

ASTIR

ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS, IRELAND

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LeAvIng Certificate redevelopment commences



- | Meet the new ASTI President
- | Education standards must be protected
- | New to teaching: you're better in a trade union

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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.

Honesty and integrity

I attended Coláiste Sheosaimh, Glenamaddy, Co. Galway, where the school motto was *Semper Veritas* – truth always. In the context of Senior Cycle redevelopment, it is a reminder of the importance of honesty and integrity in education, and an indicator as to why teachers are so concerned about Additional Assessment Components (AACs), AI, and the possible ramifications for students and their teachers.

In June, ASTI members voted to reject the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* by 68% to 32%. Members that I have spoken to believe that, sooner or later, they will be asked to sign off on an AAC that they believe has been completed using AI (and not in a manner allowed under current guidelines). They are worried about the consequences for them if they refuse to sign off on such an AAC, particularly if this results in a student receiving a lower grade and subsequently not receiving an offer for their preferred college course. This concern was among the many reasons why members decided that the proposed support measures are inadequate and will not effectively protect education standards and the integrity of the Leaving Cert.

We believe that the changes coming this September must be preceded by fundamental actions by the Department of Education and Youth and other bodies. These include:

- AI-proofing the assessment procedures for AACs to ensure transparency and fairness,
- having proper facilities – labs/equipment/lab resources and IT infrastructure,
- training teachers so that they are empowered to implement significant changes to the Leaving Cert effectively,
- recognising the time implications of a major new course development and difficulties in uploading student work, and
- safeguarding against increased teacher workload.

One of the things I am most proud of as an ASTI member is the union's insistence over many decades that the nature of the teacher–student relationship in Ireland continues to be one of advocacy and is not distorted by teachers assessing or grading their own students for State exams. I am a teacher of practical subjects with 30 years' experience in the classroom. My work has included supporting my students through Leaving Cert practical components. I can say with certainty that it is possible to have non-written exam components in the Leaving Cert that maintain standards and integrity, and protect the teacher–student relationship. The fantastic performance of our students in OECD PISA studies, despite underfunding, demonstrates that this holistic approach is working.

Colleagues, as you embark on a new, and most likely extremely busy school year, I wish you the best of luck and remind you that your union colleagues, the ASTI Officers, and the staff of Head Office are here to support you.



Padraig Curley

ASTI President

A fractious year ahead?

As we embark on another school year, a scan of the terrain highlights an unfortunate menu of potentially fractious and unsatisfactory outcomes that may come to pass and impact schools; for instance, discontent among our Fórsa colleagues, who are seeking entry to the Single Public Service Pension Scheme for all school secretaries and caretakers at the beginning of the year. A litany of our own woes has the potential to add further disruption and uncertainty unless the issues involved are carefully managed and addressed. The local bargaining process within the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 (PSA) is another case in point. As the days roll by, I fear that the lack of wisdom shown by the Minister for Education and Youth, in failing to postpone the introduction of the Leaving Certificate redevelopment programme for one year, will become all too apparent. The system is not ready and will be seriously exposed.

In the context of ASTI members voting to reject the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* before the summer break, Standing Committee decided, in the first instance, to seek resolution of the issues of concern to teachers by invoking the dispute resolution mechanisms set out in Chapter 5 of the PSA. This was a sensible and intelligent step in an attempt to bring a semblance of order and coherence to an unsatisfactory situation.

The ASTI is seeking to negotiate a substantially improved suite of supports for the implementation of Senior Cycle redevelopment. Meanwhile, while engaging with the ASTI on these matters, the Department of Education and Youth is proceeding, in our view, with the implementation of the provisions of the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* in a manner that breaches the terms of the PSA.

The ASTI's mandate to take industrial action, up to and including strike action, remains in place and is available for use, if the conciliation and arbitration process available within the PSA fails to produce a satisfactory outcome. Indeed, the unpicking of the linkage by the Department of what should have been a simple announcement of agreed support measures for the introduction of the redeveloped Leaving Certificate, to a host of unrelated matters, was a major focus during the summer months. Chief among these was the inexplicable insistence by the Department under the terms of the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* that the reduction in the qualifying period to become eligible for award of a contract of indefinite duration (CID) would apply only to those teachers who are members of a union that accepted its terms. Happily, common sense prevailed. For the avoidance of doubt, ASTI members taking up their first contract in a viable teaching post in September 2025 will become eligible for a CID in September 2026, subject to the normal conditions.



Kieran Christie

ASTI General Secretary

Best wishes to Moira Leydon, Assistant General Secretary: Education & Research

Moira Leydon, Assistant General Secretary: Education & Research, has retired from the ASTI after 36 years' service. During that time, Moira has greatly extended the role of the Education and Research Office and, by definition, the profile and capacity of the ASTI to engage in multiple policy and advocacy processes. In addition to providing professional support to the work of many ASTI committees, she also managed the union's research programme, prepared policy documents and submissions to State agencies, including the Oireachtas, and represented the ASTI on Departmental and other education agencies. Moira represented the ASTI on several external structures including the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Global Solidarity and Women's Committees, the Children's Rights Alliance, the OECD's Trade Union Advisory Committee, and Education International's Research Network. She is currently President of the Irish Labour History Society, Museum and Archive, and also serves on the board of Action Aid

Ireland and the Irish Network for Global Education. After finishing her secondary education in the Ursuline Convent in Sligo in 1977, Moira studied sociology and political economy in UCD, followed over the years by a Master's Degree in Equality Studies (UCD) and a Master's Degree in Human Rights and Social Policy (Maynooth University). Moira lives in Trim, Co. Meath, and is active at local level as Chairperson of the Gaelscoil and Secretary to the Meath Council of Trade Unions. In her retirement she plans to return to education to undertake a Master's Degree in Local History in Maynooth University, and also plans to spend more time with her three children, who currently live in Australia.



Meeting of education trade unions



The British and Irish Group of Teachers' Unions (BIGTU), of which the ASTI is a member, held a meeting at ASTI Head Office in May to discuss issues affecting education trade unions. In attendance were: Andrea Bradley (Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) Chairperson), John Boyle (Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) and BIGTU Secretary), Frank Jones (Irish Federation of University Teachers – IFUT), Emma Sokell (IFUT), Adam Sutcliffe (EIS), Michael Gillespie (Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) General Secretary), David Waters (TUI President), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Donal Cremin (then ASTI President), Anne Horan (INTO President), Rob Copeland (National Education Union – NEU), Seamus Searson (Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association – SSTA), Paul Cochrane (SSTA), Sarah Kilpatrick (NEU), Jane Peckham (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers – NASUWT), Wayne Broom (NASUWT), Jacqui White (Ulster Teachers' Union – UTU), Janice Mullan (UTU), Larry Flanagan (Ex Chairperson of BIGTU), and John Mac Gabhann (European Trade Union Committee for Education – ETUCE).

John Conneely appointed new ASTI Assistant General Secretary: Education & Research



John previously taught physics, science and mathematics in St Flannan's College, Ennis, Co. Clare. He has held several positions within the ASTI, including Clare Branch Chairperson from 2015 to 2025, member of the Business of CEC Sub-Committee from 2015 to 2025, and Standing Committee Regional Representative for Region 4 (Clare, Limerick North, Limerick South, Nenagh). In addition, John served as an ASTI representative on the NCCA Physics Subject Development Group from 2019 to 2025. As a teacher at St Flannan's, John has over a decade of involvement in mentoring students for the NASA Ames/Gerard K. O'Neill Space Settlement Design Contest, with some success, including a team that won first prize in April this year and presented their project in Orlando, USA, in June.

Bursary for children of ASTI members attending undergraduate courses

The ASTI will award five bursaries to the value of €1,000 each to assist students who have a parent who is an ASTI member or an ASTI staff member, in undertaking an undergraduate course in third-level education.

Applications are invited from children of ASTI members or ASTI staff members currently attending or commencing full-time undergraduate third-level courses. The successful applicants will be chosen by lot, which means that all entries have an equal chance of winning. The draw is open in respect of any student who:

- has a parent/guardian who is a member of the ASTI or a staff member of the ASTI, and
- is commencing or has already commenced a full-time undergraduate third-level course – proof of acceptance will be required.

How do I apply?

Entries for the bursary will open in September 2025. An application form can be downloaded from the ASTI website.

Closing date

Entries for the bursary will be open until September 30, 2025. It shall be the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the completed application is received by the due time and date.

For more information on the ASTI bursary, and to download the application form, visit: www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants

Miriam Duggan ASTI Bursary Award

To honour the memory of the late ASTI President, Miriam Duggan, the ASTI is establishing the *Miriam Duggan ASTI Bursary Award*.

The annual award is to the value of €5,000.

This Bursary is in addition to the current suite of five bursaries to the value of €1,000 each.

Applicants for this award will also be included in the draw for the other five bursaries.

The purpose of the *Miriam Duggan ASTI Bursary Award* is to assist students who have a parent who is an ASTI member or an ASTI staff member. The award is confined to those undertaking a full-time undergraduate or postgraduate programme of Initial Teacher Education.

Applications are invited from September 1, 2025, and entries will be open until September 30, 2025.

This Bursary draw will be open to any student:

- whose parent(s) is a member of ASTI or a staff member of ASTI, and
- who is commencing or has already commenced a full-time undergraduate or postgraduate programme of Initial Teacher Education.

The successful applicant will be picked by lot, which means that all entries have an equal chance of winning.

For more information on the full suite of ASTI bursaries, and to download the application form, visit www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants

ASTI funds school bus in Colombia

In the Tierra Grata community in rural Colombia, children are brought to school in a bus featuring the ASTI logo. This follows a donation of €1,000 made by the ASTI to facilitate the education of the children in this community.

Following a request from Justice for Colombia (JFC), the ASTI Global Solidarity Committee recommended that a donation be given from the ASTI Development Aid Fund. Justice for Colombia is an organisation of Irish and British trade unions supported by the ICTU, aimed at supporting labour rights as well as human rights, peace and social justice in Colombia.

In Tierra Grata, children have to travel to the neighbouring town of Manaure to attend school. The bus was purchased for the community with money donated by the ASTI and a number of other trade unions.

Abelardo Caicedo Colorado, leader of the Tierra Grata Transitional Peace Zone, spoke of the “valuable contribution you have given our community with the school bus, which has been so important for the children of Tierra Grata to be able to attend classes. Previously, children faced difficulties, including accidents, as they had to walk long distances to get to school. That is no longer the case. Thanks so much to all of you who have made a lasting contribution so that this could be achieved”.



A €1,000 donation from the ASTI Development Aid Fund contributed to the purchase of a school bus for children in Colombia. Photo credit: Justice for Colombia.

ASTI/Cornmarket launch health check initiative for Salary Protection Scheme members

ASTI members who are members of Cornmarket's Salary Protection Scheme are entitled to a free health assessment as part of a new initiative launched by Cornmarket and the ASTI. ASTI members who are members of Cornmarket's Salary Protection Scheme will receive an invitation by post to book a free health assessment in one of 28 locations around the country. The health assessment will be performed by a nurse or medical technician, and includes an extensive range of blood tests, a questionnaire and measurements. Results of the health assessment will be available two weeks after the appointment. This will

include a 24+ page report on their current health status, with advice and recommendations from a doctor.

For more information on the scheme please scan the QR code.



Launching the ASTI/Cornmarket MyHealthCheck initiative were (from left): Padraig Curley (ASTI President), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Tara Cassidy (Cornmarket), and Clodagh Ruddy (Cornmarket).

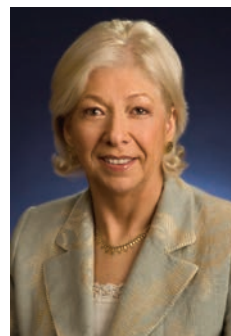
May ASTIR Convention report omission

The ASTI Trustees were omitted from the table of elections in the Convention 2025 report published on page 25 of May ASTIR, in error.

The ASTI Trustees are:



Joe Moran



Máire G. Ní Chiarba



Sarah Withero

A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO YOUR HEALTH

In a teacher's world, September is the start of a new year. Many will make new resolutions to better their classroom and the experiences of their students, but few will make a commitment to their own health or wellbeing.

The Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI) would like to change that this year. This September, together with Cornmarket, the ASTI is inviting all **members of the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme** to book an appointment for MyHealthCheck, a health screening programme designed to help you get ahead of your health. The programme will run across 28 locations and over 7,800 members will be invited to book an assessment.



Full Health Medical, the team who managed the Pink and Blue Power programme with Cornmarket in 2022, are managing the MyHealthCheck clinics around Ireland. Dr. Ann Shortt shares why this proactive approach to healthcare is beneficial and what members can gain in life from making the most of their results.

Dr. Ann Shortt, co-founder of Full Health Medical, has a fellowship in Emergency Medicine from the Royal College of Emergency Medicine and is a member of the Royal College of General Practitioners. She is a strong advocate for preventative medicine and the absolute necessity of preventing illness before it happens.

"Health is the crown on the well person's head that only the ill person can see."

Robin Sharma

"Teaching is a vital profession. A teacher contributes enormously to their community, and the lives of the young people who live in it. Unfortunately, it can also be stressful and can take a toll on your own health.

I work in the Emergency Department. Every day, I see people in the immediate aftermath of a stroke or heart attack who wish so much that they could go back several years to where their illness began and do something differently. For a lot of people reading this, that wishful time is exactly the age they are now. It may be as small a change as taking a tablet for blood pressure or quitting sugar for those who are borderline diabetic.

Sometimes, it is only when serious illness comes to our door that we realise the value of preventative medicine programmes. This is something the ASTI have recognised and it's why they are making this programme accessible to their members."

Dr. Ann Shortt, co-founder of Full Health Medical

What you need to know before your assessment

The programme offers you a practical opportunity to prioritise your wellbeing and includes:

1. A Streamlined and Comprehensive Assessment:

Members will be guided through the entire MyHealthCheck process with ease. Your assessment takes 20 minutes and will be completed by a nurse or medical technician. It includes:

- an extensive range of blood tests,
- questionnaire, **and**
- measurements.

2. A Clear and Accessible Report:

The MyHealthCheck report highlights key findings, potential risks, and actionable recommendations, empowering members to make informed decisions about their wellbeing.

3. Trust and Data Security:

The programme is run entirely independently of the ASTI and Cornmarket to ensure your individual medical data is only available and accessible to you and the medical professionals running the programme. Your data will be stored on Full Health Medical (or contracted third party) secure servers.





What previous MyHealthCheck participants said after their assessment...*

- 96%** Have a better understanding of their health after taking part in the programme
- 90%** are inspired to make positive changes in their health and wellbeing thanks to the programme
- 97%** recommend MyHealthCheck to a friend

We hope that you can seize this invaluable opportunity to prioritise your own health and wellbeing.



"We all know that the risk of burnout is a real challenge in this profession, especially with the increased workload intensity for members.

That's why we're delighted that, in partnership with Cornmarket, we are launching MyHealthCheck for ASTI Salary Protection Scheme members.

A lot of time and effort was put into developing this programme, to ensure you get peace of mind with knowing your current health status.

I urge all ASTI Salary Protection Scheme members to avail of this fantastic health assessment initiative and take control of your health today with MyHealthCheck."

Padraig Curley, President of the ASTI

How to book:

In September, invitations to all 7,800 Scheme members will be sent by post. This will include a unique invitation code and a link to the MyHealthCheck booking system. Once there, you will be asked to enter your invitation code, create an account, and book an appointment at a location that suits you best. **Spaces are limited, must be booked in advance, and operate on a first-come first-served basis.**

We look forward to seeing you there!

Cornmarket.ie/myhealthcheck, or scan the QR code



Scan me



*Source: Cornmarket, July 2025, based on 277 MyHealthCheck survey respondents.

This programme is brought to members by the ASTI and Cornmarket on behalf of the Plan underwriter and is not a regulated financial product.

The booking website and health assessments are managed by Full Health Medical.

The ASTI Salary Protection Scheme is underwritten by Irish Life Assurance plc.

Irish Life Assurance plc, trading as Irish Life, is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

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

ASTI training schedule 2025

The ASTI will be holding a series of training sessions for members beginning in September, including:

- school steward training,
- school leadership training,
- health and safety representatives training, and
- board of management training.

The training will take place in person and online.

For more information on the different types of training available and to register, please scan the QR code.



Teaching Council update

Droichead applications 2025/2026

Droichead is the induction process for all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) or teachers who have not previously completed the required period of professional practice after they qualified as a teacher. Registration for Droichead will reopen on Tuesday, September 2, for the 2025/2026 school year.

NQTs should ensure that they have all the required information and documentation before they submit their online Form D via their Teaching Council 'My Registration' account.

For more information on Droichead and to register, please go to: www.teachingcouncil.ie/register/droichead/

Teaching Council Féilte Bursary 2025

The Féilte Bursary is designed to promote teaching as a profession and to support a culture of professional collaboration and knowledge sharing among teachers and schools. The Bursary will award €125,000 to schools in the form of €2,000 and €5,000 bursaries to support collaborative professional learning activities in their school communities. Schools may use this bursary to collaborate with other schools to organise and host professional learning activities. Examples of professional learning activities include:

- forming professional learning communities,
- hosting workshops/events,
- inviting speakers,
- joint professional development events/programmes, or
- organising a lesson study.

Applications for the Teaching Council Féilte Bursary Scheme will open in September. For more information and to apply for the Bursary, please scan the QR code.



Student numbers continue to increase

The latest *Education Indicators for Ireland* report, published in July, confirms a sharp increase in student numbers between 2019 (371,450 students) and 2023 (416,575 students). This aligns with Department of Education enrolment projections for this period. Department projections predict that second-level student numbers will have peaked in the 2024/25 school year. The *Education Indicators for Ireland* report also shows that the number of second-level teachers increased between 2019 and 2023 from 29,093 to 33,543. Despite the impact of the pandemic on education and schools, there was an increase in transition rates from second level to higher education, from 62.1% in 2019 to 64.7% in 2023. Also notable is the increase in the proportion of students taking the Leaving Cert Vocational and Leaving Cert Applied programmes: from 25% to 32.7% and 5.1% to 6.7%, respectively. School completion rates for DEIS schools increased from 83.8% in 2019 to 90% in 2023.

For more stats on education from early childhood to third level and beyond, read *Education Indicators for Ireland* at: https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/2025_Report_Education_Indicators_for_Ireland.pdf

Requesting digital publications through MyUnion



MyUnion, the members' only area of the ASTI website, allows members to decide if they would like to receive our publications digitally. Once you have created an account, you will have convenient access to information about your membership, and you will be able to request digital or hard copies of all of our publications, such as *ASTIR* and *Nuacht*. Members can also update their personal details directly in the MyUnion area – for example, your home address – to ensure that you receive the most up-to-date correspondence from the ASTI.

You can do this at: www.asti.ie/my-union/

Members can access *ASTIR* and *Nuacht* online by scanning the QR code.





POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES AT MIC

EDUCATION POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

- Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology
- Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)
- Master of Education (M Ed) with Specialisms (NEW)
- M Ed in Literacy Education
- M Ed in Leadership of Wellbeing in Education
- M Ed in Educational Leadership & Management
- M Ed in Education for Human Rights & Equality
- Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Inclusive Special Education
- Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Adult & Further Education
- Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/MA in Autism Studies
- Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Digital Leadership in Education
- Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Middle Leadership & Mentoring
- Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice

PhD & MA BY RESEARCH AND THESIS IN THE FOLLOWING EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

Learning; Society & Religious Education; Language & Literacy Education; Arts Education & Physical Education; Reflective Pedagogy & Early Childhood Studies; Educational Psychology; Inclusive & Special Education; STEM Education

LIBERAL ARTS POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

- Structured PhD in Applied Linguistics
- MA/M Sc in Environment, Society & Culture
- MA in Climate, Justice & Sustainability
- MA in Modern English Literature
- Graduate Diploma/MA in Applied Linguistics
- MA in History
- MA in Local History (with UL)
- MA in Media Studies
- MA sa Ghaeilge (Ceannaireacht i dTeanga, Cultúr agus Poba)
- Certificate/MA in Christian Leadership in Education

PhD & MA BY RESEARCH AND THESIS IN THE FOLLOWING LIBERAL ARTS DEPARTMENTS

Business Studies; Drama & Theatre Studies; English Language & Literature; French Studies; Gaeilge; German Studies; Geography; History; Mathematics & Computer Studies; Media & Communication Studies; Music; Philosophy; Psychology; Theology & Religious Studies

BRIATHAR DE MO LÓCHRANN



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mic.ie/postgraduate

Government fails to make dent in teacher recruitment and retention crisis

The teacher recruitment and retention crisis in schools continues and remains unabated due to ineffective Government action.

In recent years, the ASTI has been tracking the number of unfilled post-primary teaching posts advertised on the education recruitment website educationposts.ie. Mid-August each year it remains consistent that hundreds of teaching posts remain unfilled, despite schools having worked relentlessly to try and put a full complement of teaching staff in place for their students. In a REDC/ASTI survey of school leaders undertaken in spring 2025 (published in August 2025), 67% of respondents said that they had unfilled vacancies due to recruitment difficulties. The minimalist actions taken by the Government in recent years, which have included upskilling existing teachers, extra training places for teachers in our colleges of education, changes to student teacher placement arrangements, and changes to the substitution arrangements applicable to teachers on leave schemes and retired teachers, have failed to reverse the chronic teacher shortage crisis in Ireland.

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary, said: "The extent of the recruitment and retention crisis in our schools demonstrated in the REDC survey conducted on behalf of the ASTI last spring is shocking".

The survey found that:

- 77% of second-level schools had no applications for an advertised post or posts during the 2024/25 school year,
- 90% of schools said that there were no substitute teachers available to cover for absent teachers,
- 73% said that they had to employ non-qualified/casual teachers to manage teacher supply issues,
- in addition to employing non-qualified teachers, schools had to resort to reassigning special education needs teachers to mainstream classes, adversely impacting the most vulnerable in school communities, and
- 42% of schools removed a subject or subjects from the curriculum.

"Fundamental changes to entice teachers to return from other countries need to be introduced", said Mr Christie.

The ASTI/REDC survey is available online at: www.asti.ie/document-library/school-leaders-on-teacher-supply-and-recruitment-redc-survey/



ECO-UNESCO

Ireland's Leading Environmental Education Youth Organisation

ECO-UNESCO, invites teachers to get their students involved in hands-on environmental learning and action this school year.

Join Our Environmental Workshops

Are your students passionate and eager to find ways to protect our planet? Dive into our engaging environmental workshops tailored for young people aged 10-18! Our workshops offer hands-on activities, discussions and expert-led sessions!

Topics include: Fashion Focus, Exploring Ecology and Biodiversity, Climate Action, Waste Warriors and more.



Workshops





Sign Up to the Young Environmentalist Awards!

YEA is a free all-island eco-action programme that empowers young people aged 10-18 to take action for a sustainable future.

Whether it's science experiments on energy conservation, art projects focused on upcycling, geography initiatives mapping local biodiversity, or home economic projects on creating sustainable recipes, there's a way for every teacher and subject to get involved!

Registration Deadline: Friday 7th November



YEA

Contact us to learn more: info@ecounesco.ie (01) 662 5491 www.ecounesco.ie

GET OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

Visit the Europa Experience

with your class to learn about democracy in the European Union in a new and engaging way. Book a visit today and bring a new perspective to your classwork. Groups of 12-30 persons can also book into the role-play game, and experience what it's like to be a Member of the European Parliament.



Europa Experience



11 Chatham St, Dublin,
Do2 VP46, Ireland





MEET THE NEW ASTI PRESIDENT

New ASTI President Padraig Curley speaks about his background and his priorities for the coming year.

Where do you teach?

I teach in Loreto Community School in Milford, Co. Donegal (north of Letterkenny). It is a fantastic school with a great school community. I have worked there for my whole career. It was a secondary school when I started, changing to a community school in 1996 with a new building in 2005.

Where did you go to second-level school?

I went to Coláiste Sheosaimh, Glenamaddy, Co. Galway. That school has been amalgamated with the vocational school and it is now Glenamaddy Community School. I have fond memories from Coláiste Sheosaimh. I spent many days playing soccer and Gaelic football out on the pitch, and made many friends there.

What would you say to teachers starting their career this September?

I would say enjoy it, keep your enthusiasm. Students will have a natural affinity to a younger teacher who's starting off. Watch out for your limits and set boundaries. Look after the small things – if you watch the small things in your teaching career hopefully there won't be any big incidents that will happen. Most importantly, join the ASTI straight away!

What are your priorities for your year as ASTI President?

Senior Cycle redevelopment is a major issue and will take a huge amount of my focus. We have rejected the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Support Measures and we are in the process of mapping our way forward with this campaign. I would like to lead ASTI members to

present a united front with a comprehensive and sustained campaign to better the Senior Cycle redevelopment process. Other key issues are important and will be dealt with effectively, including workload, Croke Park hours, promotion, leave, salary scales, and other issues that impact the sustainability of teaching as a career.

What positions have you held in the ASTI?

I've been involved at school, branch and national level over the years, including:

- ASTI Vice President,
- School Steward (10 years),
- ASTI board of management representative,
- Branch Organiser,
- Regional Organiser (Region 1),
- Member of CEC,
- Member of Standing Committee,
- Member of Finance Committee,
- Member of ASTI Community and Comprehensive Advisory Committee,
- Chair, Digital Rights Sub-Committee,
- Chair, Post of Responsibility Sub-Committee,
- ASTI subject rep for MT (Wood) and Graphics,
- ASTI representative on NCCA Junior Cycle Wood Technology Subject Development Group, and
- ASTI representative on NCCA Senior Cycle Technology Subject Development Group.

What advice would you give to school stewards about asking new members to join the ASTI?

Look at the ASTI as a group of people that have common interests and goals. The key to it is camaraderie, forming relationships, supporting and advising members. All of those things are offered by ASTI membership, along with a sense of belonging and protection. We will have your back at school level, at branch level, and at national level. You will be looked after in your place of work by your colleagues and our fantastic Head Office. You will now be part of a team. We look after our members very well.

What is your proudest moment to date as an ASTI member?

In my case it would have been the way I was taken under the wing of older teachers when I joined the teaching profession and was introduced to the ASTI. I was recently at an ASTI retirement function for those key people that had an influence on me and who stood up for me at certain points in my career and gave me support and strength, and that journey makes me very proud of the ASTI. Camaraderie is what has really been important for me. I'm also very proud that the ASTI has insisted that the relationship between the student and the teacher remain one of being an advocate. That has been achieved mostly because we have not agreed to demands to assess our own students in State exams. We have successfully stood by that view for both the Junior Cycle Framework and the Senior Cycle redevelopment in its initial stages. Obviously, I am extremely proud and honoured to be the ASTI President in 2025-26. I hope to serve the members well.

What are your interests outside of teaching?

Most of my interests would involve sport, woodwork or drawing. I play soccer most weekends. I am a Man Utd supporter, and keen on GAA and golf. I like all woodworking (I am a Woodwork/Construction/Drawing teacher), especially woodturning, which I have gotten back into after a hiatus of a few years. I have my own workshop set up turning bowls, lamps and other items. I find it



relaxing and fulfilling. I enjoy cycling – both road and mountain biking. I went to France and a few other countries on cycle events – L'Étape du Tour, Amstel Gold and the Paris Roubaix with friends. There is a great feeling in mass participation events.

My other interests would include music, film and travel. I am a fan of Prince and had the privilege of seeing him play live on several occasions. I enjoy trips to the cinema with my daughter, and love travelling and seeing new cultures and places.

I experienced living and working in the USA (Boston and San Francisco) and seeing many places and cities with my wife and family, which have given me a broader perspective.

There are many beautiful places in Donegal like Glenveigh, Ards Friary, and multiple beaches and forest walks I like being in with my wife and best friend Serena.

The golf courses in Donegal are fantastic too!

Being from a farming background I like the outdoors and appreciate being back on my parents' farm, although some of the old farming chores I do not miss!

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SENIOR CYCLE REDEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGN

As this *ASTIR* goes to press, a number of significant concerns regarding Senior Cycle redevelopment remain unresolved.

In May of this year, ASTI members voted to reject the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* by 68% to 32% (turnout 73%). In a separate ballot, ASTI members voted by 67% to 33% in favour of industrial action, up to and including strike action, in the event that the ASTI rejected the provisions set out in the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures*.

ASTI Standing Committee decided, in the first instance, to seek resolution of the issues of concern to teachers by invoking the dispute resolution mechanisms set out in the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026, which the ASTI is party to.

The Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 provides that where disputes arise, they will be subject to initial bilateral engagement at local level between the parties to the dispute – in this case the ASTI and the Department of Education and Youth. The Public Service Agreement further provides that where parties cannot reach agreement, either side can refer the dispute to the Teachers' Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme.

The ASTI can confirm that teachers in all schools, including ASTI members, who are appointed to a viable post in September 2025 will become eligible for a permanent contract in September 2026. Eligibility is contingent upon successful reappointment following a competitive recruitment process and the normal criteria for CIDs.

In June, the ASTI wrote to the Department of Education and Youth requesting that the dispute resolution process set out in the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 be invoked. Engagement took place over the summer period and continues as this *ASTIR* goes to print. The ASTI's strong mandate to take industrial action, up to and including strike action, remains in place and available for use, if the processes available fail to produce a satisfactory outcome.

Key issues

The key issues behind the ASTI's rejection of the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* include:

- the lack of clarity regarding the use of AI in Leaving Certificate Additional Assessment Components (AACs) and related authentication issues,
- the fact that Government-commissioned research on the implications of AI developments for AACs has not yet been published,
- the reported lack of adequate lab space/lab equipment in many schools,
- concerns about the lack of adequate and timely training for teachers,
- concerns about the exacerbation of inequities for students, and
- workload issues.

CID qualifying period

The ASTI asserted that the Department of Education and Youth's insistence that the reduced qualifying period for CIDs from two years to one year would only apply to teachers whose union had accepted the *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* document* was untenable. The ASTI argued that this would be unacceptable since this initiative was first announced by the Minister for Education and Youth in April 2025 as a measure to support teacher supply in all schools (and was only subsequently included in the *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* document).

The ASTI can confirm that teachers in all schools, including ASTI members, who are appointed to a viable post in September 2025 will become eligible for a permanent contract in September 2026. Eligibility is contingent upon successful reappointment following a competitive recruitment process and the normal criteria for CIDs.

Croke Park hours

The document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures* includes an amendment to the Croke Park hours whole-school arrangement: from 10 hours for teacher-led activities to 14 hours. The necessary Circular letter setting out arrangements in that regard has not been published at the time of going to press. The ASTI will issue guidance to members as soon as possible, including guidance for members in dual union schools.

*In May 2025, ASTI members rejected the document *Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures*. TUI members, who were also balloted by their union at this time, accepted the document.

Visit the ASTI Senior Cycle redevelopment campaign page for the latest developments at: <https://www.asti.ie/news-campaigns/campaigns/seniorcycleredevelopment/>



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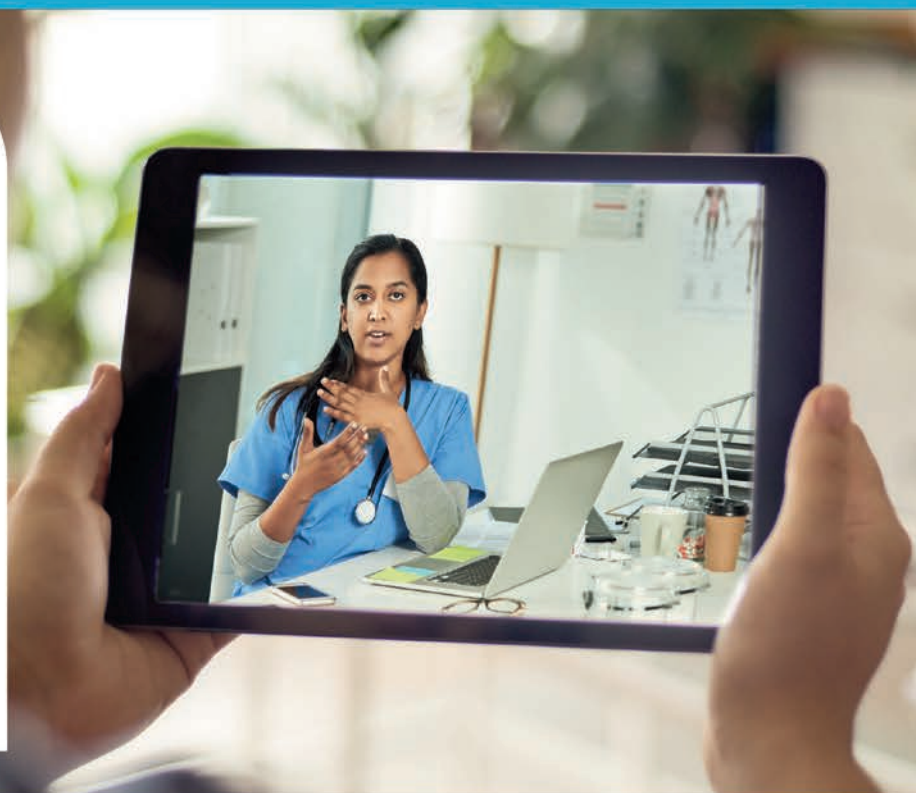
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For new entrants to teaching this year, joining a union has never been more important.

Welcome to the teaching profession! As you begin your teaching career, the ASTI is here to support you. For your first year of teaching, ASTI membership is free. This means that you make no payment whatsoever!

What the ASTI does

The ASTI is a registered trade union with over 20,200 members, which promotes the interests of second-level teachers, seeks to improve their salaries and conditions of employment, and regulates relations between members, their employers, and the Department of Education and Youth. As a member, you will have access to the ASTI's professional information and advice service. If you need representation or legal advice now or in the future, you can contact your designated industrial relations official.

What are the benefits of joining the ASTI?

Protection and support network

Joining the ASTI means that you are part of the biggest support network of second-level teachers in Ireland. As you navigate your career, you have the collective experience and strength of 20,200 teacher colleagues behind you.

Professional information and advice

Members can contact ASTI Head Office, located on Winetavern Street in Dublin, for information and expert advice from industrial relations specialists with understanding and experience of the second-level education sector. These specialists can offer professional representation if necessary.

Representation and negotiation

The ASTI represents its members on a range of bodies and negotiates on their behalf at national, regional and school level.

Training and seminars

The ASTI holds regular training courses and seminars to support its members. Regular seminars on topics such as starting out in teaching, navigating social media, leadership, special education needs, and retirement, assist members at all stages of their careers. Regular trade union training supports ASTI representatives, including school stewards, board of management representatives, health and safety representatives, and branch officers.



As a member, you will have access to the ASTI's professional information and advice service. If you need representation or legal advice, you can contact your designated industrial relations official.

Financial benefits

You can access a range of exclusive financial benefits as an ASTI member:

- ASTI Rewards for new members – 12 months' free access to MyDoc, free financial health checks, and much more,*
- teachers' car insurance scheme,*
- discounted loans, home insurance, etc.,*
- access to the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme,*
- you can apply for a range of grants for optical, dental or sickness benefit, and
- you can apply for the ASTI Bursary for further studies.

For more information, see: <https://www.asti.ie/member-benefits/financialbenefits/>

*The ASTI has no responsibility for these schemes or their administration. All enquiries about them should be made directly to Cornmarket.

Make sure your voice is heard

ASTI members decide on the policies of the union through its democratic structures, which begin at branch level.

You can express your opinions by being active in your branch. Each ASTI member is a member of a branch operating in the area in which they work or live.

Members are encouraged to attend branch meetings to discuss professional, educational, and trade union issues.



What contract are you being offered?

It is vital that new teachers are aware of the type of contract that is being offered. If you have any questions about your contract, or about a contract you are being offered, the ASTI can advise and support you.

Contracts

Before signing a contract, teachers are advised to carefully examine the contract and consult with their school steward and/or ASTI Head Office. The nature of the contract being offered should be made clear and in writing to the teacher, including the status of the contract (permanent/fixed-term), duration, subjects, number of hours, and reasons for a fixed term. Full-time teachers are contracted to teach up to 22 hours per week. There are many different types of teaching contracts and it is important that you understand what type of contract you have.

Non-permanent/part-time teacher

As a non-permanent or part-time teacher, you may be a casual part-time teacher, a non-casual part-time teacher, a regular part-time teacher, or a fixed-term whole-time teacher.

Contract of indefinite duration

A contract of indefinite duration (CID) gives a teacher the same job security as other permanent teachers. However, a CID holder's salary is based on the number of hours spent teaching (which can be less than full hours).

School-paid teachers

Some schools are in a position to employ teachers privately.

For more information about the types of contracts, scan the QR code here:



Salary scales

Teachers are paid according to an incremental salary scale and may be entitled to extra allowances. Since 2011, two salary scales operate for

teachers in second-level schools in Ireland. Through our equal pay for equal work campaign, the ASTI has vigorously sought to reinstate parity for lesser-paid teachers and has reduced the disparity considerably.

For more information on teachers' salary scales, scan the QR code here:



Employee Assistance Service

Teachers paid by the Department of Education and Youth have access to a free, confidential service, which provides telephone and direct one-to-one counselling on a nationwide basis. The service can also be used by teachers' spouses, civil partners, or dependents, where the family member can be described as a person over the age of 16 and residing at the family home. The telephone number is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, at 1800 411 057. Alternatively, you can WhatsApp 'Hi' to 087-369 0010, or text 'Hi' to 087-145 2056 for SMS support.

For more information on this service, go to the ASTI website at:

www.asti.ie/your-employment/terms-and-conditions/employee-assistanceservice-helpline-for-teachers/

Contacting the ASTI

The most immediate point of contact for ASTI members is your elected ASTI representative in your school: the school steward. Make sure to approach your school steward in the first instance if you want any advice or have any concerns. If you need to contact your industrial relations official in ASTI Head Office, you can call 01-604 0160/1800 418 400, or email info@asti.ie.

MyUnion

ASTI members have access to a section of the ASTI website called MyUnion. This area gives you convenient access to information about your ASTI membership, including contact details for your local and national elected representatives and Head Office staff. You can also edit your personal information and choose to receive key publications digitally.

How to join the ASTI online

To join the ASTI online, go to: www.asti.ie/join/

Department-paid teachers, ETBI-paid teachers, and school-paid teachers

Before you begin the 'join online' process, make sure you have the following to hand:

- payroll number,
- Teaching Council registration number,
- names of ASTI proposer and seconder (ideally your proposer and seconder will be from your local branch, e.g., school colleagues), and
- membership numbers of proposer and seconder (this is not essential, but having these numbers helps to process your application more quickly).

Student teachers – PME students or students in a teacher training college/university

Before you begin your 'join online' process, make sure you have the following to hand:

- name of degree qualification,
- name of third-level institution and year of graduation, and
- teaching practice – school name (if known).

ADVICE FOR NEW TEACHERS

Teachers share their insights and advice.



**Richard Bell, Galway Branch,
Coláiste Muire Máthair, Galway,
and ASTI Vice-President**

Firstly, congratulations on qualifying into this wonderful profession. I truly hope you enjoy it as much as I have.

Be kind to yourself. Teaching is a skill that develops with experience. Remember, 'every day is a school day'. You'll grow and get better throughout your career. Don't beat yourself up over mistakes. Students are incredibly

forgiving when you own your mistakes. Even in your own subject, it's okay to say, "I don't know, but I'll find out". Consistency and fairness will carry you far.

I sound like an 'old fogey', but the years will go by incredibly quickly. I still vividly remember my first day teaching, and now I'm well into the second half of my career. So please, enjoy the journey. Your colleagues will be a special part of your job. Each one of them – yes, even the cranky-looking guy in the corner that everyone calls Foz – had a first day too. Most will be happy to help, so never feel like you're alone.

Join the union. For me, it was a no-brainer to join the ASTI. No teacher should be in a classroom without the support, protection, and representation of a union. Your principal and senior management are almost certainly union members too.

So, welcome! Teaching can be tough but deeply rewarding. Keep learning, lean on colleagues, and take pride in your work. You've earned your place – now make your mark!



**Aoife Broderick, Clare Branch,
Mary Immaculate Secondary School,
Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare**

My first piece of advice is 'make sure to make a friend!' You will be new for this year but one of your colleagues might have been new last year. This is a great place to start. Every teacher has experienced the feeling of being new and your staffroom will be a welcoming place to build friendships.

The school year is a marathon, so pace yourself. You'll have a very busy season between August and Christmas, where 60-70% of the work gets done. The pressures are different in the second half of the year, so be prepared for the changes of tempo throughout the year. Build in time to relax and enjoy yourself during the breaks. Walking the Camino in Spain over the summer has definitely given me renewed energy for the year ahead.

Most of all, take the time to enjoy teaching. You're a teacher now! Don't let anyone make you feel like you're not.



**Katie Delany, Dublin South 1 Branch,
Synge St. CBS, Co. Dublin**

Congratulations! Teaching is a wonderful career, but at the beginning it really can be daunting. The first year can feel like quite a lot, so be patient with yourself. Remember that you're always learning.

It's very rewarding to put all the theory you learned while you were training into practice in the real-life classroom. You've done it in teaching practice but

you've more freedom when it's your own groups. You can really enjoy that. The challenge is that you may feel overwhelmed because you're getting used to having a full timetable. You could spend a whole evening planning lessons, correcting, and building resources, and then you have no space to clear your own head. Allocate a certain amount of time to do your planning but have a cut-off point. Switch off the computer and have a cup of tea or go for a walk. Work within your subject departments. Talk to other teachers to share ideas and resources. Joining the union and going to branch meetings is also a really great way to share the workload because you're sharing ideas and experiences. Reach out to your colleagues and don't be afraid to ask for help!



**Christopher Davey, Sligo Branch,
Summerhill College, Co. Sligo**

The best person who knows your voice is you. In your first years of teaching, it's easy to be pulled in many directions by advice, expectations, or pressure to perform. But your own voice, instincts, and values are still highly important. When you share your questions, challenges, and hopes with others, you'll find strength and perspective. That could be a colleague down the hall, a friend who reminds you of your worth, or an ASTI member who supports your rights and well-being. Teaching is not just about delivering content; it's about building relationships. Go to branch meetings to stay informed and connect with like-minded teachers in other schools. You will never stop learning or refining how you teach, but hold onto what matters most to you and be open to having your mind changed. Your voice will grow stronger, more confident, and more impactful with time, especially if you keep using it to support others and invite them to walk beside you as you do. It's also worth having a conversation with a financial planner. When you're young, time and compound interest are on your side. Planning early can help you prepare for the big moments in life and maximise your future choices and opportunities.

To join the ASTI, please scan the QR code:



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*Donncha O Treasaigh
Director of Schools
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WHO SHOULD APPLY?

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

TO APPLY:

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MEET YOUR STANDING COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES



Lorraine Finn,
Standing Committee Region 3:
Galway, Tuam, East Galway

I got involved in the ASTI because ...

I got involved in the ASTI because when I started teaching, full time or permanent contracts were very difficult to find.

The hours culture had well and truly taken hold in second-level schools and a lot of teachers did not know in May or June if they would have work in their school the following September. I knew that I needed to get correct information about my rights, entitlements and salary from the correct source.

The ASTI's biggest priorities are ...

The ASTI's biggest priorities at the moment are trying our best to bring about a solution to the current impasse on Senior Cycle change. This is obviously a huge issue of concern for members, as is evident from our recent vote on the Senior Cycle.

I'm glad to say also that the health, safety and welfare of members is a central concern for the ASTI. This can be seen through the work of the Health, Safety and Welfare Committee.

Likewise, the concerns of part-time and non-permanent teachers are of huge importance to the ASTI.

These are often our most vulnerable members and need the protection of our union the most. We are lucky that we have a very active Non-Permanent Teachers Committee to look after the interests of these members.

Something people may not know about me is ...

One thing that people may not know about me: my favourite type of movies and TV programmes are Mafia related.

I've been hooked since watching *The Untouchables* and *The Godfather* as a teenager.



Margo McGann,
Standing Committee Region 7:
Fermoy, Cork North, East Cork,
West Waterford, Dungarvan

I got involved in the ASTI because ...

I believe strongly in the power of collective voice and action to protect and improve teachers' working conditions. As a secondary school

teacher, I saw first-hand the challenges facing both teachers and students – rising workloads, limited resources, and policy decisions made without meaningful consultation. Joining the ASTI gave me the opportunity to advocate for positive change and ensure that teachers' voices are heard. I was also inspired by the union's history of defending education standards and standing up for fairness in our profession.

The ASTI's biggest priorities are ...

One of the most pressing issues is Senior Cycle reform. The union supports changes that enhance student learning and reduce pressure; it firmly opposes rushed implementation. The ASTI must continue to emphasise the need for genuine consultation with teachers, clear national guidelines, especially around assessment and the use of AI, and comprehensive training before any roll-out. Equal access to resources, including for DEIS and rural schools, is essential to avoid widening inequality. Above all, reforms must respect teachers' professionalism and uphold educational standards.

Something people may not know about me is ...

Outside of teaching, I'm a member of the Slow Food movement and a big fan of Darina Allen. I have a keen interest in traditional food practices, sustainability, and local producers. One of my favourite hobbies is making jam, as there's something very satisfying about preserving the best of each season.

I recently completed a two-year Professional Diploma in Home Economics Education at Munster Technological University, which deepened my passion for food education and strengthened my belief in the importance of teaching practical life skills.



Pádraig Murphy,
Honorary National Organiser

I got involved in the ASTI because ...

I got involved in the ASTI because I was asked to join as a student member by a teacher in St Peter's Community School in Passage West, Co. Cork. I was studying in University College Cork

for a Higher Diploma in Education and was on school placement. I would recommend all student teachers and teachers who are not members of any teaching union to join the ASTI. There is an opportunity to get involved in your local branch of the union, and prepare and debate motions, which, if passed at Annual Convention, become ASTI policy.

The ASTI's biggest priorities are ...

The ASTI's biggest priorities are to examine the impact of changes to the Leaving Certificate, under the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme.

Schools and the education system are not equipped to adequately implement the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme.

This leads to fairness and equity issues for Leaving Certificate students.

Something people may not know about me is ...

Something people may not know about me is that I teach in St Declan's College, Cabra, and was a member of the Dublin North West Branch.

I enjoy walking on the Curragh Plains and swimming in the Atlantic Ocean in south Kerry.



Noelle Moran,
Honorary Treasurer

I got involved in the ASTI because ...

I have always believed in trade unionism. As a young teacher, I began regularly attending ASTI Tuam Branch meetings, where I was warmly welcomed by teachers at all stages of their careers.

I was struck by the depth of knowledge in the room, and intrigued by the power of collective action in advancing pay and conditions for workers.

The ASTI's biggest priorities are ...

Preserving the integrity of our education system is vital. The new Junior Cycle has, in many ways, failed to serve education well. Now, we face rushed and flawed Senior Cycle reform, which is deeply concerning. As

a union, we must strive to uphold standards of excellence for students, teachers, and society.

Teacher workload has increased dramatically and must be addressed – we are being pushed beyond reasonable limits. Meanwhile, pension inequality remains a pressing issue.

Class A PRSI-paying teachers now make up the majority of the workforce, yet there are huge inequalities between their retirement benefits and those of Class D PRSI teachers. This must remain a central union concern.

Something people may not know about me is ...

In recent years I have been helping my father on our farm. Due to my aversion to cattle, some intense father–daughter negotiations led to a change in livestock.

We now breed Connemara ponies and llamas. As I finish writing this, I'm preparing to bottle-feed our newborn llama, Lottie, after her mother sadly rejected her.

Regional Representatives

Eighteen regionally elected members, along with the President, Vice President, Immediate Past President and Honorary National Organiser, sit on Standing Committee. Standing Committee members bring the views of the members and branches they represent to the table when important decisions are being made.

You can find contact details for your Standing Committee representative on the ASTI website or in your ASTI Diary.

Region No.	Branch	Regional Representative
1	Iar Thuaisceart Thír Chonaill, Sligo, Donegal	Jimmy Staunton
2	West Mayo, East Mayo, Carrick-on-Shannon	Geraldine O'Loughlin
3	Galway, Tuam, East Galway	Lorraine Finn
4	Clare, Limerick South, Limerick North, Nenagh	Vacant
5	Desmond, Kerry, West Limerick	Siobhán O'Donovan
6	Cork South Paddy Mulcahy, Carbery	John Byrne
7	Cork North, Dungarvan, East Cork, Fermoy, West Waterford	Margo McGann
8	Wexford Tony Boland, New Ross, Enniscorthy, Waterford	Gerard Hanlon
9	Tipperary, Kilkenny, Roscrea	Donal Coughlan
10	Laois, Carlow, Kildare	Eamon Ryan
11	Longford, Tullamore, Navan, Athlone, Mullingar	David Wynne
12	Dundalk, Monaghan, Cavan, Drogheda Sean Higgins	Louis Callaghan
13	Dublin South 2, Dublin South County	David Murphy
14	Stillorgan, Wicklow, Dun Laoghaire, Bray	Ray St. John
15	Dublin South West, Dublin North West	Adrienne Healy
16	Dublin North 1 Miriam Duggan, Dublin North Central	Maria Markey-Greene
17	Dublin North East, Fingal	Seamus Keane
18	Dublin South Central, Dublin South 1	Sinéad Corkery

PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT IS NOT ACCEPTABLE



As schools reopen, the teacher recruitment crisis and proposed Senior Cycle redevelopment remain major concerns for teachers.

“[On Senior Cycle redevelopment] I have a lot of concerns about this new Senior Cycle. First of all, there is a lack of training and a lack of knowledge on the ground of what it will entail. There is huge concern about equality, especially since 40% of marks are allocated towards a project and this project is open to manipulation from outside sources, especially AI. The assessment procedures of some subjects are not robust enough to guarantee that there will not be interference from AI.”

Padraig Curley, ASTI President

News, Ocean FM, July 31, 2025

“In May, 20,000 ASTI members voted down a proposed package of Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Support Measures because the measures didn’t go far enough, they were not targeted, and didn’t allay any of our members’ concerns regarding the new Senior Cycle. Senior Cycle redevelopment, which was accelerated by the previous Minister for Education and Youth, Norma Foley TD, shouldn’t be implemented in schools this year, but the following school year. There is a 40% project in every single subject and there are massive inequalities in facilities among schools – some schools have state-of-the-art science labs and some schools have labs that are years old. Inequalities are inbuilt from the start.”

Padraig Curley, ASTI President

News, Highland Radio, July 31, 2025

“[On the teacher recruitment and retention crisis] It seems the Department of Education and Youth is waiting for demographic shifts to lessen the problem. This is not an acceptable way to treat the children and young people who are returning to school this month ... Teaching in Ireland needs to be made more attractive. The enormous price being paid by children who are consistently in classrooms with no qualified teacher available to teach them will leave a long and bitter legacy.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

The Irish Times, August 14, 2025

“[On the teacher recruitment and retention crisis] Some students are going back to school as early as next week, and there are hundreds of vacant posts still unfilled. The Government claims it’s been making changes in terms of upskilling, substitution, and extra training places, but it’s failed to address the chronic shortage ... Schools are also experiencing overcrowding in some classes – 21% of teachers said they had to merge higher- and ordinary-level

students, which is also creating an unfair balance ... It’s not just about academics; secondary school is not just about results but making well-rounded individuals, and extracurriculars are important for that. In 2023, 28% of teachers said they had to curtail extracurriculars, and now it’s up to 38%. That’s really going to impact students’ overall development.”

John Byrne, ASTI member and Standing Committee Region 6

The Echo, August 15, 2025

“[On the teacher recruitment and retention crisis] Fundamental changes to entice teachers to return from other countries need to be introduced. Shortening the excessively long teachers’ pay scale and doubling the number of middle management posts in schools would be an enormous help in properly addressing the teacher supply crisis.”

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

Irish Examiner, August 15, 2025

“[On Senior Cycle redevelopment] ... Even in the same town, never mind city, you’re going to have one school that might be five years old and is a beautiful school with a very, very good lab. It might even have two labs. Then you look in the same town and there’ll be a school built in the 1960s with one lab and no proper infrastructure ... No teacher wants to take industrial action ... but they’re not being respected and they’re not being listened to.”

Padraig Curley, ASTI President

The Irish Times, August 18, 2025

“[On Senior Cycle redevelopment] We want the assessment to be as AI-proof as possible, so that one student with a great computer, great Wi-Fi, a paid version of generative AI, won’t have an advantage over a student who can’t afford that. It’s not that we’re anti-AI – we live in the real world, we want students to have these skills. This is in the interest of students because if the project is going to be AI generated, each student gets 35-40% in it and that’s fine, but it’s still the exam that separates the H1s from the H2s. The whole premise of introducing this reform to reduce student stress needs to be examined very carefully because I’m speaking as a parent here, as my own daughter was very stressed with it and I sympathise with any parent in that position. This is not going to reduce stress but exacerbate it.”

Padraig Curley, ASTI President

The Hard Shoulder, Newstalk, August 18, 2025

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ASTI CELEBRATES OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS

This year's ASTI Awards evening celebrated the contributions of ASTI members both inside and outside the classroom.



From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Anne Loughnane (Honorary Life Membership recipient), and Donal Cremin (then ASTI President).

From left: Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Michael Barry (Honorary Life Membership recipient), and Donal Cremin (then ASTI President).

Teachers from all over the country were honoured by the ASTI in May for their outstanding contributions both inside and outside the classroom. The annual ASTI Awards ceremony, held in Dublin, celebrated those who have provided invaluable service to the teaching profession and the ASTI. This edition of *ASTIR* profiles the 2025 Honorary Life Membership Award recipients.

Honorary Life Membership

Honorary Life Membership is awarded to members who have given exceptional service to the ASTI, displayed outstanding leadership, and served as inspirational role models. The recipients this year were Anne Loughnane and Michael Barry.

Anne Loughnane

A teacher of Gaelge and English in Kenmare Community School until her recent retirement, Anne Loughnane has been an ASTI member throughout her teaching career. Union activism became a source of solidarity and protection for her in 2001 when a school amalgamation process presented significant challenges, instigating a considerable and valued commitment from Anne towards her colleagues, a commitment that lasted for the rest of her teaching career and beyond. She has always held to ASTI principles and implemented ASTI policies in her school, even under challenging circumstances. Within her branch she promoted collegiality and inclusiveness while offering wisdom and support to fellow members, encouraging young members to get involved with their union, to go forward for elected positions, and taking pride in their activism.

Anne has remained a committed ASTI activist in her local branch, Carbery Branch, for over two decades. She has served in almost every officer role, attended Annual Convention as a delegate since 2003, and was also a member of CEC from 2008 until her retirement from teaching in 2023. At national level, Anne served on a number of committees including the Education Committee and the Equality Committee. Most recently, she served on Standing Committee from 2020 to 2023. Anne currently serves on the Rules Committee, and is a member of the *ASTIR* Editorial Board. She was an ASTI subject representative on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) for Gaelge in recent years. Anne was

appointed as Standing Committee Representative on the Teaching Council in April 2022 and currently serves in that position.

Michael Barry

Michael Barry has been an ASTI member for more than 40 years and an ASTI stalwart for all his career, championing teachers' rights in his own school – St Patrick's College, Cork – as a member of the Cork North Branch and in his numerous national roles with the ASTI. Early in his career, he saw the power of being in a trade union, drawing particular inspiration from the Teachers' United rally in Croke Park in 1985 when he was a young school steward.

Throughout his career he has served his branch with dedication, holding many officer positions including Chairperson, Secretary and Equality Officer. He has been an inspirational mentor and friend to his Cork North colleagues, offering them advice and advocating for their rights. The Branch members elected him to represent them on CEC, and he was subsequently elected to Standing Committee, where he served for many years as representative for Region 7. Michael is a former chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Committee, where he worked to advance gender equality in the workplace and took particular interest in issues such as the promotional prospects of teachers following maternity leave. He was a key contributor to the ASTI's submissions on the Employment Equality Act.

He was an ASTI subject representative for Classics on the NCCA until 2009, and was the ASTI nominee to the Teaching Council for four years, bringing a strong ASTI voice to Teaching Council developments. Michael was elected Honorary National Organiser of the ASTI in 2005 and was later elected a Trustee of the ASTI, a role he held from 2017 to 2023.

For more information on the ASTI Awards, see www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants/

Further awards, including the ASTI Achievement Awards, Thomas MacDonagh Awards and the PJ Kennedy Awards, will be featured in future issues of *ASTIR*.



2025 - 2026



5.30 PM - 6.30 PM



ZOOM



TRAINING@ASTI.IE



The seminars are open to all members - join us for these helpful information sessions hosted by ASTI industrial relations officials and other staff.

Email the address above specifying the session/s you want to attend.

While every effort will be made to adhere to the advertised dates, ASTI reserves the right to reschedule any of the events if the necessity arises. Please check the ASTI website for more information.

THU 11TH SEP

Contracts/ Your First Year Teaching/ Eligibility for a CID

We will cover contracts, CIDs, your rights, working hours, workload, CID pathways & key circulars 59/2016 and 49/2017.

TUE 7TH OCT

Supervision & Substitution

This seminar will examine all aspects of the operation of the S&S scheme in schools such as time commitment, duties and rotas.

TUE 21ST OCT

Preparing for Annual Convention/ Branch Guidelines

Learn how to draft effective motions and amendments for Convention, and understand branch officers' roles to ensure smooth running of ASTI branches. All members welcome.

TUE 4TH NOV

Job Sharing/ Career Break

Overview of the schemes, including eligibility, application procedures, how they operate, and impact on pay, PRSI and pension.

TUE 18TH NOV

Sick Leave

A guide to sick leave for second-level teachers including illness benefit requirements and Medmark referrals.

TUE 2ND DEC

Fitness to Practice/ Disciplinary Procedures

We will go through the steps of disciplinary procedures, how the Teaching Council deals with complaints, and the advice and representation the ASTI provides to its members.

TUE 20TH JAN

Posts of Responsibility

An overview of how the PoR structure works - the appointment procedure, appeals and the circular governing posts. Plus, our view on the posts structure and how it can be improved.

TUE 3RD FEB

Health & Safety

Learn about psychosocial risks, key safety laws, your duties as a safety rep, and how to complete safety statements and risk assessments for your school.

TUE 24TH FEB

Leave Entitlements

We will advise you on Maternity Leave, Paid and Unpaid Leave, Parent's Leave, Parental Leave, Paternity Leave and Adoptive Leave.

TUE 3RD MAR

Grievance Procedures

We will explore the issues that can be dealt with through the Grievance Procedure, the steps involved, and the support available to members through the process from the ASTI.

TUE 24TH MAR

Croke Park Hours

This seminar will examine all aspects of the Croke Park hours including timetabling of the hours and the use of discretionary hours.



RSTA members gather in Kilkenny

The RSTA annual conference in Kilkenny was a fantastic occasion.



Delegates attending the Kilkenny conference.



Eddie McCarthy, the new RSTA Treasurer.



The 'Tuam Shams' – all originally from Tuam, Co. Galway. From left: John B. McLaughlin, Frank McKenna, Frank Egan, and Mattie Finnerty.



From left: Valerie O'Shea (RSTA), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), and Donal Cremin (then ASTI President).

The RSTA recently held its 2025 conference in the Ormonde Hotel in Kilkenny. We were given huge support by the hosting committee of the Kilkenny Branch – we thank them sincerely.

The conference was attended by over 85 delegates, all at their own expense, representing almost all branches of the RSTA.

A new National Committee was elected. Pat Younger (Wexford) is the new President, Norma Fitzpatrick (Cork) the new Secretary, and Eddie McCarthy (Dublin) the new Treasurer.

Bernadine O'Sullivan (Dublin) and Annette O'Carroll (Sligo) are the other new members.

We thank the retiring members: Henry Collins (former ASTI President), Pádraic O'Doherty, and Marian Lyons.

Delegates discussed a number of issues, in particular the importance of maintaining pension parity with serving teachers. Delegates were reminded to encourage retiring colleagues to join the RSTA.

During the conference, €865 was contributed to UNICEF to help with its continuing work throughout the world. The social aspect of the conference is also important. We had the pleasure of listening to the Kilkenny School

of Music String Quartet on Tuesday night. Many delegates took part in an educational walking tour of Kilkenny on Wednesday afternoon, and this was followed by a gala dinner attended by 100 people.

Delegates left Kilkenny with a renewed sense of pride and enthusiasm.

The RSTA is most grateful for the continued support of the ASTI – its staff and members.

We thank all our members throughout the country who volunteer to provide advice and continued support for our members.

We look forward to the 2026 conference, which will be held in Athlone.

To all newly retired teachers – join the RSTA.

Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine.

For more information on the RSTA please scan the QR code.



DCU launches part-time guidance counsellor course

A new part-time course for post-primary teachers who are interested in specialising in guidance counselling has been launched by Dublin City University (DCU). The course, which is due to commence in January 2026, aims to address the shortage of guidance counsellors in Cork and Munster in particular, but is open to applications from interested post-primary teachers throughout the country. Up to 50 places have been made available to interested applicants. Applications for the course open in late September. For more information, please scan the QR code.



Relove Fashion competition 2025/2026



The annual Relove Fashion competition has returned for the 2025/2026 academic year. Relove Fashion is a sustainable fashion competition open to young people aged 12-19 in Ireland. To find out whether your local authority is participating, please register your interest online at: www.relovetofashion.ie/how-to-enter. The competition aims to teach young people about fashion's environmental impact, while encouraging them to use sustainable design techniques. It also encourages applicants to take a deeper look at how their clothing is made, while challenging them to explore creative reuse options such as upcycling, repairs, alterations, and mending.

Young people interested in entering the competition must create a wearable outfit from second-hand, pre-loved or unwanted clothing and textiles, and must create a storyboard documenting the process of creating the outfit. Participants must also undertake research into the fashion industry and detail this research as part of their completed submission form. Online inspiration sessions will be held by The Rediscovery Centre.

Applications should be submitted at relovetofashion.ie in January 2026. Shortlisted participants will be invited to the finals, which will be held in The Rediscovery Centre, Ireland's National Centre for the Circular Economy. Winners in each category will be awarded a trophy, and all finalists will receive either a virtual or an in-person sustainable fashion workshop for their class/group.

The overall winner will receive a trophy, and their school/group will receive a cheque for €500 for sustainable fashion tools and materials, and six hours of sustainable fashion mentoring from Arran Murphy, Programme Manager of Rediscover Fashion.

For more information on the Relove Fashion competition and to sign up, please scan the QR code.



Join the Global Solidarity Run

The Global Solidarity Run, an initiative organised by Sanctuary Runners and supported by Irish Aid, The Ireland Funds and The European Commission, will take place on Saturday, October 11, 2025. The Global Solidarity Run is an event where people can run, jog or walk any distance as part of one global team. This event aims to show solidarity with all those who are forcibly displaced and those who are living in extreme poverty.

Participants are asked to wear blue, if possible, and to share images from the event on social media using #GlobalRun2025.

No registration is required for the event.

For more information on how to participate in the Global Solidarity Run, please email GSRun@sanctuaryrunners.ie

COLÁISTE NA BHFIANN

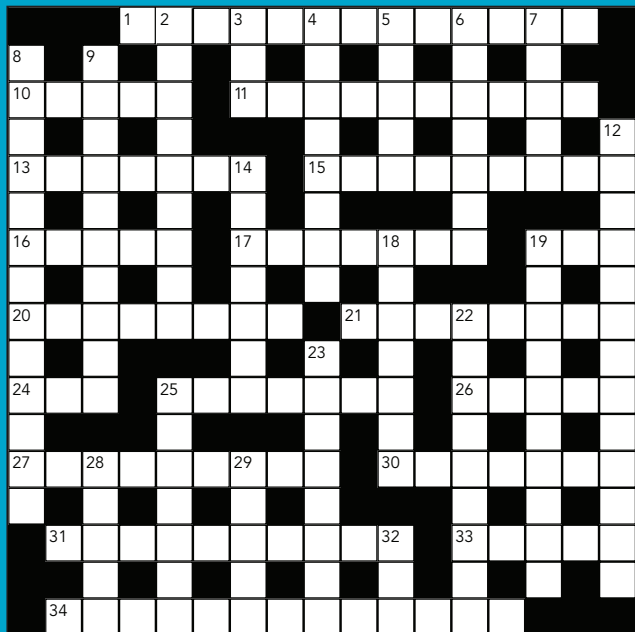
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ACROSS

1. Norfolk holiday resort (5,8)
10. Spent time doing nothing (5)
11. Finishing, finalising, perfecting (10)
13. Awkwardly edged in and condescended (7)
15. Famous Venetian explorer and writer (5,4)
16. More former Irish beach (5)
17. Locate, place, position (7)
19. Freezing US Government agency (1.1.1.)
20. Aoife Broderick (Clare Branch) describes the school year as a ... (8)
21. Administrative capital of the State of Palestine (8)
24. Political colour of much of 8 down (3)
25. Bend or fold in something, such as part of the body (7)
26. Henry VIII's surname (5)
27. Kind of stew cooked slowly in an oven (9)
30. Feeling shocked, bewildered or giddy (7)
31. Nineteenth century commercial sailing ship with multiple masts (10)
33. Roman fountain (5)
34. Singer Pink's words to E. Coli. from her Can't Take Me Home album (3,4,2,4)

DOWN

2. 24 across world organisation starts to be superfluous (9)
3. Far cry from chunk of circle (3)
4. Japanese commander for attack on Pearl Harbour (8)
5. Governor used for straight lines (5)
6. Dead commercial, in short, might lead to a result (7)
7. Puritan goes for Argentinian dance (5)
8. US heartland, typically conservative states: Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and Illinois (6,7)
9. Kept away from the outside world, living in a monastery or nunnery (10)
12. Henrietta agog at being united once more (8,5)
14. Get rid of sound like this posture (7)
18. Sounds like a fully grown dabbler loves what he's at (7)
19. Sick advertisement, in short, became unwise (10)
22. A cute hint? Really! (9)
23. Exemplary mother in America, busy and capable (8)
25. Could be of press, of religion, or of thought (7)
28. Christopher Davey belongs to this ASTI Branch (5)
29. Noah's Australian vessel, in short, could be American mountains (5)
32. ... Tailteann, Irish cycling event (3)

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ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 2504

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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

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Entries to: ASTIR Crossword No. 2504,
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, September 26, 2025.

Solutions to Crossword No. 2503

ACROSS

1. Amusement park
10. April
11. Ballooning
13. Digress
15. Privateer
16. Frame
17. Assault
19. Apu
20. Huckster
21. Presumed
24. FAS
25. Optical
26. Ratio
27. Emaciated
30. Slowest
31. Anticlimax
33. Folio
34. Magnetic field

DOWN

2. Maltesers
3. Sub
4. Mile post
5. Naomi
6. Pedant
7. Range
8. Land of the free
9. Fragrances
12. Ground control
14. Stalest
18. Unrolls
19. Admittedly
22. Sorrowful
23. Academic
25. Opinion
28. Apnea
29. To let
32. XII

Did you miss?

Meet the new ASTI President 14
ASTI celebrates outstanding contributions 26

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the winner
of Crossword No. 2503:
Mary Worrall, Glenamaddy
Community School, Gortnagier
West, Glenamaddy, Co. Galway.
Tuam Branch member



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