4 Type of retirement you are interested in (early retirement, cost neutral, etc.).
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New Teachers Deserve Better

The ASTI is continuing its opposition to the pay and pension arrangements for new entrants to teaching.

As part of its pension campaign the teacher unions are meeting with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin.

The ASTI has previously raised its concerns for new entrant teachers in face-to-face meetings with a number of politicians including the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn; the Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan; Fianna Fáil Education Spokesperson, Brendan Smith; and, Sinn Féin Education Spokesperson, Seán Crowe.

The ASTI has also raised the issue at meetings of the Teachers' Conciliation Council. ♦

www.asti for more information

Teaching of maths

The teaching and learning of maths continues to receive significant media coverage. The ASTI believes that some of the media commentary in relation to maths is ill-informed. In light of this, the ASTI is taking the following action:

- regular issuing of media statements to press;
- participation in media interviews/ debates as opportunities arise;
- lobbying of key influencers including heads of industry and politicians.

Some of the points the ASTI is raising are:

- The term “unqualified” maths teacher is incorrect. Teachers of maths in second-level schools are qualified teachers and are registered with the Teaching Council.
- The real issues that affect the teaching and learning of maths in our schools are: large classes, honours and ordinary level maths being taught together, the need for more one-to-one interaction between individual students and their teachers, the need to prioritise and properly resource Project Maths. ♦



Left: as part of a series of meetings with education spokespersons, the ASTI recently met with Sinn Fein Education Spokesperson Sean Crowe. Pictured (left to right) are: ASTI Assistant General Secretary, Moira Leydon; Seán Crowe TD; and, ASTI Deputy General Secretary, Diarmaid de Paor.



Left: The ASTI recently met with Fianna Fáil Education Spokesperson, Brendan Smith as part of a series of face-to-face meetings with education spokespersons. Pictured (left to right) are: ASTI Deputy General Secretary, Diarmaid de Paor; former ASTI President, Jack Keane; Senator Averil Power; ASTI General Secretary, Pat King; Brendan Smith TD; and, ASTI Assistant General Secretary, Moira Leydon.

The Jobs Bridge Scheme is separate from the FAS Work Placement Scheme which was extended to schools last year. The Jobs Bridge scheme ceases in June 2013. ASTI Annual Convention passed a motion in April opposing the FAS Placement Scheme in schools. The ASTI described the extension of the Scheme to schools as a cynical exercise in presenting a concern for unemployed teachers at a time when the working conditions, salaries and pensions of newly-appointed teachers are under attack.

Internship scheme in schools

Jobs Bridge is a new national internship scheme which provides work experience placements for six to nine months. The Jobs Bridge scheme can be used to facilitate recently qualified teachers in meeting the post-qualification employment period (300 hours) required in order to gain full Teaching Council registration.

The ASTI has participated with other teacher unions in a joint response in relation to the Job Bridge Scheme. While accepting that new teachers can benefit from full Teaching Council registration, any use of an internship scheme to deal with the effects of reduced services in schools will be strongly opposed by the teacher unions. The unions have not endorsed the scheme and are currently seeking safeguards against the abuse of the scheme in areas such as displacement of existing teachers and the treatment of interns. The unions believe that any such scheme must have a representative monitoring committee and an independent complaints process with trade union involvement.

Members will be updated shortly. ♦

Trade union champions visiting schools

It is vital that our students - the workers of the future - understand and appreciate the value of trade unions in balancing the uneven relationship between employer and employee.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has established a group of 15 "schools champions" – all graduate teachers – who are visiting second-level schools this year as part of the ICTU YouthConnect programme.

Schools have already received a YouthConnect resource pack which covers the world of work and includes a number of lessons for use across a wide range of subjects including CPSE, business, economics, history and the Transition Year, LCA and LCVP programmes.

YouthConnect schools champions are available to deliver a class lesson tailored to the needs of the class and subject/ programme. ♦

www.asti.ie for more information

ASTI wins ICTU seat

ASTI General Secretary Pat King has been elected to the ICTU Executive Council. The election took place at the recent ICTU Biennial Conference in Killarney.

At the Conference, ICTU delegates (including ASTI representatives) adopted four motions on the funding of education. The motions highlight the critical importance of education to economic recovery. They call on ICTU to resist cuts to training and education and to demand that the Government prioritise investment in education. ♦

The ASTI proposed the following motion to ICTU Biennial Conference in July: 'That this Conference calls on the ICTU to publish a weekly commercial newspaper to promote affiliate trade unions and a society based on equality and justice.'

The motion was referred back to the ICTU Executive.

Record your brief absences

Where school management has sanctioned the absence of a teacher from class teaching periods of less than a school day, the brief period of absence is recorded at school level. The Department accepts this as the official record because its own system can only record brief absences as full day absences. The school record allows that only a cumulative total of 4 hours and 24 minutes absence counts as one day's absence.

The ASTI advises members to keep their own personal record of their brief absences. This may be important in the event of long-term illness when sick leave arrangements are subject to official records. ♦

ASTI Substitute Placement Scheme

Teachers who are looking for work are advised to sign up to the ASTI Substitute Placement Scheme. Members can join online. Visit www.asti.ie.

Teachers' federation for Ireland

The four teacher unions – ASTI, INTO, TUI and IFUT – have engaged industrial relations expert John O'Dowd to develop a road map for the establishment of a federation of Irish teacher unions. The agreement follows the adoption of a motion by the ASTI at Annual Convention 2008. The other teacher unions adopted similar motions. The aim is that by working together and pooling resources, the four unions will be able to provide an enhanced service for members.

John O'Dowd previously worked as ASTI Assistant General Secretary and CPSU General Secretary. He was Director of the National Centre for Partnership from 1997-1999. He currently works as an independent consultant specialising in industrial relations, organisational change and mediation. ♦

€5,000 to East Africa appeal

The ASTI has donated €5,000 to the Concern East Africa Appeal (for Somalia/Ethiopia). Every year the ASTI makes a number of donations to charities working in developing countries from the union's development fund. See www.asti.ie for more information.

ASTI recruitment campaign

The ASTI launched its membership recruitment campaign in September. Packs have been sent to all school stewards. These packs include 2011 ASTI Membership Application Forms.

Information meetings for new teachers

A series of information meetings for new/ part-time and temporary teachers are being held this month. If you have colleagues who are new to teaching or qualified in the past few years and are temporary and/ or part-time please encourage them to come along. ♦

www.asti.ie for more information

RETIREMENT SEMINARS FOR ASTI MEMBERS

RETIRING IN 2011 OR 2012?

In order to facilitate members who are considering retirement during 2011 or 2012 the ASTI is providing seminars for those who have **not** yet attended an ASTI retirement seminar.

This two evening programme is for members considering retirement during 2011 or 2012.
Attendance is required on **both** evenings from 4.30pm to 7pm.

You must pre-register with Eileen O'Rourke on 01-6040170 or asti.library@asti.ie

VENUE	DAY 1	DAY 2
DUBLIN AIRPORT Clarion Hotel	Monday 17 October	Monday 24 October
	You must attend both days	
MAYO Breaffy House Hotel	Tuesday 18 October	Tuesday 25 October
	You must attend both days	
STILLORGAN Stillorgan Park Hotel	Monday 7 November	Monday 14 November
	You must attend both days	
KILKENNY CITY Newpark Hotel	Tuesday 8 November	Tuesday 15 November
	You must attend both days	
LIMERICK CITY Southcourt Hotel	Wed 9 November	Wed 16 November
	You must attend both days	
SLIGO Radisson Blu Hotel	Monday 21 November	Monday 28 November
	You must attend both days	
GALWAY CITY Carlton Hotel	Tuesday 22 November	Tuesday 29 November
	You must attend both days	
ATHLONE Radisson Blu Hotel	Wed 23 November	Wed 30 November
	You must attend both days	

TEA/SANDWICHES WILL BE AVAILABLE ON ARRIVAL

You may only attend if you have pre-registered with Eileen O'Rourke on 01-6040170 or asti.library@asti.ie

ASTI RETIREMENT SEMINARS

ASTI
A century of service