

Teacher Workload Survey

The ASTI is currently conducting research into teachers' working hours, both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers are under increasing pressure to deliver a wide range of educational and social outcomes. These developments have impacted on teachers' workload and working hours. 1,500 ASTI members have been randomly selected to participate in the survey and have been asked to complete a 6-day diary to record the work they do over the period Monday 13th to Sunday 19th October.

The results of the survey will be invaluable in providing strong factual data on teachers' workload and will enable the ASTI to protect teachers' working conditions from unsustainable demands. The ASTI is strongly encouraging all teachers who have been selected to participate in this very important research. ♦

2008 Education Conference

The 2008 ASTI Education Conference will take place in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin on Saturday 8th November. The Conference will focus on the teaching and learning process and the practices in the classroom that enable students to reach their potential. The focus of all teachers' work is on the individual student and the Conference will examine strengths and areas for improvement in our schools.

The Conference will be addressed by Dr. Rory O'Donnell, Director of the National Economic and Social Council of Ireland (NESCI) who will speak on 'Education Policy and the Social Framework'. Mr. Olavi Arra of the National Education Union Finland will also address the Conference on the topic of 'Education Policy and Students' Learning: The Finnish Experience'.

Attendance at the Conference is open to ASTI members who can apply to attend through their branch or may apply directly to ASTI Head Office. Contact Eileen O'Rourke at asti.library@asti.ie or phone 01- 6040170. ♦



Pictured above: a group of ASTI subject convenors who attended a briefing seminar held in ASTI Head Office in September.

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Assessment of Oral Examinations in the Junior Certificate

Special Rates for Part-time Teachers

Part-time teachers joining the ASTI benefit from reduced membership subscription rates.

Special membership rates for part-time teachers include:

A rate of €118.30 per annum for fixed-term pro-rata contract teachers on 11 hours or more;

A rate of €53 per annum for fixed-term pro-rata contract teachers on less than 11 hours;

A rate of €53 for substitute teachers (non PRC or RPT).

There are also special rates for teachers with CIDs who are teaching less than 18 hours.

For more information contact ASTI membership at 01-6040162 or email membership@asti.ie. Membership application forms are available on the ASTI website www.asti.ie.

The introduction of the Junior Certificate programme in 1989 included provision for an optional school-based oral examination in the modern languages - French, Italian, German and Spanish. Because this oral examination was and is conducted and assessed by the candidates' own teacher, the ASTI directed its members not to engage in the conduct and assessment of these Oral Examinations. This policy directive also includes the revised arrangements for Oral Irish in the Junior Certificate examination covered in Circular 42/07.

The ASTI policy on the necessity for external assessment of all aspects of the Certificate examinations is consistent and practical:

"The ASTI supports the use of a wide range of assessment techniques in the State certificate examinations such as oral and aural examinations, the examination of project work and the examination of practical work provided that they involve the external setting of questions, conduct and marking. The ASTI insists on these conditions because the setting, conduct and marking of the examinations must be perceived by students, parents, employers and the wider community to be totally objective and impartial." (ASTI 1999 convention policy on Junior Cert Examination)

Teaching, learning and assessment are all culture-bound activities. National external examinations have a status and a currency in Ireland which retains the confidence of parents, employers, and the wider society. Any changes to this model should, therefore, have a compelling educational validity. The ASTI has always resisted suggestions that the Junior Certificate examination be 'downgraded' or that its assessment arrangements be different to that of the Leaving Certificate examination.

While the vast majority of all students now progress beyond the Junior Certificate examination to complete five or six years second level education, the Junior Certificate examination remains a fundamental part of their educational experience. The examination represents the first state assessment of students' attainments which validates the learning in which they have been engaged. It also serves to provide a goal and a focus for student learning. The assessment arrangements for the examination should be objective, fair and transparent. The ASTI believes that the current model of external assessment is the best guarantor of these desired features. Changing to a school-based assessment model where the student's own teacher would provide marks for certification purposes could undermine the credibility, status and perceived integrity of the final marks obtained by the student.

The ASTI welcomes measures to broaden the range of assessment techniques so that the widest range of students' achievements and learning are measured. It does not support changes to the examinations which undermine their validity, acceptability and objectivity. ♦

Education Spending is Third Worst out of 29 Countries

Ireland is almost at the bottom of the international league in terms of investment in second-level education relative to the country's economic wealth.

The OECD report Education at a Glance 2008 shows Ireland coming 27th out of 29 countries when it comes to the amount of GDP per capita invested in each second-level student.

The report also shows Ireland coming joint third last in the OECD league when it comes to the proportion of GDP invested in education across all levels. Only two other countries - Greece and the Slovak Republic - invest a lower proportion of their GDP on education than Ireland.

Commenting on Education at a Glance 2008, ASTI General Secretary, John White said: "This under-funding of our education system is completely unacceptable. Everyone is now familiar with the stories about large class sizes and schools strapped for cash. While Ireland's second-level education service is performing very well - as re-affirmed by the OECD PISA surveys - the Government's stated objective of developing Ireland as a knowledge economy is only achievable if we have adequately-funded schools. The concerns about the uptake of science and mathematics cannot be adequately addressed by a cash-starved system."

A full analysis of Education at a Glance 2008 will be published in November's edition of ASTIR. ♦

Board of Management Training Seminars

Board of Management representatives are encouraged to attend ASTI training seminars being organised throughout the country during October and November. For more information, contact Sarah on 01-6040173 or email sfagan@asti.ie.

PER Conference

On Saturday 25th October a group of teachers and educational philosophers known as the Philosophy for Educational Reform (PER) Group will hold a one-day conference at Trinity College, Dublin. The PER Group seeks, through rational and democratic dialogue, to find a form of thinking about schooling from the basis of explicit, commonly accepted, values.

The conference is open to all and the registration fee is €25.

For more details, visit www.jtest.utvinternet.ie or contact Dr. Aidan Seery, School of Education, Room 3089 Arts Building, Trinity College; email: seerya@tcd.ie; Phone: 01-8962433.

Personal Information Alert

The ASTI has become aware that an email sent to an Irish second-level school contained a message which implied that the email came from ASTI Head Office. The email - which had a hotmail address - sought personal contact details for teachers at the school. This email did not originate in ASTI Head Office. In alerting members to this incident, the ASTI wishes to state the following:

Emails from ASTI head office always carry the domain name asti.ie (e.g. library@asti.ie). A listing of ASTI head office email addresses appears in the ASTI diary which is distributed to members every December.

In collecting data from members for legitimate trade union purposes, the ASTI follows procedures outlined by the Data Protection Commissioner. Any member who is concerned that a communication seeking personal information about ASTI members is not authentic should contact the ASTI immediately. ♦

Teaching Council Elections

The second Teaching Council will take office for a three-year term in March 2009. The Council consists of 37 members, including 22 registered teachers.

Eleven of the 22 registered teachers are from the second-level sector, seven of these are elected by registered second-level teachers and four are nominated by the two teachers' unions representing second-level teachers (ASTI and TUI).

The ASTI nominates two registered second-level teachers to the Teaching Council

ASTI Nominated Members to Teaching Council

The ASTI is entitled to nominate two teachers to the Teaching Council who are employed to work in or qualified to teach in registered second-level schools. ASTI members who wish to apply to be considered for an ASTI nomination to the Teaching Council by the ASTI's Standing Committee must fill in the relevant application form and return it to the General Secretary, ASTI, Thomas MacDonagh House, Winetavern Street, Dublin 8 before Friday, November 7th. Application forms have been sent to school stewards and branch secretaries.

ASTI Endorsed Candidates for Teaching Council Elections

ASTI members who are considering running in the Teaching Council elections and who wish to apply for ASTI endorsement of their candidature must fill in the relevant application form and return it to the General Secretary, ASTI, Thomas MacDonagh House, Winetavern Street, Dublin 8 before Friday, November 7th. Application forms have been sent to school stewards and branch secretaries.

It is expected that the elections for the second Teaching Council will take place in February 2009. All registered teachers who were on the Register of Teachers on September 30, 2008 are eligible to stand for election to the Council.

In order to stand for election to the Teaching Council in 2009, prospective candidates must be nominated by 15 electors (registered teachers) in the same electoral category and geographical constituency. The Teaching Council will publish a notice to this effect in national newspapers in December 2008 inviting nominations before January 13, 2009.

Gender Balance and the Electoral Process

The Teaching Council Act makes specific reference to the desirability of an appropriate gender balance in relation to the Council membership. Provision has been made for separate electoral panels - one for male candidates and one for female candidates - where possible. In the case of second-level teachers, separate electoral panels exist in the voluntary secondary category - Category 2 (this category has two constituencies and each constituency elects two second-level teachers - 1 male and 1 female).

There are four electoral categories and geographical constituencies. Category one is relevant to primary teachers only. Categories 2, 3 and 4 are relevant to second-level teachers.

Category 2: Second-level teachers - Voluntary School Sector		
Geographical Constituency	Area	Number of members
Connacht, Munster and Ulster	In Connacht, counties Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo and the City of Galway.	2
	In Munster, counties Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, North Tipperary, South Tipperary and Waterford and the cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford.	
	In Ulster, counties Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan.	
Leinster	Counties Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow; and the administrative areas of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, South Dublin and Dublin City.	2

A provisional electoral roll for the Teaching Council elections will be published in October 2008. For information on how to check the roll and have your details included or changed before October 31st, visit www.teachingcouncil.ie.

Category 3: Second-level teachers - Vocational Education Committee (VEC) Sector		
Geographical Constituency	Area	Number of members
Connacht, Munster and Ulster	In Connacht, counties Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo and the City of Galway.	1
	In Munster, counties Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, North Tipperary, South Tipperary and Waterford and the cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford.	
	In Ulster, Counties Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan.	
Leinster	Counties Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow and the administrative areas of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, South Dublin and Dublin City.	1

Category 4: Second-level teachers - Community and Comprehensive Sector		
Geographical Constituency	Area	Number of members
Connacht, Leinster, Munster and Ulster	In Connacht, counties Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo and the City of Galway.	1
	In Leinster, counties Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow and the administrative areas of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, South Dublin and Dublin City.	
	In Munster, counties Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, North Tipperary, South Tipperary and Waterford and the cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford.	
	In Ulster, counties Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan.	

Evaluation of School Leadership

ASTI Gay and Lesbian Network

The ASTI Gay and Lesbian Network is a group of gay and lesbian members of the ASTI who meet regularly in ASTI Head Office. The aim of the group is to identify what the ASTI needs to do to promote equal treatment for all teachers.

Forthcoming meetings will be held on:
29 November 2008
31 January 2009
7th March 2009

All meetings are held in ASTI Head Office and start at 1pm. For further information contact 087-6297727 or email gayandlesbiannetwork@asti.ie

Postal Addresses for Ballots

It is very important that ASTI Head Office has the correct contact addresses for each member. Ballot papers for ASTI ballots will in future be sent to the most recent address of each member. You can update your details by downloading the change of membership form on the ASTI website or by emailing updated details to membership@asti.ie.

The Department of Education and Science Inspectorate is currently engaging in a thematic evaluation of school leadership in 50 schools at primary and second-level.

The evaluation will be conducted as part of the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) process and a sample of schools undergoing WSE in 2008 has been selected for the evaluation.

During the WSE process, principals and deputy principals in the selected schools will be asked to complete questionnaires relating to their role as school leaders. These questionnaires will be provided and collected by the reporting inspector. Responses to leadership evaluation questionnaires are confidential. The responses to these questionnaires and to the normal areas of enquiry in the interviews within the WSE will form the evidence base for a national evaluation of school leadership.

The Inspectorate has stated that it will use the data collected relating to school leadership to inform a national composite report. The published WSE report on each individual school will not identify the school as taking part in the evaluation of school leadership. The composite national report will not identify the schools that provide the evidence base for the evaluation. ♦

Brief Absences

The Department of Education and Science has agreed that where school management has sanctioned the absence of a teacher from class teaching periods of less than a school day, the period of absence will be recorded at school level and will be regarded as the official record of absence. A cumulative total of 4 hours and 24 minutes will count as one day's absence.

An issue had arisen because the Department of Education system of recording absences had recorded these brief absences as a day's absence. The Department has stated that it is prepared to take account of brief absences, as recorded and certified by the Board of Management as owing to illness, in the calculation of the paid sick leave arrangements that currently apply to teachers in voluntary secondary and community and comprehensive schools. ♦

Rights Commissioner Ruling

A Rights Commissioner has ruled that a part-time teacher employed in a fee-paying schools, whose salary is funded by the Department of Education and Science (DES) is entitled to the same rates of pay and the same conditions of employment as full-time teachers whose salaries are funded by the DES.

This vindicates the on-going work of the ASTI to secure uniform salaries and conditions of employment for teachers irrespective of their hours or their source of funding.

The option of an appeal must be exercised within 6 weeks. A similar decision in favour of a teacher in another school has been appealed by the school to the Labour Court. ♦

Access to Department of Education & Science Pension Scheme for School-funded Teachers

Members may not be aware that school-funded teachers - teachers whose salaries are paid by the school - may apply to join the Secondary Teachers' Superannuation scheme (Department of Education & Science scheme).

The details of the Secondary Teachers' Superannuation Scheme are:

In accordance with an Agreement under the Programme for Competitiveness and Work, membership of the scheme is open to part-time teachers who are paid directly by their schools and who satisfy the eligibility conditions:

1. *Admission to the Superannuation Scheme, will not be compulsory for teachers who are paid directly by their schools. If they wish to be admitted to the scheme, they must apply for membership. Approval will be subject to their passing a medical examination.*
2. *Teachers will be formally admitted to the scheme from the date on which they pass the medical examination.*
3. *After formal admission, membership will be backdated. The effective date of admission will be the date which is 15 months earlier than the date of receipt of their application by the Department, provided the teachers were in eligible teaching service at that time.*

A part-time teacher who wishes to have membership backdated by more than 15 months from the date of receipt of application will have the option of having membership backdated to 1 August 1996, provided he/she was in eligible teaching service at that time, or to the date of appointment to eligible teaching service, whichever is later.

4. *Following formal admission to the scheme, teachers who are not paid directly by the Department will be billed on an ongoing basis every 6 months for the superannuation contributions payable.*

The ongoing superannuation contribution payable by whole-time teachers will be based on the incremental salary which would be payable if they were within quota.

The ongoing superannuation contribution payable by part-time teachers will be based on the weekly hours for which they are timetabled multiplied by the part-time hourly rate multiplied by 52.18 weeks.

5. *The arrears of contributions due in respect of service given between the effective date of admission and the formal date of admission will be recovered by increasing the ongoing contribution by instalments, over a period corresponding to the length of the service to which the arrears relate, until all arrears have been collected.*

Please note that the purchase of school-funded service from 1996 will be addressed in the coming months.

Members interested in joining the scheme should write to the Department seeking admission. ♦

ASTI Website Developments

A new section on curriculum has been added to the ASTI website and can be accessed in the members' area and through the homepage. The curriculum section sets out the role of the NCCA in relation to curriculum and curriculum developments and reviews currently underway. It has been developed in conjunction with the NCCA and will be updated in line with new developments.

The ASTI website is currently undergoing redevelopment and it is hoped that the new site will be up and running shortly.

Teaching Council Registration

The ASTI is currently seeking a meeting with the Teaching Council to register its concern at the delays experienced by some members in securing registration and to explore ways of remedying the situation

Separated Teachers' Support Group

The next meeting of the INTO Separated Teachers Support Group will be held on Saturday 18th October 2008 at 11.00am in the Four Seasons Hotel, Carlingford.

Separated, divorced, widowed and single parents are welcome, as are new members.

ASTI, TUI, IFUT members are welcome also.

For further information contact Chairperson, Maura Killackey on 0505-21694 or 087-1233456; or Secretary, Christina Henry on 01-8481405 or 087-6201153.

ELSTA Conference

The English Language Support Teachers' Association (ELSTA) will hold its annual conference on October 18th at the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. Speakers include Dr. Virginia Rojas, author of 'Strategies for success with English Language Learners' and Dr. Handel Wright, Canada Research Chair in Comparative Cultural Studies.

For further information, email niamhnestor@elsta.ie, call 086-3961430 or see www.elsta.ie.

The Role of Principals and Deputy Principals in the ASTI

The following motion was passed at ASTI Annual Convention in Killarney in March 2008:

"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".

The sub-committee was duly elected and, as part of its deliberations, has asked for submissions on this subject.

If you wish to make such a submission, please send it to Diarmaid de Paor, Deputy General Secretary, Thomas MacDonagh House, Winetavern Street, Dublin 8, or email to depaord@asti.ie. Submissions must reach Head Office no later than 5.00 pm on Friday 24th October 2008. ♦

Teaching Council Focus Groups

As part of its role in promoting teaching as a profession, the Teaching Council is currently planning a website which will highlight the rewards associated with teaching as a career and publicly acknowledge the work that teachers do in preparing young people for life. The domain name www.teach.ie has been purchased for this purpose and material for the site is now being developed.

In order to ensure that the content accurately reflects the work of teachers and the rewards of teaching in Ireland today, the Council is currently planning a series of focus group meetings for teachers, which will take place regionally in late 2008. Practising teachers at primary or post-primary level who would like to contribute to this process are invited to contact Etain Furlong on Etain.furlong@teachingcouncil.ie.

Later in the year when more details are available in relation to venues and timing, the Council will contact all teachers who have expressed an interest in participating. When contacting the Council, teachers are requested to provide their registration number, which will be used to ensure a balanced attendance at meetings having regard to education sectors, gender, subjects taught, regions etc. ♦

Introducing ASTI's Centenary Identity

To mark the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the ASTI, a centenary identity has been designed which will be incorporated into all centenary visual material, including publications, displays and backdrops. The centenary identity, designed by Think Media, presents a 'Flying Colours' image which aims to present the ASTI as a modern trade union with a track record of service. The festive design incorporates a flame of flying colours as an abstraction of the familiar ASTI icon, the flaming torch.

