General Election
Make your vote count for Primary Education

Croke Park update
Northern Ireland news
School enrolment and Section 29
Literacy and numeracy – join the debate
Importance of storytelling
Art education – why it matters
 Finally, the long awaited general election has been called giving all citizens a say in who will form the next government.

Clearly employment, the economy and emigration will be at the top of the national political agenda for the next few weeks. Few families in the country have been unaffected by one or all of these major issues.

But as teachers it is important that we all ensure that education is also an election issue. Recovery will start in primary schools. That will be a major challenge for all of us who work in education but it is a challenge that we must meet.

The immediate past has seen many significant gains of recent years in primary education dismantled. Teachers’ conditions of employment, along with those of other public servants have been seriously attacked. The impact of December’s budget on teachers’ pay clearly indicates that ordinary people and their families are to bear the burden of recovery. Staffing and funding for schools have been severely reduced making it increasingly difficult to deliver a quality education. Proposed cuts in Resource and Visiting Teachers for Travellers, rural co-ordinators and English language teachers are a cynical attack on the most marginalised in our society.

Last year, INTO members backed the Croke Park Agreement as a protective strategy but we cannot be complacent. There are many who would like to see it scrapped and public funding for education further reduced. We cannot allow this to go unchallenged and the views of every candidate in this regard must be tested in this election.

There will be a variety of challenges facing primary schools over the coming years. A special election issue of InTouch will issue shortly with INTO views on these key election issues. It will also contain responses from all political parties on the key issues of pay, pensions, staffing and funding.

Other material in relation to the election will be sent to schools and made available on the website.

At both national and local level the INTO will interrogate the economic and education policies of all parties. I urge all members to do the same with every single candidate who seeks your vote and when polling day arrives, cast your vote.

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Jim Higgins, INTO President, Sheila Nunan, General Secretary and Noel Ward, Deputy General Secretary and General Treasurer at the recent Branch and District Officers’ Conference

Sheila speaking to Education and Equality Committee members

Make your vote count
Quick Response codes
A Quick Response (QR) code is a two-dimensional barcode. You will often see them used for adding web links to a printed page. QR codes are an easy way of sending people to a site without having to type a URL. Anyone with a smartphone can scan and read QR codes with the click of a camera. You may need to download a QR reader app from your iTunes or app store.

InTouch is now using QR codes to help readers navigate quickly to full length versions of articles on the INTO website. As an example the code reproduced here is the QR code for www.into.ie/ROI homepage.
Newsdesk

20 Vere Foster Medal Winners

21 Teaching Council News
Draft Policy paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education

22 Cumann na mBunscol
National Award Winners

23 NCSE Research Seminar
Presentations from three recent research reports

24 Outreach Moldova
ORM appeal

25 Newsdesk
• EAS helping teachers
• Advertising in schools
• Promoting diversity

27 Northern Ireland News
Three pages of news from INTO Northern Office

INTO Advice

31 Financial Tips
• Check your salary
• Comhar Linn give tips on reducing interest charges.
• Comhar Linn Draw winners

32 School Leadership
School enrolment and Section 29 under the microscope

33 From College to Classroom
This month Mary Burke focuses on short-term planning

Teaching Matters

35 On course for CPD?
Anne English suggests we open up a debate on CPD.

36 Literacy and Numeracy in Focus
Join the debate. Recent reports discussed.

38 Assessment for Learning in Irish Schools
A Window into Current Practice

40 INTO/EBS Handwriting Competition

43 Show Racism the Red Card
School wins prize with anti-racism Comic Strip.

46 Modern Languages
The Importance of Storytelling.

49 NCTE Tips
What is a visualiser? Scoilnet Panel

54 Irish Language Resources
Resources for the classroom.

58 The Arts
Under attack?

60 SESE Tips
Working in Tandem with the Seasons

62 The Source
Resources, Comhar Linn Crossword, World Book Day.

Noticeboard

61 Noticeboard
Upcoming events.

Northern Ireland News

27 School enrolment and Section 29 under the microscope

40 INTO/EBS Handwriting Competition

43 Show Racism the Red Card
School wins prize with anti-racism Comic Strip.

46 Modern Languages
The Importance of Storytelling.

54 Irish Language Resources
Resources for the classroom.

58 The Arts
Under attack?

60 SESE Tips
Working in Tandem with the Seasons

58 Book Reviews
Liturgy, technology & leabhair Ghaeilge

On the cover

Irish Language Resources p54

January/February 2011

The Arts p58

NQTs p33

Irish Language Resources p54

National Teachers’ Organisation for any error which might occur.

Apart from the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation has
formally negotiated agreements as part of its services to
members, inclusion of an advertisement does not imply any
form of recommendation. While every effort is made
to ensure the reliability of advertisers, the INTO
cannot accept liability for the quality of
goods and services offered.
Number of SNAs capped

The DES has announced in Circular 0006/2011 that the number of Special Needs Assistants posts in schools will be capped at 10,575. This cap was previously signalled at the announcement of the National Recovery Programme.

The Circular confirms that the National Council for Special Education must manage the SNA scheme within this overall employment and budgetary framework. Work is ongoing at the moment on a new SNA scheme which will provide for an annual allocation of Special Needs Assistant support to eligible schools.

The INTO will be in discussion with the NCSE about the new scheme and will be raising a number of issues including criteria, deployment and review processes.

Newly appointed principal?

If you were recently appointed as principal and have not yet signed up for the Misneach programme under Leadership Development for Schools, you can apply for a place by emailing Linda Hogan at lhogan@lds21.ie or by phoning Ennis Education Centre at 065 68 45500.

A special Misneach module is taking place on Monday 14 and Tuesday 15 February in Ennis for principals appointed in recent months. The Misneach programme is a professional development programme designed specifically for newly appointed principals.

Further details are available at www.lds21.ie

Who’s eligible for primary school posts?

Head Office has been receiving a large amount of queries on eligibility for primary school teaching posts. The table below summarises the eligibility of recognised primary teachers for appointment to various permanent and temporary posts in primary schools. Further information can be found in DES Circular 25/00. *Irish Language Requirement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posts</th>
<th>Full Recognition (including Probation)</th>
<th>Full recognition (No Probation)</th>
<th>Provisional/Conditional (ILR/other shortfalls)</th>
<th>Restricted Recognition, including Montessori</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal (subject to Circular 02/02)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher- mainstream</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special School/Class</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS/RT General Allocation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Post (SEN)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Support (ESL)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCESL/ Rural Co-ordinator</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Support Posts</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource Teacher for Travellers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Visiting Teachers (Travellers, Visual/Hearing Impairment)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Start</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Closing date reminders

Please ensure application forms are returned for the following schemes by the closing dates below.

Teacher exchange: 1 March (application form available in December 2010 *InTouch.*

Job sharing: 1 March (application form available from DES Circular 11/03.)

Career breaks

Applications for career breaks must be made to the board of management before 1 March. Approved applications must be submitted to the DES before 10 April.

CAREER BREAK CIRCULAR

The Department of Education and Skills will shortly issue a new Circular on the Career Break Scheme. A number of changes are proposed under the new Circular including extending the potential length of career breaks to a maximum of 10 years. Details will be posted on the INTO website as soon as it issues.

WHERE ARE YOU ON THE AGE LIST?

Recently released figures show the age profile of primary teachers in schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;= 25</td>
<td>2,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 30</td>
<td>8,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 35</td>
<td>5,859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 - 40</td>
<td>2,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 45</td>
<td>3,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 - 50</td>
<td>3,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 55</td>
<td>3,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 - 60</td>
<td>2,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 - 65</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recently released figures show the age profile of primary teachers in schools.
Circular Due on Croke Park Agreement

Members will have received a special copy of *Eolas* with the details of the outcome of the talks on the implementation of the Croke Park Agreement between DES, primary school management and INTO representatives. A Department of Education and Skills Circular is now due to issue to confirm implementation of the Croke Park Agreement during the remainder of the current school year. It is expected that the implementation will begin in February 2011 and it is agreed that 18 hours are necessary to comply with the Agreement during the current school year. The full text of the agreement was carried in the special edition of *Eolas* and is also available on the INTO website at www.into.ie/ROI under the ‘Latest News’ listing. The CEC has approved a Question and Answer document on the implementation which is also available on the INTO website and includes examples on how the hours may be utilised in a variety of school settings during the course of the school year.

A second element under the Croke Park Agreement was a review of contract. The agreement in the talks about the review of contract related to reorganising post of responsibility duties within a school. It is further agreed that, in the reassignment of duties, management will have regard to the genuine needs of the school as discussed and identified in consultation with the staff, will act reasonably and will consult with the relevant post holders. Where difficulties arise, recourse may be had to stages three and four or the agreed grievance procedure.

Discussions on redeployment panel

INTO, DES and primary school management representatives have been in contact about potential numbers on redeployment panels by the end of this school year. Given the constraints imposed on primary school staffing by the Government in the National Recovery Plan, and the cutback in teaching positions including Resource Teachers for Travellers, Visiting Teachers for Travellers, rural co-ordinators under the DEIS scheme, and some EAL posts, the CEC is concerned about the number of teachers that may end up on redeployment panels. This could exacerbate an already difficult situation of teacher unemployment for recent graduates. The CEC has therefore decided to engage in discussions with the DES and management authorities with a view to ensuring as smooth an operation as possible of the redeployment panels this year. A number of proposals are under consideration but nothing has yet been finalised. The maintenance of an effective redeployment system was hard-won by the INTO and is a highly valued condition of service. Updates on this issue will be carried on the INTO website.

10 THINGS you should know

1. The Croke Park implementation date will be from the beginning of February and a total of 18 hours additional work is agreed between now and the end of the current school year. Details are contained on the recent *Eolas* issued to schools and on the INTO website.

2. Teachers applying for career break, job share or teacher exchange must do so by 1 March next. A new circular is also due on extending career breaks to up to ten years. See www.into.ie/ROI. Page 8.

3. A cap of 10,575 SNAs in primary and post-primary schools has been imposed by the DES. Page 8.

4. The INTO is holding a Regional Conference of delegates from Branches and Districts in the Republic of Ireland on Saturday 12 February next to discuss INTO strategy for the next four years and the upcoming General Election.

5. A meeting was held recently with Student Representatives in relation to the implications of the Work Placement Programme. See www.into.ie/ROI

6. This issue contains a range of important information for our members in Northern Ireland, which are on pages 27-29.

7. The Teaching Council has issued an important policy document, to which the INTO will be responding, in relation to the continuum of education including both preservice and ongoing professional development. Page 21.

8. A number of recent reports have issued in relation to literacy and numeracy in primary schools. Join in the discussion. See pages 36-39.

9. The INTO is recruiting two people for intern positions in INTO Head Office beginning in the next school year. Page 15.

10. The recent announcement by VHI about an increase in subscriptions will not apply in the coming year to members in the Teachers’ Scheme. Page 16.
Letter of the month

Education cuts – who decides?

Last year I wrote calling on teachers to have a vision of a future beyond the economic crisis. Little did I foresee the depth or savagery of the crisis which has unfolded since then. We have all swallowed a much larger and more bitter pill than any of us expected. The debate has moved on from whether we should accept the Croke Park deal to how lucky we’ll be to get it. It is difficult now to hold on to a vision of a post-recession society not to mind a vision of a more compassionate society, post-recession.

The cuts in education so far show that this government are determined to deepen inequalities under the myth that ‘we all have to suffer’. The Visiting Teacher for Traveller Service and the Resource Teacher for Travellers abolished overnight, why? There are few if any votes in Traveller education. 600 jobs have been lost to primary education in one fell swoop. Have we or our representatives been asked where we saw savings to be made? No. There have been no consultations with us on the ground, but if are going to fall for the line that we all have to pay then we should at least think about where necessary, if painful, cuts could be made. I have seen lots of waste; the summer works scheme, small and unviable schools (of which I am a part) competing for pupils, unregulated text book publication… and yes, there were resource teachers in schools with very few Traveller pupils. However, the swingeing cuts on Traveller education smack of racist economics. Traveller families have struggled and still struggle to get fair treatment in education, they are too concerned about whether they will be accepted through the doors of the school to worry about whether those doors are new or weather glazed.

There is a little, too little, debate about how this crisis can be solved or how, indeed we may measure ‘recovery’. We need to engage with it. We are educators, for God’s sake. It is not good enough for us to bury our head in the sand. We should question this pervading ethos that ‘everybody has to pay’. Some have to pay a lot more than others – those that benefited least during the ‘boom’. I don’t want to pay more tax or social charge or pension levies if I have no say in how they’re used. I am a teacher, I have a brain. I teach my pupils to think. There are lots of facts in this crisis, we can’t know them all but we have a responsibility to ask the questions and to encourage our students to challenge the answers. Anne McCluskey, Our Lady of the Wayside NS, Bluebell, Dublin 12

Text messages

Find a sub
Good news on set up of SubSearch facility.
Brian

Work Placement Programme
Worried about the Work Placement Programme and young teachers being exploited.
Helen

Check your salary
Thanks for reminding us to check our salary, discovered I was getting the wrong Degree allowance.
Mary

TEXT US
Text the word INTO followed by your comment to 53377.
Standard network charges apply.

Did you know?

- More than 2,000 visitors use the INTO website every day.
- There are over 9,000 pages viewed each day.
- The most popular areas visited are Latest News, Information for Teachers, Members’ Area, and Resources.
- In the last quarter of 2010 2.5% of our visitors were regularly checking the site by smartphone.
- There were over 1700 visits to our ‘mobile’ site (www.intonews.mobi) and we are working on developing this further in 2011.
- INTO has over 1,600 fans on Facebook and followers on Twitter.

Tell us what you think …

Have you something to say about an article you have read in InTouch, or is there an issue on which you want to communicate with other members, or the wider community of primary education? Email editor@into.ie or write to the Editor, InTouch, INTO, Vere Foster House, 35 Parnell Sq, Dublin 1. Mark all such communications “for publication” and give a contact telephone number. A €50 book token will be awarded each month for the prize letter published.
Angry but determined
INTO Officers meet to review current issues

More than 200 INTO Branch and District officers met in Dublin in early January to discuss a range of current issues impacting on members’ salaries and conditions. General Secretary Sheila Nunan outlined the context of the National Recovery Plan, recent implications of Budget 2011 and also the latest outcome from proposals to implement the Croke Park Agreement. Sheila said it was outrageous that ordinary workers throughout the country were being made to pay for the failure to govern financial institutions, and that reckless decisions made to drive up profits had brought the country to the edge of bankruptcy. She said it is a difficult time for all workers but it is also a time to ensure a unity of purpose as we face into the difficult period ahead. “The INTO must ensure to the greatest extent possible that our members’ living standards and working conditions are protected from further attacks”, Sheila said. She also said that we must ensure that school staffing and resources are protected and that school leadership is supported in the years ahead. Sheila paid particular attention to the potential difficulties around school staffing and the knock-on consequences for teacher employment. She said it was important for all members to play a part in ensuring that opportunities are given to unemployed graduates to gain experience. Sheila also said that, on a professional level a debate has started on the issues around literacy, numeracy and the future of teacher education. She encouraged members at Branch and District level to engage on these issues to ensure that we contribute and shape future developments, rather than having outside vested interests seeking to impose their limited vision on primary education. She also urged members to take an active interest in the upcoming General Election and ensure that they use their vote to promote the interests of primary teachers and primary education.

Regional Conference on strategy and education

The CEC has decided to hold a Regional Conference for delegates from Branches and Districts in the Republic of Ireland on Saturday 12 February in Dublin.

The purpose of the conference is to discuss and debate an INTO strategy document, prepared by the CEC, about primary education and primary teachers issues are highlighted. The Conference will conclude with INTO General Secretary Sheila Nunan outlining the elements of an INTO General Election Campaign to ensure that primary education and primary teachers issues are highlighted. The Conference will also be addressed by ICTU President Jack O’Connor on the ideas contained within the ICTU “Better, Fairer Way” Strategy Document. Further details of the Conference and a webcast of the education debate will be available when finalised on the INTO website at www.into.ie/ROI

IMPACT recruitment initiative

As part of the ongoing organisational plan within IMPACT, a pilot project has been put in place aimed at recruiting non-teaching staff into membership at primary and post-primary level.

This project will run for six months and will concentrate initially on Dublin and surrounding counties as well as Cork and surrounding counties.

IMPACT has asked INTO members for their support at local level by informing their school Caretaker (in the Dublin area only), Secretary and Special Needs Assistants of this project. New members are welcome from all parts of the country.

Contact details
Cork area: Joan McCrohan, IMPACT offices, Father Matthew Quay, Cork.
Tel 021 4255233/087 6321944
Email: jmcrcrohan@impact.ie

Dublin area: Patricia Whelan, IMPACT offices, Nerney’s Court, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 817812/087 4135052
Email: pwhegan@impact.ie

Annual Congress motions include proposal to reduce subscription

Branch Annual General Meetings have taken place in recent weeks and a wide range of motions, reflecting the anger amongst members about cuts in salary, school staffing and support services for primary education have been proposed for Annual Congress. The CEC has also put forward motions, including a proposal for reduction in the membership subscription. The CEC and INTO Head Office have already restructured a number of activities and further cost saving measures are being introduced in the coming months. Further updates on Annual Congress, which takes place from 25-27 April in Sligo, will be covered in future editions of InTouch.
Communications/ Publications

Effective communication is central to INTO’s work. Some 7.5% of members’ subscriptions are allocated to the Publications Fund. The fund provides for all expenditure including printing/postage costs associated with INTO reports, books and newsletters. This remains substantial, although CIT (communications and information technology) is increasingly used. Website development is also accounted for here, as are publishing-related computer costs.

INTO ‘hard copy’ publications include InTouch, Printout (Northern Ireland), Eolas on specific topics, our diary, and documents for INTO committees and conferences including Annual Congress.

The Publications Fund attracts income in addition to members’ subscriptions. An effective advertising section in head office currently adds to fund income close to 50% of the value of member subscriptions. Sales of publications generate more modest but important funding.

The Benevolent Fund is used for payment of grants to INTO members or their dependants. The fund is administered by the five-person Benefit Funds Committee (BFC) which has significant discretionary powers.

Income comes from some 2.5% of each member’s subscription, plus dividends and interest from INTO accounts, and donations from individuals/INTO events. Payments from the fund include:

- A grant on death of a member’s spouse (currently €2,000, with qualifying recipients to include civil partners following recent legislation) – 19 grants paid, 2010.
- A death grant (currently €4,000) to the dependent, next of kin or legal representative of a deceased member – 16 grants paid, 2010.
- Grants of varying amounts in cases of exceptional hardship, at the discretion of the BFC which applies strict criteria to applications received – 34 grants paid, 2010.

In 2010, grants under these three categories totalled €200,000, a tangible solidarity and helping hand by INTO members to colleagues or their dependants.

Next issue: Capital and Benefits and Services Funds

Sean Brosnahan Memorial Fund Grant – closing date approaching

The Sean Brosnahan Memorial Fund, established in 1990, aids worthy projects, activities and resource provision in the general area of special education in any of the 32 counties of Ireland. A grant or grants up to a total of €4,000 may be awarded this year for projects such as:
- Providing information about special education.
- Conducting research into special education needs.
- Aiding provision of specialist resources in special education.
- Furthering educational opportunities, recreation and sporting facilities in special education.

The Administration Committee will give priority for grant aid to projects dealing specifically with the needs of a child/children with disability. The decision of the Administration Committee on all matters relating to the disbursement of grants shall be final. To receive full details of how to apply, email Pat Crowe at district14@into.ie. Closing date for receipt of applications is 28 February 2011.

A helping hand

INTO AVC Plan

Annual Report available

The INTO has received from the Trustees (Irish Life Trustee Services Limited) the annual report for the year ended 31st March 2010 of the INTO AVC Plan. Cornmarket will provide a synopsis of this report in the annual benefit statement documentation issued to members.

A copy of the annual report is available from INTO (which is sponsor of the scheme). This is a detailed report running to over forty pages. A copy is available to be emailed to any member who requires this. If you wish to have a copy of the report, please email gglackin@into.ie or telephone (01) 804 7745.
General Election on the way

At the time of going to print it was confirmed that a General Election will be held in the coming weeks. The INTO has already put in place a Strategy Committee to look at the issues relevant to primary teachers and primary education in the General Election.

Amongst the items the INTO is urging members to raise are pay and pensions, particularly for new entrants to the public service, the staffing of primary schools including class size, special education support and social inclusion measures, and the importance of supporting school leadership given the challenges facing education in the coming years. The INTO will also be raising issues of educational disadvantage, provision for pupils who have English as an additional language, and the overall funding level of schools including provision for the appointment of ancillary staff. A special issue of *InTouch* will be sent to all INTO members in advance of the General Election and will include a summary of responses from the various political parties to the issues raised by the INTO.

The CEC of the INTO has endorsed the candidature of Declan Kelleher, Past President of the INTO, to run on the National University of Ireland panel for Seanad Eireann. This decision was taken after current incumbent Senator Joe O’Toole, former General Secretary of the INTO, had decided that he would not be running in the next election. Eligible members are urged to support Declan in his candidacy and if you are willing to get involved in the campaign please email seanad@into.ie for further information.

**INTO invites applications for 2 positions as paid interns for the school year 2011/2012.**

Persons appointed will be located in INTO Head Office (35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1).

These positions will be filled by secondment from teaching and subject to the persons concerned securing approval as necessary from their Boards of Management.

Persons appointed will be required to work normal office hours, Monday to Friday, from 1 September 2011 to 31 August 2012. They will be subject to INTO Head Office conditions and protocols, in terms of hours, holidays, and other relevant staff policies. The persons will continue to be paid their normal DES salary and to accrue pensionable service as teachers, and receive an additional allowance subject to a maximum combined amount.

A full statement of conditions of employment is available on request: email gglackin@into.ie

INTO is seeking members who:

- are enthusiastic about INTO and its services to members;
- seek more experience of INTO and its operation;
- have excellent oral, written, communication and interpersonal skills;
- are trustworthy and appreciate the confidentiality associated with handling issues for INTO members;
- have basic IT skills;
- have high standards and vision for INTO and for education.

The responsibilities of the internships will include working directly with Sections within INTO as assigned, assisting with members’ queries and cases as assigned, attending meetings and preparing papers as required, researching specific issues, participation in internal meetings, providing administrative support and such other duties as may be assigned by the General Secretary.

To apply, please forward:

- a copy of your CV;
- a cover letter outlining your interest in INTO and how you believe you could contribute to/benefit from working with our Head Office team;
- names and contact details of three referees (with note of how each person knows you).

Your application, including the above material, should be sent to Internships, General Secretary’s Office, INTO, 35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1 or by email entitled “Internships” to gglackin@into.ie

All applications must be received not later than 5 pm on Monday 28 February 2011.

It is anticipated that a short-listing and interview process will take place. All applicants will be advised of the outcome. INTO is an equal opportunities employer.
Looking after your health in 2011

Your health is your most valuable asset, and maintaining wellness should be a priority. We all need to pay attention to our health!

As well as treating you when sick, your doctor can follow a ‘preventative care’ programme designed to help you keep an eye on your health. Preventive care can include the following: screening tests including regular measurements of weight, cholesterol levels and blood pressure; advice about healthy lifestyle choices such as a well-balanced diet, regular exercise, stress management and avoiding smoking/alcohol.

Screening refers to a test or examination done to identify a condition or illness. The benefits include early diagnosis, often before symptoms appear, leading to early treatment, and providing a ‘score’ in relation to a condition to compare future tests to e.g. tracking your cholesterol levels.

Which tests you need depends on a number of factors – your age, your sex, your family history or whether you have risk factors for certain diseases. For example, being overweight can be a risk factor in developing diabetes. Diabetes screening is included in most screening programmes. Some other conditions that doctors commonly screen for include breast cancer, cervical cancer, colon cancer, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, osteoporosis and prostate cancer.

Osteoporosis is a silent disease. You may not know you have it until you break a bone. Anyone can develop osteoporosis, but it is more common in post-menopausal women. As many as half of all women and a quarter of all men over 50, will break a bone due to osteoporosis. A bone density scan can detect if you are at risk of developing this condition.

Many doctors carry out routine annual ‘health checks’ for their patients. Some people may decide and choose to have a regular health check at a dedicated facility which offer all tests and screening on the same day, in one facility. An illness once identified may be treatable – however a preventative approach is preferable!

Health check
Health check located at the Mater Private Hospital offering discounts to all members/immediate family. For information visit www.healthcheck.ie or telephone 01 885 8257/ 885 8258.

Are you due a tax refund?

Are you due a tax refund? Teachers throughout Ireland overpay tax due to errors in payroll and missing tax credits.

Get back what’s yours! Red Oak Tax Refunds are one of Ireland’s premier Tax Agencies, with over 5,000 clients receiving millions of euro of refunds a year.

For teachers with salary only and no extra incomes/rental properties, Red Oak review your last 4 years taxes for refunds on a ”No Refund, No Charge” basis with no minimum fees or other charges.

As a special offer to INTO members, you can avail of a 10% discount on the Red Oak commission rate, and this offer is extended to family members and retired teachers.

Find out more about the Red Oak Tax Refunds services for teachers in their Teachers Tax Tips Section on www.redoaktaxrefunds.ie or contact 1890 733 625.

No increase to Teachers’ Plan prior to 2011 renewal

Further to the announcement made by VHI Healthcare in January in relation to increases in their rates, we are happy to announce that VHI Healthcare has advised the INTO that the increase announced will not apply to members who purchased the Teachers’ Plan in the last year.

While an increase will be announced shortly for the Teachers’ Plan, it will not come into effect until March 2011. Therefore, teachers currently on the Teachers’ Plan or those joining/switching to the Teachers’ Plan prior to 9 March 2011, will avail of the current rate of €695.00 on scheme renewal date, 8 February 2011.

For details of the Teachers’ Plan please log on to www.vhi.ie or ring 1850 201 241.

Please note that members of the INTO group scheme, in place for many years, are not automatically members of the Teachers’ Plan, (new in the last year). INTO members in the original group scheme should appraise themselves of the benefits of both schemes in order to assess their private health requirements. It is open to members to switch to the Teachers’ Plan.

As the INTO does not endorse any particular private health offers, members are advised to consider all options in making a decisions on a private healthcare provider.

Competition winner

The winner of the Temple Spa Pamper Day was Bridget Phelan, Co Kilkenny.

You can enter competitions for various prizes by clicking on the ‘Competitions’ button in the Benefits area of the INTO website.
Update on Work Placement Programme

The CEC gave detailed consideration at its January meeting to the provisions of the Work Placement Programme for graduates announced by the Government in recent times. Representatives of the INTO met with DES officials to clarify a number of issues in relation to the operation of the WPP for primary teachers.

Following the meeting it has been confirmed that any graduate teachers participating on the programme can terminate their placement with one week’s notice or immediately by agreement in order to take up alternative paid employment. A monitoring committee representing the INTO, DES and primary school management representatives will be established to oversee the operation of the scheme in primary schools. It was again emphasised at the meeting that any vacancies in primary schools will have to be filled in the normal manner including substitutions.

Having considered the outcome of the meeting and the details of the scheme, the CEC reiterated concerns about potential exploitation of young teachers, but decided on balance that, given the present employment situation for teachers, opportunities for unemployed graduates to maintain their teaching skills should be utilised as much as possible. The CEC also agreed to consider the implementation of the WPP at each meeting in the future, to recommend that where schools are participating only short-term placements would be offered, and that guidelines on the operation of the scheme will be posted on the INTO website. These are now available on www.intolearning.ie/ROI. At the time of going to print INTO representatives were due to meet Student Union representatives about WPP.

Ciao Italia!

INTO Learning is running a 10 week Italian for Beginners course commencing after Easter. The classes will be hosted by a native Italian teacher and will use a communicative approach to language learning. A specific theme will be taken each week as the basis for introducing vocabulary, grammar and various idioms and expressions. The classes will run in the INTO Learning Centre, 38 Parnell Square, Dublin 1 from 4.30-6pm each Tuesday commencing 8 February. The course costs €100.

Creating a positive behaviour (online)

This online course will explore the possible factors that influence children’s behaviour, how teaching and learning styles have an impact on behaviour, how a positive behaviour classroom can be created, how positive behaviour can be taught and how challenging behaviour can be managed. The course will be run over 5 modules commencing Monday 14 February (excluding midterm) and costs €70. For further details contact Kim on 01 8047756 or e mail onlineadmin@into.ie or see www.intolearning.ie for registration.

Let’s Play

Teaching young children through play is often so daunting teachers just don’t go there. This course on play in the infant classroom will take teachers step by step through establishing play as a discrete learning approach in their classrooms. It will explore how and what children learn through play, how to introduce structured play and build upon this approach to maximise children’s learning. This 5 week course will run from 4.15-6.15 pm each Thursday commencing on 10 February in the INTO Learning Centre, 38 Parnell Square, and costs €80, including a good practice DVD.

ICT across the curriculum (online)

This online course, co-designed by NCTE, will explore the use of free software and application to support teaching and learning in literacy, mathematics, SESE and the Arts. The course will be run over 5 modules commencing Monday 14 February (excluding midterm) and costs €70. For further details contact Kim on 01 8047756 or e mail onlineadmin@into.ie or see www.intolearning.ie for registration.

Creative writing in the classroom

The hows and the why!

An exciting three week course that will spark your own creativity as well as giving practical ideas for the primary and post primary classroom. The course will look at how creative writing can be used to build the confidence and attainment of children with high incidence learning needs, such as dyslexia, as well as support high attainers. Ways to approach poetry, prose and non fiction will be explored and cross curricular themes will also be developed. Each class will incorporate creative writing games to whet your appetite, sending you back to the classroom and or even your own desk with new ideas and enthusiasm.

This 3 week course will run each Thursday from 4.30-6pm commencing on Thursday 10 February in the INTO Learning Centre, 38 Parnell Square and costs €40.
Hands on approach to acquiring ICT teaching skills

John O’Mahony shares his views on the value of the CPD programme in the classroom

EPICT – The European Pedagogical ICT Licence – is a professional development programme for teachers combining pedagogical knowledge of the integration of ICT into teaching and learning. The programme originated in Denmark as ICT professional development training for teachers but now has been accepted in a number of European countries and the syllabus is mapped to the NCCA ICT Framework in Ireland.

Employing a blended and flexible approach to learning, the methodology used in EPICT is team-based and assessment is in the form of the submission of an assignment which is based on an actual classroom learning scenario where pedagogic and ICT elements must be considered and reflected upon.

In 2008 our school piloted two of the compulsory modules where 15 teachers participated in five teams facilitated by the ICT co-ordinator and myself. As we had received training from our DEIS Cuiditheoir on the First Steps Writing programme we opted to begin with ‘Word Processing and the Writing Process’ module as we felt there was a natural link between both. Teachers found that this was a useful and practical module for classroom use to achieve specific learning objectives with the children.

Our second module was ‘Communication and Collaboration on the Internet’. Teachers found it very relevant and showed that children are made aware of electronic communication which is very important in today’s technologi- cal society.

Children’s safety online is a major concern for parents, teachers and schools. Three of the EPICT modules involve using the internet – ‘Locating and Incorporating Online Resources’, ‘Communication and Collaboration on the Internet’ and ‘Web Publishing’. The course materials for each of these modules alert teachers to the importance of children learning to use the internet safely. In the course of the classroom

Can we use these types of technology in our teaching and learning?

Creative Vado digital video cameras are excellent tools for children to use when recording field trips in their own locality. Two of the EPICT modules ‘Digital Images’ and ‘Presentation Technologies’ are very relevant in this regard.

With €50 million invested in technology in Irish schools under the Smart Schools = Smart Economy initiative in a little over 12 months, teachers taking the final compulsory EPICT module ‘ICT and School Innovation’ will be positioned to play a leading role in the development of their eLearning Plan in order to maximise the potential of this investment.

For more information on the EPICT programme please email info@epictireland.org or call 083 399 1503.

John O’Mahony is a support teacher and ICT Coordinator in Sacred Heart SNS, Tallaght. He is co-author of the recently launched publication “ICT’s in the Primary School – Teaching & Learning for the 21st Century” and is a facilitator for EPICT.
School vacancies crisis adds to chaos

Delays in the long-promised filling of management vacancies in dozens of primary schools are adding to chaos, teachers have claimed.

More than 120 primary schools applied, to mid-September, for exemption from a ban on filling middle management positions below principal and deputy principal level.

They were responding to an initiative by Education Minister Mary Coughlan to alleviate the difficulties the public service promotion moratorium has created for schools with high numbers of vacancies through retirement or holders of the jobs being appointed principal.

However, the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO) claims that the primary schools that had applied for relief under the scheme have not yet heard from the Department. Most of them had responded to a survey of 220 large primary schools, which found that one-in-four assistant principal jobs have been lost in those schools, and significant numbers of special duties posts have been lost.

“The delay in responding to schools is completely unacceptable and the Department must issue positive responses to schools immediately. It is unfair and unrealistic to expect modern well-managed schools without the necessary resources,” said INTO General Secretary Sheila Nunan.

Irish Examiner, 28 December 2010

Northern schools have double South’s computers

Schools in Northern Ireland have almost twice as many computers as their counterparts in the Republic.

Figures published by the Department of Education Inspectorate show a ratio of one computer for every five pupils in primary schools in the North.

By contrast, there is only one computer available for every nine pupils in the Republic.

Last night, the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation claimed a “digital divide” now existed between schools in the two parts of Ireland. Its General Secretary Sheila Nunan said: “Schools in the North are an example of what can be done whereas schools in the South are an example of what should be done.”

Ten years ago a new school computing initiative classroom 2000 was rolled out to all schools in the North. Over that time it has delivered nearly 70,000 networked computers to schools.

In stark contrast, schools in the Republic could, according to Ms Nunan, “paper the classroom walls with glossy reports from Government on what can be done with technology in classrooms. In fact, the digital divide is widening because of a lack of investment and a coherent national plan.”

The Irish Times, 4 January 2011

Council threat to cut schools’ supply over failure to pay bills

The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation said it was aware of dozens of schools throughout the country which were affected by broken pipes due to the bad weather, which will mean potentially greater charges by local authorities.

An INTO spokesperson called on local authorities not to penalise schools in cases like this and to discount any additional charges due to broken pipes.

Irish Independent, 8 January 2011

Student teacher plan slammed

The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO) is also highly critical of the FAS scheme, as it believes it offers no prospects to unemployed teachers.

“It is not a platform to real employment,” an INTO spokesperson stated.

“Many teachers who are now out of work were in fulltime temporary employment last year.

“Schemes like this are no guarantee of employment. Already unemployed teachers have seen job prospects curtailed, planned reductions in salary and disimprovements in pensions. Being told they can work for nothing does not improve their situation one bit.”

The INTO spokesperson said the Minister for Education’s claims that the scheme is aimed at supporting unemployed teachers does not stand up, especially after it was announced so soon after the teaching job cuts were revealed.

“Most people would see this as one arm of the system displacing jobs while another is trying to fill positions with unpaid workers,” the spokesperson stated.

Northside People, 29 December 2010

IN THE MEDIA

December to January
Vere Foster was born in Copenhagen of an Irish-born father. He worked in the UK Diplomatic Corps but left to help the victims of the Great Famine on his brother’s estate in Ardee, Co Louth.

Concerned by reports of the terrible conditions for those using emigrant ships, Foster campaigned in the USA and Britain for improved conditions for passengers. He helped to found and became the first President of the INTO, travelling throughout the country campaigning for the maintenance and improvement of national schools.

Foster is also known for the popular ‘Vere Foster National School Writing Books’. He died in Belfast on 21 December 1900.

The December issue of InTouch featured Vere Foster Medal winners from St Patrick’s College, Mary Immaculate College and Hibernia College.
At its recent meeting, the Teaching Council decided to discontinue the option to pay the registration renewal fee by salary deduction. This decision was taken following legal advice in the context of the amendment to Section 30 of The Teaching Council Act, 2001, which is currently proceeding through the Oireachtas.

To renew registration, teachers are encouraged to use the online payment facility on www.teachingcouncil.ie, or alternatively to return the renewal form and payment by post.

The income tax relief on the Teaching Council annual registration renewal fee is not affected by the changes announced by the Minister for Finance in the 2011 budget. A tax credit is added to the teacher’s flat rate expense allowance and, in effect, this means that the fee in real terms is closer to €53 per annum for those paying the higher rate of tax.

Newsdesk
News from the world of education and trade unionism, at home and abroad

Teaching Council Publishes Draft Policy Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education

The Teaching Council has launched a consultation process in relation to its Draft Policy Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education. The draft policy will provide the framework which will guide the Council’s work in the areas of initial teacher education, induction and early and continuing professional development.

The draft policy paper is available on the Teacher Education pages of www.teachingcouncil.ie and on www.into.ie/ROI.

The INTO is preparing a response to the Draft Policy Paper and members will have an opportunity to give their views at special meetings at District level.

Guiding principles underlying the policy

Based on the three broad pillars of innovation, integration and improvement, The Teaching Council’s policy is that teacher education should be underpinned by a number of key principles. It should:

- be informed by the core values of the Teaching Council’s Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers;
- be informed by the best available research and evidence;
- recognise teachers as lifelong learners and teacher education as a continuum;
- develop the capabilities which are central to teachers’ professional practice and personal growth throughout the continuum;
- foster reflective, critical and enquiry-oriented learning;
- be based on a broad understanding of the practice of teaching as one involving complex relationships and requiring different types of professional knowledge, attitudes and dispositions;
- be supported by appropriate structures designed to achieve coherence across all stages of the continuum;
- be provided using a partnership model involving teachers, schools and teacher educators;
- be adequately resourced to meet teacher, school and system needs;
- foster the development of competences to facilitate quality learning and cater for educational priorities;
- be subject to periodic review and ongoing evaluation of needs and priorities.

Initial teacher education proposals

- Review entry requirements and selection procedures, including the use of aptitude tests, structured interviews, previous relevant experience, and the entry level mathematics requirement.
- Consider alternative ways to assess competency in numeracy, literacy and Gaeilge.
- Review current practice of quotas for Gaeltacht applications.
- Introduce new and innovative school placement models.
- Extend the BEd programme to 4 years and the graduate programme to two-year training.
- Enhance models of delivery to allow wider access to teacher education programmes.
- Student teachers should be required to complete courses in the teaching and assessing of literacy and mathematics.
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Induction proposals

- Induction should be available to all NQTs in their first year.
- Satisfactory completion of a programme of induction should be a requirement for full registration with the Teaching Council.
- NQTs should actively shape their own professional development.
- Mentors should have a minimum five years in school teaching experience.
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Teaching Council registration fee

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Paul receives Hall of Fame Award

When Paul Kennedy stepped down as Principal of Lisnagry NS at the end of August 2009, his retirement brought to a close a career of outstanding service to education and to the children of the parish. Paul Kennedy was appointed Principal of Richill NS in July of 1975, succeeding Mr Paddy Fitzpatrick. The history of education in the Mountshannon area of the parish tells us that the Fitzpatrick family presided both in the old school across the road and in Richill for almost a century and a half. It was a daunting task for the curly-haired goalkeeper from Borrisoleigh but over the next 34 years, Paul grew into his task. The three teacher school that Paul entered in 1975 was a far cry from the wonderful facilities enjoyed by the pupils and staff today. Paul set about his task with enthusiasm, determination and professionalism. In a parish such as Ahane, Paul’s skills as a coach and team mentor were welcome but his expertise spanned all areas of the education process. The school grew year on year and in the 70s and 80s Paul never allowed the poor facilities and overcrowding of the time to distract him and his staff from the task of providing high quality education. The numbers on roll almost trebled under Paul’s watch. In 1991, a new extension providing high quality education. The numbers on roll almost trebled under Paul’s watch. In 1991, a new extension was opened. Within a short time, the school had outgrown this building. With his eye for forward planning, and the generosity of the late Lizzie O’Meara and family, land was acquired at the rear of the school. This land was developed to provide a playing pitch for generations of boys and girls that is the envy of every visitor. Over 400 trees were planted with the help of the pupils of the day as part of environmental studies but Paul’s fingerprints were on every sapling. In 2008, the next phase of the building was completed with its magnificent facilities. Paul believed that his task was to enable every child to reach his/her potential. He constantly encouraged and motivated his fellow teachers to share his vision. Pupils were afforded the opportunity to play hurling, football, soccer, camogie, badminton and volleyball. Cross country running was on the winter menu. Concerts were held to develop musical and theatrical talents. Artists in residence, visiting authors, school magazines, Green schools, a dedicated computer room – every experience that would benefit children was provided. To list Paul’s achievements would fill many pages. Perhaps his greatest achievement was that he retained his enthusiasm for the challenge to the very last day of his tenure.

In 34 years in Lisnagry, it is doubtful that he made an enemy. He treated everyone – parents, colleagues and pupils with respect and honesty. And the good news is that he is still a familiar figure as he helps to nurture the hurlers of the future. “A teacher leaves the track of his teeth on a parish for three generations,” so said Brian McMahon in his wonderful work The Master. Lisnagry was fortunate to have such a Master. Paul was the winner of the Paul Trainor Hall of Fame Award at the National Awards 2010.
Research seminar on special education

The NCSE held its second research seminar in Croker Park Conference Centre on 24 November 2010. The seminar featured presentations from the authors of three recently completed research reports.

The seminar also provided an overview of the NCSE’s research programme and its impact, a presentation on the value and limitations of research in special education and an outline of the NCSE’s experience of developing policy advice for the Minister for Education and Skills.

An International Review of the Literature of Evidence of Best Practice Models and Outcomes in the Education of Children with Emotional Disturbance/Behavioural Difficulties

Professor Paul Cooper, University of Leicester

The review found considerable evidence to support the conclusion that with adequate training and support staff in mainstream schools make a significant contribution to the prevention and alleviation of emotional disturbance/behavioural difficulties. It was found that approaches based on behavioural and cognitive behavioural models offer the strongest efficacy evidence. These approaches can often be learned through relatively brief training programmes and are best implemented within the context of a whole school approach. It was noted that, whilst many of the approaches reviewed are suitable for use in mainstream classrooms, there is persuasive evidence to suggest that non-mainstream options (such as on and off site specialist provision) sometimes have an important role to play, and are most effective when integrated with mainstream provision. Multi-disciplinary cooperation has an important role to play in meeting the needs of students experiencing behavioural and mental health problems in community and school settings. It was recommended that this process might be facilitated by the adoption of a bio-psychosocial theoretical framework for policy development, because of its power to harmonise potential conflicts between individual and social approaches to understanding emotional disturbance/behavioural difficulties.

Procedures used to Diagnose a Disability and to Assess Special Educational Needs: An International Review

Professor Geoff Lindsay, University of Warwick

This study explored international practice and standards in relation to diagnosing a disability and identifying the associated special educational needs (SEN), and also examined the implications for the Irish system. A study of eight countries revealed that half required a diagnosis of a disability before an assessment of needs, equally half did not. The report suggested that the diagnosis-led system is problematic in many ways including:

- the lack of a common classification system of disability;
- the lack of consistent use of a system either between or even within countries;
- the conceptual problems inherent in a disability-led system, including the limited fit of pupils into specific categories, the overlap of characteristics of children in different categories, and the change in categorisation of pupils (and categories) over time;
- the nature of individual children’s trajectories and their changing needs over time;
- the lack of consistency of use of assessment tools, for diagnosis or assessment; and
- the variation in the professionals involved, their training and expertise. This paper summarises the findings and explores the implications for the Irish system.

National Survey of Parental Attitudes and Experiences of Local and National Special Education Services

Gillian Kane and Dr David Armstrong, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

In December 2008, the NCSE commissioned PwC to undertake a national survey of parents of children and young people with SEN.

Parents’ satisfaction levels with their children’s overall education and with special education services were relatively high; however, a substantial minority of ten to twenty per cent expressed dissatisfaction with certain elements of support provision. Many parents welcomed the fact that this research was being undertaken, with several highlighting the need for parents’ views to be taken into account on an ongoing basis.

The relationship between the parent and the school played a central role in parents’ attitudes and experiences of special education services. Those parents who stated that their child’s needs were being met attributed this to a supportive ethos, good understanding of the child’s needs on the part of staff and good communication between the school and parents. The assessment process and the subsequent allocation of resources appear to have caused parents most frustration. The need for improved information and guidance for parents was a recurring theme throughout the research, as was the level of co-ordination and co-operation between education and health services.

This research identified key areas for further consideration, notably measures which could be addressed at local and national levels.

Log on to the Research Section of the NCSE website at www.ncse.ie for more information.

Dr Seamus Hegarty, Ms Jennifer Doran, Dr Clare Farrell and Ms Mary Byrne
OutReach Moldova (ORM), an Irish registered charity was founded in 2000 by Suzanne O’Connell, a graduate of Medicine of the University of Dublin, Trinity College, and cares for 500 abandoned and orphaned young girls in Hincesti, and the Baby Orphanage in Chisinau. Both orphanages are located in Moldova in Eastern Europe. Moldova is seen as the poorest country in Eastern Europe where the average industrial wage is less than €2,000 per annum.

Prior to the arrival of OutReach Moldova, 50/60 of these abandoned girls, out of a population then of 185, died needlessly every year, many alone and in great pain; temperatures plummet to -40°C in winter, yet the girls had little heating or hot water; they had very little clothing; they were malnourished; there was widespread abuse in all its forms; drugs were withheld and sold for profit; there were very few functional bathrooms, showers or toilets; buildings were in a state of decay needing urgent refurbishment; the children had no access to sufficient doctors or medications; the children rocked backwards and forwards, waiting for release and their turn to die.

Moldova is a European neighbour just 4 hours away by plane, yet the girls were treated as outcasts and incarcerated for life, even those with treatable conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes and asthma.

OutReach Moldova has succeeded in turning things around and today are seeing:

- smiling happy faces and children who could not speak are now full of chatter;
- some who could not see properly are now seeing clouds and colours for the first time;
- bedridden children are now running around;
- new facilities were added including a playground, universal access ramps and playing fields;
- major refurbishment of the orphanage has been undertaken including a new kitchen, laundry and restaurants with the support of Irish Aid (Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland);
- septic and aseptic procedure rooms, a new pharmacy and a dental surgery;
- a full rehabilitation centre has been added including a gym, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and psychotherapy rooms;
- teams of doctors, special care nurses, physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, dentists, teachers and other professionals that are now employed by OutReach Moldova to work with the children;
- the girls being enrolled in the educational system for the very first time;
- the installation of a 400KVA generator and new electrical switch rooms. Never again will the children be without heat, hot water or light;
- a fulltime staff of 250 Moldovans employed by OutReach Moldova.

ORM has opened a Palliative Day Care Respite Centre in the Baby Orphanage for terminally ill children. The children will be kept pain free for the remainder of their days and their parents will have some personal respite. This is the first such Palliative Respite Centre to be opened in Eastern Europe and Russia.

In the last ten years over €8 million in funding and humanitarian aid has been raised in Ireland to fund these projects. It is ORM’s intention to continue the work and also to undertake other major projects.

ORM runs a hugely successful volunteer programme where Irish volunteers come to Moldova for periods of two weeks to work with the children. To date over 1,500 volunteers have joined the programme. Further information at www.outreachmoldova.org. All ORM needs is two weeks of your time and you can choose to come at Easter or when available during the months of May to October. The ORM office arranges all flight tickets, insurance, accommodation and food. Information days are held usually on Saturdays in TCD for new intending applicants.

Every year by far the largest cohort of volunteers are INTO teachers and most return year after year. They bring with them that rare skill and talent that can’t be bought – TLC for the children. A local team of doctors, dentists etc are available to all volunteers 24/7 in the event of need. ORM is appealing to INTO members to join them in Moldova.
Employee Assistance Service helped over 700 teachers in 2010

Figures just released show that the EAS received more than 700 calls from teachers during the last academic period from September 2009 through to the end of June 2010, seeking help on how to deal with stressful work, personal, health, family or financial issues.

The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is a free and confidential counselling and support service that was established in 2006 exclusively for teachers and their family members to provide them with assistance in coping with a variety of issues. The purpose of the service is to provide easy access to confidential counselling support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. During 2010 there is evidence that emotional health issues have increased in number particularly due to financial concerns, transition, ill health, family issues such as bereavement, and anxiety about the future.

Who can access the service?
The EAS is available to teachers and SNAs whose positions are funded by the DES, their spouses or partners, their dependents above the age of 16 and mother/father where appropriate and can be accessed by a dedicated freephone number or email address.

The EAS is provided by Vhi Corporate Solutions who follow strict ethical guidelines and codes of practice which means that any contact with teachers, SNAs and their families remains confidential and no information about them is available to anyone without their written consent. Any feedback provided to the Department is purely in general terms and is anonymous in nature.

What kind of services are available?
- Telephone counselling – single sessions or short term structured counselling.
- Face to face counselling – up to six counselling sessions
- Counselling is provided on issues such as health, relationships, addictions, bereavement, stress, conflict, critical incident and trauma.

How do I contact the service?
Couldn’t be simpler. The EAS is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through:
Freephone 1800 411 057 or Email : eas@vhics.ie

For additional information on the EAS just click visit www.education.ie and follow the link provided.

International recognition of Irish teachers’ opposition to advertising in schools

An international report on in-school marketing has praised the stance taken by the INTO and individual schools towards token collection which led to the abolition of token quotas in the January 2010 Building for the Future promotion.

Effectively Embedded – schools and the machinery of modern marketing is the 13th Annual Report from the National Education Policy Centre based in Arizona State University. The authors highlight how the commercial stipulation of 20 tokens per student from Independent Newspapers was successfully opposed by the INTO who described the demand as “a new low in trying to target school children for commercial gain”.

However, the report also highlights the ongoing commercial presence in Irish schools of companies such as Tesco, who seek promotion to children and sales of €299,000 in return for a ‘FREE’ laptop, and Allied Irish Bank whose Build a Bank Challenge recruits teenage students to promote its accounts through peer-to-peer marketing using social networking websites and organising in-school events.

To read the full report visit http://nepc.colorado.edu/publications.

School wins award for promoting diversity

Congratulations to St Kevin’s BNS, Finglas West, Dublin 1 – winners of the Fáilte Finglas Awards held on 29 November

The ‘Fáilte Finglas’ project aims to showcase the great work that ordinary people in Finglas do every day to make Finglas a welcoming and open place to live and work. The awards celebrate local community groups, sports clubs, schools and businesses who promote diversity and support integration in Finglas through their everyday work. The aim of the awards is to recognise and reward those groups and to encourage others to follow their example.

St Kevin’s BNS project entitled ‘Traveller Inclusion in the Primary School’ won both the school and the best overall winner categories. The project involved the organisation of a Travellers Focus Week which included making a short audio visual piece with Traveller pupils based on the theme of identity, a photography exhibition and designing and teaching lessons based on nomadism and Irish Travellers.

For more information visit www.finglas4diversity.dcu.ie/

Teacher Kevin Keogh pictured with some of the pupils involved in the project
Government attack on children and families

It’s not just student tuition fees, a two year salary freeze, increases to pension contributions and a VAT increase to 20%, a widespread, overarching attack on children and families is underway. We are all in this together! Don’t believe the Government lie.

Facts
- Poor families lose the £190 ‘Health in Pregnancy’ grant and another £500 for second and third children.
- The Childhood Tax Credit for babies is abolished which is a £545 cut for the under-1s.
- Working Tax Credits are frozen for 3 years – another 10% cut for working families.
- Freezing Child Benefit for 3 years loses mothers another 10%.
- Disabled families lose £9 billion UK wide.
- All benefits fall by 2% a year (same as teacher pension benefits) arising from the Government’s change from the RPI to CPI inflation measure.

Latest inflation figures
Bank Of England inflation target: 2%
- CPI: 3.3% Consumer Price Index
- RPI: 4.7% Retail Price Index
- Ireland: 2.1% Source Eurostat (Statistics Office European Union)

Frank Bunting, Northern Secretary, said: “A harsh winter is merging into a harsh New Year for children and families. The coldest December since 1890 means an average gas bill of £277. Nationwide’s house price data reveals Northern Ireland as the worst performing UK area with the average house price falling over the year by 8.9%. The VAT increase will add £158 a year to essential bills for the average household.

It’s so much easier to tax the public sector worker to get its £13 billion tax increase than to change the law to narrow the tax loopholes that the rich swim through. This is the background to the INTO campaign against tax dodgers. Unpaid taxes indirectly lead to teacher redundancies.”

More facts
- Tax dodging costs the UK up to £120bn a year: http://pcs.org.uk/en/campaigns/taxjustice/index.cfn
- The Inland Revenue is expected to make 13,000 officials redundant by 2015: http://www.taxjournal.com/tj/articles/tax-experts-oppose-hmrc-cuts-package.
- ‘Revenue and Customs will adopt a less combative approach to resolving tax disputes with business in a move designed to cut a mounting legal logjam’: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0cd1f1618-abcd-11df-9f02-00144feabcd0.html.
Introduction
The British Academy has published a new report which claims that a “sharp rise” in work stress in Britain is becoming a major social problem in the current economic crisis. The report reveals that from spring 2009 to spring 2010 there has been an increase of some 4–6% in work stressors such as workload, conflict, job security and organisational change. This is a marked rise in the previous yearly increase since 1992, which has been at about 0.5–1%.

The Academy says that work stressors can fuel depression, anxiety, suicide and workplace injuries. Notable recent research has also shown they can lead to a 50% increase in the risk of heart disease. The public sector in particular has felt the strain, with over a quarter of employees reporting an increase in their hours, a rise of 7% since the recession, compared to a 2% rise in the private sector. Job insecurity has also increased considerably in the public sector with almost one-fifth of workers thinking they are "likely" to lose their jobs, a rise of 11% since spring 2009.

Other trends highlighted in the report are tighter controls on sick leave, leading to 'presenteeism' and a rise in interpersonal conflict in the workplace. While 79% of European managers are concerned by work-related stress, less than one-third of companies have procedures in place to deal with it.

Pay more, work longer, get less
Government has accepted Hutton’s opinion that public sector workers pay higher contributions. This 3% rise in contributions will cost the average teacher £90 a month and a NQT up to £54 a month.

Government wants public sector workers to work to 65 with teachers retiring earlier having to accept a reduced pension. The switch to CPI from RPI will cost a teacher retiring on a £10,000 pension, £35,000 over the course of retirement. These are very serious developments. We need to act now to protect our pensions and our salaries.

Join the INTO campaign. Check the ‘Pensions’ Campaign link at www.into.ie.
In January 2010 the Equality Commission contracted The Equality Company to undertake research entitled ‘Indicators of Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations in Education’. The project aimed to develop a framework of indicators and associated measures of equality of opportunity and good relations in education for each of the three overarching goals specified in Every Child an Equal Child:
1. Every child has equality of access to a quality educational experience.
2. Every child is given the opportunity to reach his or her full potential.
3. The ethos of every school promotes the inclusion and participation of all children.

The draft recommendations of the work were discussed at a workshop, to which key stakeholders including INTO were invited, in November 2010. At that workshop the Commission stressed that the development of equality indicators would not place additional burdens on schools. However, despite this reassurance, INTO has continued to stress that such equality indicators cannot be developed unless the relevant bodies have access to up to date information and data. The only reliable source of this data is schools. INTO have therefore made our serious concerns known to the Equality Commission, Department of Education and the Education and Training Inspectorate, that any attempt to increase pressure on schools to deliver statistical or other data through inspections, surveys or questionnaires, under the pretext of this initiative will be resisted by our members.

Managing redundancies
In December 2010, INTO issued a bulletin to members regarding the management of teacher redundancies for the incoming year. The bulletin stressed a number of points:
- Redundancies should only be managed in accordance with the agreed redundancy procedure (TNC 2010/1) and its associated appendix.
- Consultation should be ongoing and meaningful.
- That in the event of a failure to find volunteers in the school compulsory redundancies should be objectively justified and based on the agreed criteria:
  (i) Statutory requirement for curriculum delivery and teachers contribution to the curriculum,
  (ii) Specialist roles undertaken in school which cannot be easily replaced.
  (iii) Total teaching experience in current school.

It is important to stress that redundancy means the loss of a teaching position and schools who rely upon criteria such as:
  (i) Having prepared pupils for specific curricular activities e.g. religious, sacramental, sport, drama, feis etc.
  (ii) Having been a coordinator (paid or unpaid) or held management responsibility for delivery or coordinating a curricular theme/subject.

In compulsory redundancy situations may be challenged. The selection of individuals for compulsory redundancy should be objectively based on criteria developed from the school development plan, and other resources which effectively define the current and future direction and needs of the school. INTO will also be organising a number of workshops in late January/February for individuals involved in managing potential redundancy situations in their schools. Details will be available on the INTO website.

Training workshop for Branch and District Secretaries
INTO Branch and District Secretaries in Northern Ireland attended a weekend training workshop on Friday 28 and Saturday 29 January 2011. The workshop included:
- A briefing on current issues affecting members in Northern Ireland,
- The operation and organisation of branch meetings in Northern Ireland,
- A section on developing electronic communications and local branch websites.

Branch Secretaries from throughout Northern Ireland were in attendance and had an opportunity to exchange ideas and views.

Part of the session also covered the issue of increasing participation in line with some of the recommendations from the Participation Task Force established since last Congress.

Vere Foster commemoration
Above: Vere Foster penny emigrant’s guide.
Left: Part of the INTO delegation at the Annual New Year’s Day commemoration of Vere Foster at his grave in City Cemetery, Belfast.
INTO Advice

INTO advice for members on issues of importance

Savings in your interest?

I am making the minimum monthly payment on my credit card debt but the balance never seems to reduce and the monthly interest is only a little less than my payment. How can I reduce the amount I pay in interest?

Credit card debt is a very expensive form of credit. By making the minimum or partial payment you can incur interest charges on purchases ranging from a high of 22.6% APR to a low of 13.3% APR. As a first step you should check the interest rate you are paying.

Some credit cards have an introductory interest free period, if you switch to a new provider. This option may be worth consideration if you can pay off the credit card during the introductory rate period (usually 6 months) and remember to avoid using the card until you have cleared the outstanding balance. However, this may not be feasible if the outstanding balance is high. Another option would be to take out a personal loan at a lower APR than you are currently paying on your credit card.

Assuming an outstanding credit card balance of €4,000 you could increase your monthly cash flow by taking a personal loan (7.8% APR) from Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union over 2 years to clear the debt, repaying €82.95 per fortnight and incurring a total interest charge over the term of the loan of €326.49.

Of course you could take the loan over a shorter term and reduce your interest payments further. If you chose to take the personal loan route it is important to control future credit card spending and to ensure that you clear the balance monthly.

Tip: Credit card debt should be addressed promptly. Calculate the amount of interest charged to your account in the last year. Compare this cost with a personal loan. You will readily identify the savings which can be achieved.

I got a personal loan from my bank just over a year ago. On a recent loan statement I saw that the interest charges are applied quarterly and are quite substantial. Is it possible to have interest cleared monthly and to get a more competitive loan rate?

Personal variable loan rates available from the retail banking sector for a 5 year loan term at present range from a high of 22.6% APR to a low of 9.9% APR. In most cases interest is applied to bank loans at quarterly intervals, however on a credit union loan a portion of each agreed repayment is used to repay any interest outstanding on that date and the remainder is applied against loan principal. It may be worth your while to switch your present loan to Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union but beware of any ‘breakage fee’ that may apply if your current loan is on a fixed interest rate.

A personal loan of €22,000 over 5 years from Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union Ltd at 7.8% APR would cost a total of €4,495.72 (€203.19 per fortnight). The total cost of a similar loan from the retail banks over the same term ranges from a high of just over €7,000 to a low of €5,690.

Comhar Linn offers car loans at 6.75% APR and home improvement loans at 6.5% APR.

Tip: When shopping for credit take a moment to check out the National Consumer Agency website: www.itsyourmoney.ie. This site provides comprehensive information on a wide range of financial products and allows the consumer to make informed choices.

Check your salary

Members are urged to check their salary slips regularly to ensure that they are receiving all appropriate increments, allowances etc. To check if yours is correct multiply fortnightly rate for each element of pay on salary slip by 26.09 and compare with current correct multiply fortnightly rate for each element of increments, allowances etc. To check if yours is particularly to ensure that they are receiving all appropriate

(ie principal, deputy principal, assistant principal, special duties teacher)*;
- Other Special Allowances*;
- Teachers’ Children’s Allowance in certain cases.*
- Note: These allowances may not be applicable to all teachers.

Check latest salary and allowance scales on www.into.ie and in the INTO diary. An online salary calculator and advice on checking your salary are also available in the Members’ Area of the website. There is also a pension calculator available for members retiring.

Comhar Linn December draw winners

**Toyota Auris** Deborah Nic Gabhann, Kinsealy, Co Dublin.

**€1,500 Cash** Irene Murphy, SN Naomh Peadar, Drogheda, Co Louth.

**Weekend for two in Jury’s Inn** Siobhán Maher, Scoil Chroínaín Naofa, Drum Ui Cianain, Roscrea, Co Tipperary, Susan Maher, St Colmccile’s Senior NS, Knocklyon, Dublin 16
In November, 2010, the Supreme Court ruled on the decision making authority and competence of S29 appeals committees. The Supreme Court decision arose out of the refusal by the Board of Management of St Molaga’s SNS, Balbriggan to enrol two pupils pursuant to the school’s enrolment policy.

**Section 29**

Due to lack of space in 2007/2008 St Molaga’s enrolment policy exclusively prioritised pupils from its feeder school, St Peter and Paul’s JNS. In February 2008 the parents involved in this case applied to enrol their 2 children as they had transferred to the area. The Board of Management refused on the basis that the school was full and previously had refused some 41 enrolment applications. Arising from the refusal the parents successfully appealed under S29 of the Education Act, 1998 which decided that St Molaga’s did have the capacity to enrol both children.

**High Court**

Following the S29 decision in favour of the parents, the Board of Management of St Molaga’s SNS initiated a judicial review and on 17 February 2009 the High Court ruled in the school’s favour. Overall the High Court accepted that the school had doubled its enrolment prior to 2007, that it could no longer justify any further expansion given its duty to maintain educational standards and that there was a lack of adequate permanent accommodation. The school also successfully argued that its average class size exceeded 27 contrary to DES Circular 20/2007 and that the appeals committee had failed to properly apply DES Circular 9/1999 regarding the inclusion of special needs pupils for staffing purposes.

The High Court was critical of the decision making process of the appeals committee and it quashed its decision on the basis that it was “unreasonable and/or irrational, that it was not supported by credible evidence” and was, by and large, based on considerations which were irrelevant to its determination”. The High Court also concluded that:

- the legislature had not intended that a S29 appeals committee would “be able to make or reverse management decisions lawfully made... that it was never intended that the S29 appeals committees would involve itself in making decisions... to find places for students in schools...”;
- that S29 does not allow an appeals committee “substitute its own judgement on a management issue... for that of the Board (of Management) itself... that the substantive power conferred by S29 is limited to... a type of review”; and
- that the appeals committee had acted “ultra vires...” ie beyond its powers.

**Supreme Court**

The S29 appeals committee itself then appealed to the Supreme Court which delivered its very significant judgement on 23 November 2010 rejecting the High Court decision. The Supreme Court decided that the High Court had erred in its interpretation of S29 and that:

- the language of S29 was clear, particularly S29 (6) and (7);
- that an appeal “… goes beyond a review of a decision making process”; and
- that “…the appeals process (S29) enables the appeals committee to have a full hearing … and if so determined to replace its judgement … for that of the Board (of Management) and to make such recommendations as it considers appropriate… to remedy a situation…”

**INTO response**

INTO is calling on the DES to issue comprehensive guidelines to schools on enrolment policies and to operate S29 appeals fairly and transparently.

The next issue of InTouch will outline another enrolment case where the Equality Tribunal found that the CBS High School, Clonmel, discriminated against a pupil contrary to the Equal Status Acts, (2000-2008). This case is being appealed.

From left: Anne McElduff Bl, Assistant General Secretary, Eleanor O’Dwyer, Chairperson, and Vivian Meacham Bl, during an Equality Committee discussion on prohibiting discrimination in enrolment policies.
What are the headings for my short-term (weekly) plans?
For each subject the short-term plan should contain the following headings:
- Date and class level.
- Learning objectives.
- Learning activities/teaching methodologies.
- Linkage and integration.
- Differentiation.
- Assessment.
- Resources.
- Reflection.

Do I use the content objectives from the curriculum for my short-term (weekly) plans?
Some of the content objectives are stated in broad terms in the curriculum documents to reflect learning that will occur over a long period of time. These content objectives need to be refined into learning objectives for the weekly plans. Focus on making the learning objectives specific, doable, attainable, realistic and measurable. For example, if the content objective states "Listen to a story and respond to it" then a learning objective would be "to provide the children with the opportunity to listen to and respond to the story Farmer Duck" (English curriculum, strand: oral language, strand unit: Receptiveness to Language – Senior Infants). Some terms to use when writing learning objectives include name, list, identify, point out, discuss, predict, summarise, count, label etc.

What should I include under the heading ‘Learning activities/teaching methodologies’?
The learning activities are the activities in which the pupils will engage in throughout the lessons. They are carefully selected to ensure the specific learning objectives for that particular week are achieved. This heading also includes the appropriate teaching methodologies e.g. talk and discussion, use of photographs, use of the environment, use of story, co-operative learning etc. This section could also outline how the pupils will be organised – whole class, group work, pair work or individual.

What if I have to carry over lessons from one week to the next?
Sometimes you will have to carry over lessons from one week to the next because of different school events which may occur throughout the week. However, if you find yourself carrying over lessons on a regular basis then you need to ask yourself why this may be happening. It is important that your planning is based on the learning needs of your class. If you are carrying over the same subject on a regular basis you will need to look at your timetable to ensure that all subjects are receiving the appropriate curriculum time allocation.

What format should I use to write up my notes?
You can write your notes in landscape or portrait, you can write in narrative or bullet point – basically as a professional teacher you now have to develop your own style in planning.

Use the headings from the short-term and long-term planning guidelines on www.teacherinduction.ie and plan your lessons based on the learning needs of your class.

Where can I get further support for my planning?
In term one planning and preparation workshops for NQTs were facilitated by the National Induction Programme for Teachers, throughout the Education Centre network. Should you require further support in the area of planning and preparation please contact your local Education Centre as some centres will be hosting teaching clinics for NQTs, in term two.

Mary Burke, is Co-ordinator of the National Induction Programme for Teachers.

(...if you find yourself carrying over lessons on a regular basis then you need to ask yourself why this may be happening)...
On course for CPD …?

Anne English suggests we open up a debate on what it is that we recognise as CPD, as our understanding of what constitutes CPD will have a significant impact on how we seek to facilitate and promote it.

Policy discourse about education and training in general tends to focus mainly on ‘formalistic’ aspects of provision and achievement (Eraut et al., 2000). This formalistic paradigm relates to provision being defined in terms of qualifications and credits. Considerably less attention is paid to gains in knowledge, skills or capability which escape formal assessment. It is important, however, that we do not restrict our understanding of CPD to ‘formal’ courses and seminars, whether they lead to qualifications or not. Valid professional learning is not the preserve of educational institutions or formal inservice events. Learning is an integral part of our everyday lives. “Professional development can no longer be viewed as an event that occurs on a particular day of the school year; rather it must become part of the daily work life of the educator” (Garner, 2006, p.17 citing NCREST).

Typically, the primary school is viewed as a site of learning for children but a vast amount of learning also takes place on the part of teachers and others involved in education as they go about their school-related work. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005) suggest that one of the key means of fostering teachers’ workplace learning is through creating what they refer to as an “expansive learning environment” – a school environment in which there are wide-ranging and diverse opportunities for teachers to learn, individually and collectively, in a culture that values and supports teacher learning.

An expansive learning environment would have an explicit focus on teacher learning as a dimension of normal working practices. The staff meeting can be a useful vehicle for prompting and nurturing professional conversations – opportunities for teachers to ‘tease out’ professional issues. Such professional dialogue is a key part of teacher workplace learning – it enables teachers to reflect on their practice, to share ideas with others and to draw on the ideas of others. The “messy, confusing problems” which are part of daily work life can lead to powerful learning (Beckett and Hager, 2002, p.3). Similarly, having ready access to ‘professional literature’ (manuals, journals, various documents) can send a positive signal to teachers about the value of ongoing professional learning, and can serve to enhance individual and collaborative learning.

Opportunities for “boundary crossing” – developing connections with other groups both within and beyond the school – are a feature of an expansive learning environment. Teachers would be encouraged and supported to forge professional contacts with teachers and others beyond the school perimeter and to involve themselves in such networks. Teachers would also be afforded the opportunity, insofar as is possible, to meet with visiting co-professionals such as NEPS personnel or members of the Visiting Teacher Service. Engaging in joint initiatives with teachers from other schools, and interactions with various other personnel have the potential to advance our collective learning as we share our ideas and co-create knowledge in response to new and emerging challenges.

Primary schools have much in common with each other, yet the contexts in which we work differ greatly, and teachers are unique individuals – a one-size-fits-all approach to teacher workplace learning is unlikely to have the same result in all situations. Accordingly, an expansive learning environment should show flexibility in addressing CPD needs at local level.

Greater focus on workplace learning has the potential to do much to enhance our individual and collective professional learning as teachers. It is important that we give due consideration and recognition to this key aspect of CPD as we engage in a debate on the nature and direction of future CPD. A concept of CPD which includes, yet extends beyond, formal opportunities for teacher learning could serve to greatly enhance opportunities for teachers to develop and generate professional knowledge. To ignore the avenues for professional learning that are rooted in the day-to-day practice of teachers is to devalue the richness of ‘know-how’ that teachers can potentially develop and refine throughout their teaching careers.

Anne English, INTO Education Committee, District VIII.
Literacy and numeracy have become major issues for consideration by the INTO this year and in to the future. Three reports relating to English literacy and numeracy in the Irish educational system were published recently and drew a significant amount of public attention.


National Assessments of English Reading and/or Mathematics have been carried out at regular intervals since 1972, and were run separately until 2004. For the 2009 assessments, it was decided that the same pupils should complete both elements. This necessitated a shift in the target grades. Second and sixth class were chosen, to represent the end of the junior and senior cycles of primary schooling.

The companion study, NAIMS (National Assessments in Irish Medium Schools), which focussed exclusively on Irish-medium schools, took place in May 2010. The results of NAIMS will be available later this year.

PISA is an international assessment of the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy, carried out in three yearly cycles. In each cycle, one subject area is the main focus of the assessment. In the first cycle of PISA (in 2000) and again in 2009, reading was the main focus. This means that 2009 was the first time a detailed examination of changes in student reading performance and attitudes towards reading was possible. Because PISA aims to assess students’ preparedness for the future education and adult life, the study focuses on ‘real-life’ tasks rather than specific curriculum knowledge.

Ireland has also decided to participate in international assessments at primary level in 2011. PIRLS (Programme for International Reading Literacy Study) and TIMSS (Trends in Mathematics and Science Study) will be conducted among 4th class pupils in a number of randomly selected primary schools in Spring 2011 (a field trial was conducted in Spring 2010). Ireland last participated in international studies at primary level in the early 1990s.

The findings of the 2009 National Assessments, the Report on Incidental Visits to our schools. The draft plan is relevant to both primary and post-primary schools. The next few pages contain brief summaries of the main findings of the 2009 National Assessments, PISA 2009 and the Incidental Reports, in addition to a summary of some of the recommendations in the draft plan on literacy and numeracy.

**National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading**

Last November saw the launch of a report on The 2009 National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading. Almost 8,000 pupils, split between second and sixth class, took part in the study, making it one of the largest ever conducted in Irish primary schools. This article picks out a few highlights most relevant to InTouch readers.

**Overall results**

For maths (both second and sixth class), questions assessing pupils’ ability to use measures and to apply and problem-solve were the most difficult, while there were no gender differences on overall maths performance. For reading, questions assessing pupils’ ability to retrieve information proved easiest at both class levels. Girls outperformed boys at second class, but gender differences were limited at sixth. Pupils and schools with high scores on reading tended to have high scores on maths, and vice versa. There were very strong links between test scores and socio-economic status (SES). Most individual pupil scores and most school average scores were as would broadly be predicted, based on SES. As it was the first time that second and sixth class were the ‘target classes’ for the assessments, trends in test scores are not available.

**Factors related to test scores**

Many factors related to performance were common to reading and maths, with some of the strongest links found for family background characteristics. Lower scores were linked to some hard-to-change characteristics – eg unemployment, Traveller community, lone-parent, large family size. However, other positive characteristics were more amenable to change – eg. plenty of books at home, no TV in the bedroom, limited time on the internet/playing computer games, and parents who were willing to engage in reading. For ‘newcomer’ pupils, language spoken at home had a much stronger relationship with test scores than did place of birth.

Teacher characteristics also mattered. Pupils with higher test scores tended to have experienced teachers, with an additional qualification, who were confident in their teaching ability, and who rarely used workbooks.

**Recommendations**

Next is a selection of recommendations from the report, split into those targeted at the education system and at school staff.

- The DES should promote parental awareness of how crucial the home environment is for supporting literacy and numeracy.
- Future curriculum changes should identify key cross-curricular skills (to
On budget day, the OECD released the results of the fourth round of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2009). Like the budget, there was much bad news, and a few things remained unchanged! After achieving exceptionally high reading scores in the first three PISA cycles, the average score of 15-year olds in Ireland in 2009 was not significantly different from the OECD average, and Ireland’s ranking fell from 5th in 2000 to 17th in 2009 among countries participating in both years. In mathematics, Ireland’s average score fell from being not significantly different from the OECD average in the first three cycles, to being significantly below it in 2009, and Ireland’s ranking fell from 20th to 26th among countries in PISA 2009 and PISA 2000. However, consistent with previous cycles, 15-year olds in Ireland achieved an average score in science that was significantly above the OECD average, and Ireland’s ranking improved from 20th in 2006 to 18th in 2009.

Are the declines in reading and maths real, or are they artefacts of the PISA tests and the ways in which performance is compared over time? While the sample of schools in Ireland participating in both years. In mathematics, Ireland’s average score fell from being not significantly different from the OECD average in the first three cycles, to being significantly below it in 2009, and Ireland’s ranking fell from 20th to 26th among countries in PISA 2009 and PISA 2000. However, consistent with previous cycles, 15-year olds in Ireland achieved an average score in science that was significantly above the OECD average, and Ireland’s ranking improved from 20th in 2006 to 18th in 2009.

Are the declines in reading and maths real, or are they artefacts of the PISA tests and the ways in which performance is compared over time? While the sample of schools in Ireland participating in each PISA cycle is representative of its respective population, the percentages of students speaking a language other than English/Irish at home and of students with special education needs have increased. There are more students in transition year compared with fifth year than in earlier PISA cycles, and fewer students are leaving school before age 16. However, at most, these changes account for one-third of the declines observed in Ireland. There are serious questions about changes to the PISA tests over time and about the statistical procedures used to establish trends that need to be addressed.

Most students participating in PISA 2009 in Ireland were eligible to participate in the 2004 National Assessments of English reading (fifth class) or mathematics (fourth). Yet average performance on these assessments did not change compared with earlier national assessments (reading in 1998; maths in 1999). Hence, there is no evidence that performance at primary level was in decline when PISA 2009 students attended primary school. However, as we search for further evidence supporting or qualifying PISA 2009 findings, it seems important to consider how children’s development in reading and maths can be better supported. In reading, many children now engage with electronic texts to a greater extent than with print texts, and there has been a decline in reading for enjoyment, while boys continue to lag behind girls in interest and achievement; in mathematics, at post-primary level, Project Maths is aiming to raise students’ ability to apply their maths knowledge to solving problems embedded in real-life contexts. These and other changes have implications for the work of schools at primary level. It is also important to ensure that children’s experiences with science at primary level continues to lay a good foundation for work at post-primary level, with respect to both knowledge and interest.

help address curriculum overload) and should outline in very practical terms what is meant by the social constructivist perspective underpinning the maths curriculum.

School and teacher

- Results of standardised tests should be widely used to monitor performance across the school and across classes, while all parents should be given written and verbal feedback on their child’s performance.
- In-class provision of additional support should be the norm, not the exception.
- All staff should participate regularly in CPD.
- Many teachers need to update their maths lessons to reflect modern teaching methods, particularly in relation to problem-solving and calculator use.
- School and class libraries need a better balance of fiction and non-fiction, especially for senior classes.

All recommendations outlined here are described, in context, in the report, which can be accessed on www.erc.ie/NA2009.

Join the debate

Districts have been encouraged to hold discussion meetings to enable members share their views on literacy and numeracy issues. In addition, members may join in a discussion forum on the INTO website through logging on to the members’ only section. The reports and the draft plan may be accessed through the INTO website also.
Assessment for Learning in Irish Schools

In *InTouch* (June, 2010), a case was made for the use of Assessment for Learning (AFL)/formative assessment strategies and techniques in teaching and learning. In making this case, AFL was described as a ‘warranted strategy’ in so far as research indicates that when used effectively by teachers it has a significant, positive impact on the achievement of all learners but especially the traditional ‘low achievers’ (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Building on that piece, this article reviews some of the key findings in relation to the use of AFL currently in Irish primary schools as highlighted in *three recently published reports*. The purpose of this short review is twofold: (a) to draw attention to what these reports say about AFL and (b) to encourage schools and teachers to take a proactive step to identifying professional development needs in the area of AFL by engaging in an audit of their existing knowledge, skills, understanding and practice.

1 Assessment in the Primary School INTO, 2010

The INTO report presents the findings from a survey of a questionnaire distributed to a random sample of 301 school staff representatives. The response rate was 65%. As described, the objective of the Education Committee in undertaking this research was to “… ascertain current practice in schools in relation to assessment” (p.35).

Approximately three of every four respondents indicated that they had a written policy on assessment. Asked if AFL was “addressed” in these policies, 82.9% said it was, with just over half, (52.3%), reporting that the area of peer/self assessment featured also. However, elaboration on the nature of such planning and/or how it impacted on teaching and learning was neither sought nor given and responses in respect to the question: “In relation to assessment, what form of further professional development is required by teachers in your school?” are not detailed in the report.

The authors concluded (presumably on the basis of responses about the use of assessment for learning and standardised tests which formed the primary focus of the survey) that “… in general, teachers are very positive about the role of assessment in teaching and learning … and … willing to embrace assessment in their classrooms” (pp. 42-43).

2 Incidental Inspection Findings 2010: A Report on the Teaching and Learning of English and Mathematics in Primary Schools DES, 2010a

In December 2010, the DES published the most recent in a series of Inspectorate Evaluation Studies reports. The report presents the composite findings of incidental (i.e. unannounced) inspections of over 800 lessons in 450 primary schools undertaken during the 12-month period October 2009-2010 that focused on the quality of pupils’ learning and the practices of teachers in English and Mathematics. As such, it provides a timely snapshot of current practices in Irish primary schools and data that are derived from classroom observations rather than teacher self-reports.

Evaluations of the English lessons observed were reportedly “mixed” with inspectors recording that although “…satisfactory learning outcomes were evident in the vast majority (85.5%) of the lessons, there was nonetheless a significant minority (14.5%) of lessons in which pupils’ learning was not satisfactory” (p. 9). Significantly, the report highlights “the quality of assessment practices” as one of three “key determinants of the quality of pupils’ learning in English lessons” (p.9). They noted that for most lessons with satisfactory learning outcomes there was evidence of satisfactory assessment practices. However, they also noted that there were “particularly serious problems” in relation to assessment (p.6). In more than one third of the English lessons evaluated they noted that records of pupils’ skill development and/or their attainment levels in English were not available, pupils’ written work was monitored infrequently and formative assessment approaches were not in evidence.

In response to the findings, the authors call for “urgent school improvement” and the provision of continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers and principals focusing on “… aspects of the teaching of literacy and numeracy – and especially the use of assessment to improve learning” (p. 18).
3 The 2009 National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading

The tenth national assessments of Mathematics and English reading was conducted by staff of the Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra, in 2009 on behalf of the DES (DES, 2010b). The study sampled almost 4,000 6th class and 4,000 2nd class pupils who completed tests in English Reading and Mathematics. Contextual information from questionnaires was gathered from schools, class teachers, parents and pupil groups. In presenting the outcomes of the work, the authors highlighted the following points:

“As well as standardised tests, NA 2009 examined use of other forms of assessment. Almost all pupils were taught by teachers who reported regularly using teacher questioning as an assessment strategy. However, there was limited use of documented observations, of strategies that enable planning of instruction related to pupils’ learning needs (e.g. teacher-made checklists), of pupil-centred strategies (e.g. portfolio assessment), of reflective journals, or of pupil-self assessment. WSE reports also highlight some shortcomings in these areas, noting that assessment for learning strategies are not used in all classrooms, and suggesting that the information derived from such assessments could contribute usefully to teacher planning. Regarding assessment for learning strategies – such as described by the NCCA (2007) and Shulman (2007) – few teachers have attended related courses or received ongoing support, and may be unfamiliar with web-based materials to help them implement such strategies.” (DES, 2010b, p. 89)

In light of this situation, the authors recommend that the results of standardised tests should be used to inform both pupils and parents about progress, thereby providing learners with ‘insider-knowledge’ to support them to identify and develop strategies for improvement, in consultation with teachers. In addition, they urge that principals and teachers “…should ensure that assessment for learning is a feature of every classroom, with good practice shared at school-level” (p. ix). This recommendation highlights comments made earlier in the report in relation to school and classroom characteristics that influence student achievement as reported:

“…Teachers who engage in regular professional development (Evers et al., 2005), who report high levels of satisfaction with ICD attended (Shiel et al., 2006), who regularly assess pupils using a variety of methods (Evers et al., 2005), or who use formative assessment (Black & William, ’98) are those whose pupils tend to display superior achievement.” (p. 11)

Afl challenges

In the context of the findings and recommendations of the three Irish reports reviewed, it is noteworthy that Paul Black – co-author of the influential AFl publication, Inside the Black Box (Black & William, 1998) – noted recently that AFl “isn’t happening” in the UK, despite intensive guidance and support for teachers spanning over a decade. Reflecting on the problem, Black readily acknowledges that the democratisation of the teaching and learning process and the incremental relinquishing of control by the teacher which AFl demands presents “too risky … too radical” a change for many teachers. Indeed this observation reflects a persistent theme in the assessment literature that while an AFl approach seems straightforward in theory, implementing it in day-to-day teaching and learning is far “...more complex than it might appear at first sight” (York, 2003, p.478).

Such commentaries from the UK, together with the findings of the three Irish reports recorded in this article, highlight the immediate need for sustained, high quality professional development in assessment for Irish teachers, a call that has been repeated in recent years (e.g. O’Leary, 2006; 2008), without any significant response to date. Save, notably, the publication of national guidelines by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2007), which built upon the original O’Leary assessment framework, but have not yet been supplemented by a national programme of CPD. In turn, this begs questions about what form such CPD might take, given the acknowledged limitations of the mass withdrawal of teachers from schools for CPD purposes (e.g. Murchan et al., 2006 and the evidence internationally of the benefits of site-based CPD (e.g. McLaughlin, 2010), a model that has proven successful in light of this situation, the authors recommend that the results of standardised tests should be used to inform both pupils and parents about progress, thereby providing learners with ‘insider-knowledge’ to support them to identify and develop strategies for improvement, in consultation with teachers. In addition, they urge that principals and teachers “…should ensure that assessment for learning is a feature of every classroom, with good practice shared at shared at school-level” (p. ix). This recommendation highlights comments made earlier in the report in relation to school and classroom characteristics that influence student achievement as reported:

“…Teachers who engage in regular professional development (Evers et al., 2005), who report high levels of satisfaction with ICD attended (Shiel et al., 2006), who regularly assess pupils using a variety of methods (Evers et al., 2005), or who use formative assessment (Black & William, ’98) are those whose pupils tend to display superior achievement.” (p. 11)

### Classroom in which formative assessment is exploited to maximum effect have a look and feel that is palpably different

When implementing AFl in the Irish context (Lysaght, 2009). Linked to those concerns is the challenge of scalability (William, 2009) which raises questions about the potential of virtual learning communities to meet teachers’ needs at times and places of convenience to them, issues being considered in an article currently being written (Lysaght & O’Leary, 2011).

### Moving forward

Against this backdrop, teachers may be interested to learn that an AFl audit instrument is being developed for use by schools to conduct site-based reviews of their existing knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices in AFl.

Building on work in the UK and that of Lysaght (2009), the Assessment for Learning Audit Instrument (AfLAI) was designed by the author and her colleague at St Patrick’s College, Michael O’Leary, for use by teachers and schools as a first step to (a) identifying individual and collective levels of understanding and use of AFl in teaching and learning and (b) developing a plan for professional development in the area.

The AfLAI has questions/items organised under 4 headings: Sharing Learning Intentions/Success Criteria, Questioning/Classroom Discussion, Feedback and Peer-/Self-Assessment, and takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. Once completed, responses may be aggregated and compared to identify existing strengths and needs. In turn, this knowledge may be used in tandem with existing school plans to develop a course of action in formative assessment. Schools wishing to use this tool are invited to contact the author, (Zita.Lysaght@spd.dcu.ie), or Michael O’Leary (Michael.Oleary@spd.dcu.ie).
Teaching Matters

School wins prize with anti-racism Comic Strip

Anita McMonagle teaches sixth class in St Eunan’s NS, Raphoe, Co Donegal. Last year her class entered the Show Racism the Red Card Creative Competition and won first prize for their Comic Strip. In the following article Anita tells us about their project.

Show Racism the Red Card offers a creative and unique opportunity to teach children the importance of equality and respect for all human beings. The project compliments the strand ‘Myself and Others’ in the SPHE curriculum. The project supports teachers and children every step of the way. Show Racism the Red Card enlisted the help of football clubs to deliver anti-racism messages to the children. The children look up to these football players and the anti-racism message is conveyed to the children in a positive and influential way.

Working with our local football team and John Campbell (Club Promotions Officer, Finn Harps) was fantastic and Finn Harps inspired a lot of interest in the project. We had a special day dedicated to Show Racism the Red Card. The children watched the Show Racism the Red Card DVD and the Finn Harps players talked to children in a real and understandable way. The Finn Harps team took the children for PE throughout the day. Everyone wore red and we sold red balloons and red sweets with Show Racism the Red Card messages written on them. The €230 raised was given to the Haiti Appeal.

Our entry for the project was a comic strip that promoted Show Racism the Red Card. The children wrote the dialogue for the comic and then planned photographs to accompany the script. Photographs of all the children were included in the comic and the children put the photographs and the script into comic form using Comic Life on an Apple Mac. This comic allowed children of all abilities to play a valuable role in the production of the comic and the class worked as a team to create the end product. We printed our comic and included it in our school paper. This allowed us to reach the local community with our anti-racism message. The entry was then emailed to the competition in a fast and effective way with no hassle.

We were short listed for the Show Racism the Red Card Award and we travelled to UCD in Dublin. The Minister for Integration, John Curran TD, opened the event and well known sport stars talked about their experiences. Some of the stars included Irish rugby star Luke Fitzgerald, Dublin GAA star Cian O’Sullivan and Shamrock Rovers player Ollie Cahill. The children and their parents were ecstatic when they were announced as overall winners. We were welcomed home by a cavalcade of cars with beeping horns and flashing lights. The community came out onto the streets to congratulate the children. The children became real superstars in the local community and beyond. I am sure that this experience will stay with the children and will shape their future actions towards anti-racism in the future.

For details of the Show Racism the Red Card Competition 2011 visit www.theredcard.ie/competition.php

Anti-racism service to provide support and record data

Since the economy crashed, the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) has been receiving more reports from migrants about racist incidents they have experienced, from physical violence or damage to property, through to name calling on the street.

ICI chief executive Denise Charlton said racism was a reality before the crash but it appears to be becoming worse in tandem with the country’s worsening economic woes.

This, combined with a lack of reliable data, which is crucial to effectively combating racism, led to the ICI establishing a Racist Incidents Support and Referral Service.

Through the service, people who have experienced or witnessed a racist incident can receive support such as referrals to counselling, if required, or information and support in making a formal complaint to the appropriate agency, if they wish to.

Or, when people do not wish to make a formal complaint, the confidential service will provide an avenue for people to talk about what happened and have the incident recorded.

In addition, the ICI is working with a number of organisations, including the English Language Support Teachers’ Association, to roll out the reporting and monitoring service to where it is most needed.

For more information, brochures or posters, please contact Ruth Evans at communications@immigrantcouncil.ie or visit www.immigrantcouncil.ie.
Stories and storytelling are central to our lives and lie at the heart of human experience. Since the beginning of time we have shared through stories the events, beliefs and values that make us who we are and form our families, communities and cultures. Some of these stories have been collected in myth and documented in fables and legends, some have become literary classics and others have become stories passed on orally through the generations.

Storytelling, as used today, often refers to an interactive experience between a teller and a listener. Among the techniques and methodologies available to the teacher, storytelling is one of the most frequently used teaching methodologies and is an established part of the Revised Primary School Curriculum (1999). Story is one of the five principal contexts through which oral language can be approached. The importance of story is explored in the Teacher Guidelines for English, pgs. 45-47.

Anyone who has ever told a child a story will testify to the capacity of a story to capture a child’s attention and engage his/her imagination. Most children adore listening to stories in their mother tongue and understand the process and the narrative conventions. This explains why storytelling is such a valuable tool in the modern language class. They provide an ideal introduction to the modern language as the language is presented in a context that is non-threatening and familiar to the child.

Storytelling is a superb methodology in the modern language classroom for the communicative approach and in keeping with the NCCA Draft Modern Language Curriculum (1999), serves as a platform to develop the two other strands of the modern language curriculum – language awareness and cultural awareness. Language is presented in a familiar and memorable context and many stories contain natural repetition of key vocabulary and structures enabling the child to join in reading key taglines and phrases. Storytelling can involve receptive skills and can also serve to practise productive skills as the stories may be used as a springboard for practising reading, speaking, writing and listening activities.

(See the MLPSI’s CPD Module 4 Language Awareness and Integrating the Modern Language with Literacy, Oracy and Numeracy for additional information and materials.)

Choosing stories

The type of story you choose will depend on the skills you are trying to develop in the pupils, for example for gist, learning specific vocabulary, revising particular language structures etc. The following points may serve as useful guidelines:

- Traditional or well-known children’s stories are a good starting point for storytelling. Folk stories, fairy tales, legends and fables are a good place to start as the children may know the stories in their native language and this will help them to understand it when re-told in the modern language.
- It might also be useful to choose a story that relates to the topic you have just covered in the modern language classroom, for example.
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar is useful for practising vocabulary associated with food.
- Create your own story using one of the many digital storytelling tools or adapt a story by devising your own text to suit your pupils’ age and interest levels.

Why storytelling?

The Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative emphasises the importance of storytelling in achieving the aims of the Curriculum, especially in modern language teaching.

The food we eat makes our bodies and the stories we hear make our minds.

Wright, 1995

TELLING THE STORY

In order for storytelling to be an effective vehicle for teaching the modern language, the teacher must bring a strong performance element to the telling of stories. The teacher must learn to dramatise the story so as to make it engaging and interesting to all of the language learners in the classroom. It is advised that the teacher practise telling the story a number of times before presenting it in the classroom. Teachers can dramatise the action and engage pupils in a number of ways:

- by varying the pitch, volume and tempo of the voice;
- by using mime and facial gestures;
- by maintaining eye contact with the pupils;
- by making the best use of the space;
- by using different voices for different characters;
- by using silence and pauses to add dramatic effect.
STORYTELLING BENEFITS IN THE MODERN LANGUAGE CLASS

Stories can
- enhance children’s motivation to learn the modern language by stimulating their imaginations and their involvement in the storytelling process;
- help children to look at life from different viewpoints and imagine what it feels like to be someone else;
- link to other subjects in the curriculum and present opportunities for cross curricular integration;
- help children to develop their thinking skills;
- provoke a shared response thereby developing pupils’ social skills;
- facilitate the acquisition and revision of vocabulary and structures. Most of the new language in stories is perfectly contextualised and it is usually repeated more than once so that the listener has more than one opportunity to understand the meaning;
- enhance the development of the child’s literary competence i.e. the child’s ability to understand and enjoy literature;
- help to develop children’s intercultural awareness through their experience of culturally specific stories;
- improve pupils’ pronunciation through an enhanced awareness of the rhythm and intonation of the modern language;
- promote communicative exchange between the storyteller and his/her audience by inviting the audience to collaborate in predicting the end of the story, composing an alternative ending and giving a summary of the story to that point;
- develop pupils’ appreciation of a variety and range of accents through listening to stories on CDs/DVDs.

Stories can be
- motivating, challenging, interesting, enjoyable and fun;
- promote the development of listening skills including listening for gist which involves listening for the main idea or plot without necessarily understanding everything. Other skills such as listening for specific information can also be developed through stories;
- excellent for catering for pupils of different learning styles including visual, auditory, kinaesthetic etc. and also for the different types of intelligence including emotional, linguistic, interpersonal etc.;
- an ideal platform to develop pupils’ language awareness as through stories pupils become aware of language patterns.

STORY SOURCES

- Storybooks in the target language including Big books etc.
- Comics in the target language
- YouTube.
- DVDs.
- Newspapers/magazines from the target language.
- Guests from the target culture(s).
- Websites.
- Trócaire, Oxfam and Ireland Aid for stories and pictures relating to target cultures.
- Adapt existing stories.

STORY SOURCES

- More resources on storytelling in various media on www.mlpsi.ie.

STORY SOURCES

- Choosing books with colourful illustrations.
- Create your own stories in big book format
- Choose stories with a good storyline
- Create a section in your class or school library for modern language books and encourage pupils from different countries to bring in stories in their mother tongues.
- Use a variety of formats and media to present the stories – there are several excellent websites that offer stories electronically with accompanying sound files and images. Big books are also a terrific way to present a story to a class as the text and images are visible to all pupils.

When selecting storybooks teachers should consider

Vocabulary/structure/functions: is the language accessible for the age group you are teaching? Does the story reinforce or revise language?

Stories that begin with ‘Once upon a time …’ are frequently written in the simple past tense. Many teachers are apprehensive about introducing children to this tense in the early stages of their modern language learning. It is important to remember, however, that children will focus not on the use of tense but rather on the meaning of the story.

Their prior knowledge and experience of storytelling will, to a certain extent, have prepared them for its use in the target language. The quality of literary devices: such as repetition, rhythm, humour, predictability, surprise etc. …how do these devices contribute to pupils’ enjoyment and comprehension?

For further guidelines on the consideration of content/subject matter, illustrations/layout and cross-curricular integration/linkage: when selecting storybooks, please see full article on www.into.ie. More resources on storytelling in various media on www.mlpsi.ie.

Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative, Kildare Education Centre, Friary Road, Kildare, Ireland.

Bibliography

A visualiser, also known as a document camera, is a camera mounted on a stand that connects to a projector. In many ways a visualiser is a ‘modern’ combination of a camera, a microscope and the overhead projector. Documents or objects can be placed under the camera and the image projected onto a screen/whiteboard. It is ideal for showing 3D objects, sharing books, children’s work, photographs and pages. Visualisers have a zoom facility allowing you to zoom in on detail. The quality of the image projected on the big screen depends on the camera resolution. The visualiser is an intuitive and user-friendly tool in the classroom requiring little technical skill. If one of the teachers in your school is using a visualiser it might be a good idea to ask them to give a ten minute session at a staff meeting demonstrating two ways they use the visualiser. From this very short session teachers will see very clearly how easily and effectively it can be used.

Some ideas for using a visualiser in the classroom:

- For demonstration purposes:
  - Using a ruler accurately.
  - Using a protractor to measure angles accurately.
  - Demonstrating an art technique e.g. weaving.
  - Handwriting – examples of children’s handwriting, showing improvements.
  - Showing different 3D shapes.
  - Using children’s own work as the basis of teaching e.g. artwork, brainstorming.
  - A science experiment.
- Reading labels or ingredients on bottles.
- Showing objects and artefacts in close detail – a coin, a snail, a leaf.
- Turn a small book into a big book – put the book under the visualiser. Using the zoom the teacher can enlarge the book onto the big screen for all children to follow.
- Introducing new words in the reader.

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**Safer Internet Day 2011** will be celebrated in Ireland on 8 February 2011. Safer Internet Day is part of a global drive to promote a safer Internet for all users, especially young people. The event, supported by the European Union through the Safer Internet Programme, has been celebrated since 2004 in a growing number of countries. The campaign is organised in Ireland by the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) and promoted through Webwise, their Internet Safety initiative. The NCTE, in partnership with Microsoft and other organisations, will deliver 100 Internet Safety talks to children in primary schools across Ireland. With the National Parents’ Council Primary they will deliver talks to parents in 18 regional locations, and with the PDST and CAPP they will release an internet safety education programme to implement the SPHE curriculum in primary schools. [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)
Spreag an Ghaeilge le Spraoi

Sceal an tUsal Michéal Ó Muirc-HEARTAIGH aitheas a chroi de uaslaí Mhíchíle Ó Muirc-HEARTAIGH go dtí am na Ghaeilge, ’Spreag an Ghaeilge le Spraoi’, ag Comhdháil Gaelse (COGG) a bhreith leis an gComhpháirtíocht um Fhorbairt Ghairmiúil do Bhunscoileanna (SFGB) agus do bhunscoileanna Gaelscolaíochta (OGC). Bhronn COGG cóip den phacáiste seo ar gach bunscoil sa tír le déanaí.

Is marú a thugann an t-oideachas go dhá thús, go fógraítear an stáit an teanga agus, i gceannas a bhfuil an scileanna cluiche chomhtháith a chruthaigh, a chonradh, a chruibh é, agus an cheisteanna a chur ar fáil le haghaidh a fhiosrú. Tá an t-oideachas go thréimhseach ar gach pheinteoir an teanga ar dhuine a bhfuil chumas ann do phacáiste seo.

Tá an t-eolas agus an cúlthacht an tsúgartha i saol na páistí ó rang na naíonán go dtí an t-ábhar. Tá stáit agus ag triúntóis go dtí na páistí chun an teanga a chur ar fáil agus a cainte a theaghas.

Tá an cheisteann ar fáil, an t-eolas a bhfuil in ann a fhágadh ar fáil, an teangacha a bhfuil in ann a fhorbairt a thabhairt ar fáil, agus an chuid de na teangacha a bhfuil i mbrabhumhacht.

Bhí an cheist agus an focal a bhaint as chuid de na teangacha a bhfuil in ann a fhorbairt a thabhairt ar fáil.

Is maith a thuigeann oideachaisí tábhacht do bhunscoileanna ina dhiaidh an chéad lá, ina dhiaidh an cheist chugamh, ina dhiaidh an t-ábhar a bhfuil in ann a fhorbairt a thabhairt ar fáil.

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Tá an cheist agus an focal a bhaint as chuid de na teangacha a bhfuil in ann a fhorbairt a thabhairt ar fáil.
déanann na páistí éisteacht, labhairt, léitheoireacht agus scríbhneoireacht ar bhealach nádúrtha. Is féidir na cluichí go léir sa leabhrán a úsáid i ngrúpaí beaga, áit ar féidir idirghníomhú sa spríoitheanga a mheadú agus tuilleadh cleachtai dh chabhair do na páistí.

Tá an ceathrú cuid de Spreag an Ghaeilge le Spraoi ag luí go deas leis an seanfhocal a deir, ‘Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí,’ toisc go molann múinteoirí na páistí nuair a ghlacann siad leis na deiseanna an teanga a úsáid gan spreasgradh an mhúinteora sa rang, sa chlós srl. Is caibidil ghleite í ina bhfaightear smaointe agus áiseanna fíorchabhracha chun úsáid na Gaeilge Neamhfhoirmiúil a spreagadh i measc na bpáistí.

Tá Spreag an Ghaeilge le Spraoi ar fáil go digiteach ar www.pdst.ie agus ar www.cogg.ie. Is fiú go mór an leabhar seo a úsáid i ngach seomra ranga sna scoileanna T1 toisc go bhfuil fíonnuair mar fhoghlaimeoirí a bhaint fearas ar leith.

Tá Spreag an Ghaeilge le Spraoi ar fáil go fóill do ghníomhaíochtaí agus cluichí a spreagadh i measc na bpáistí.

Tá Spraoi an Ghaeilge le Spraoi agus an Ghaeilge Neamhspleách mar fhoghlaimníní airgeadachtaí.

A dhó. Bhí dhá bháis sa chlúachtanna fóirmiúil agus an Ghaeilge Neamhspleách mar fhoghlaimeoirí.

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Tuigfear deis do na páistí a bheith neamhspleách mar fhoghlaimneoirí.

Tó Ceallaigh, Comhordaitheoir Réigiúinach, An tSeirbhís um Fhorbairt Ghairmiúil do Mhúinteoirí.
The centrality of the arts in education is under attack. Recent studies that point to a decrease in literacy and numeracy standards appear to have resulted in a reappraisal by the DES of the central message of the 1999 curriculum: that all subjects are of equal importance. I am using this opportunity therefore to represent the original rationale for the inclusion of the arts in education prepared by the NCNA Arts Committee between 1990 and 1999 and which was summarised to create the introductory sections in the music, drama and visual arts curriculum documents.

The arts encourage abstraction & symbolism

The ability to abstract and to symbolise has direct relevance to other forms of knowing: it is akin to the scientist's first imaginative insight into a new discovery before working out a painstaking, logical proof of what she/he knows to be true.

The arts in a core curriculum

An education which seeks to subsume the arts into what is perceived as the core curriculum is concerned with educational outcomes which are neither arts-based, nor necessarily arts-related. It is primarily concerned with knowing about, or study, rather than with knowing, or experience.

Why art?

- A function of arts education is to give children experiences, rather than skills and information only.
- The process of making art and of responding to visual, musical, dramatic, tactile and kinaesthetic forms develop children's openness to experience.

The arts are non-discursive

- The arts comprise a number of modes of communication and children must be initiated, not only into the symbols of reading/writing and numeracy but also into the possibilities of imagery.
- For teachers, parents and the community at large to ignore non-discursive ways of knowing is to discriminate against all children by side-stepping the metaphorical and the affective aspects of their lives.

The arts are language

- Initiation into the languages of understanding and communication, of gesture, of visual and musical expression, of harmony and aesthetic judgement is essential to the child's balanced development.

The arts themselves are vital

- A central concern of arts education must be with the arts themselves.
- The particular quality of artistic expression is the development of the child's imaginative dimension.
- The arts promote the development of the imagination and it is through the imagination that we transcend experience and are enabled to give form to and to communicate that experience.

The arts are a language

- Initiation into the languages of understanding and communication, of gesture, of visual and musical expression, of harmony and aesthetic judgement is essential to the child's balanced development.

The arts foster creativity

- Educators agree that young children have an inherent impulse to create and that their early learning experiences are multi-sensory.

The arts provide for integrated experience

- Arts education comprises a set of integrated experiences: intellectual, emotional, perceptual and aesthetic.
Children need to develop an awareness of the sense qualities in things themselves: sights, sounds, tastes, tactile surfaces, forms, colours, movement and space, each of which generates its own aesthetic response.

Developing the sensory mechanism strengthens children's powers of perception.

As the basis for aesthetic experience may be found in the rhythm of ordinary experience, opportunities must be provided for children to explore ideas and discover the natural and the built environment.

The educative power of the arts must be exploited in the interests of the child's whole development.

Artistic expression is a product of personal intelligence and gives the lie to the perceived dichotomy between the affective and the cognitive, between feeling and thinking.

Curricular bias tends towards the cognitive domain where objectives are the recall and recognition of knowledge and the development of 'intellectual' abilities or skills.

The bias is to the detriment of the affective domain where objectives include provision for changes in interests, attitudes and values and the development of appreciations.

As the rate of social change accelerates, the qualities of capability and adaptability in young people become increasingly important.

The arts are vital forms of knowing which offer unique access to certain dimensions of children's experience.

While creative thought and action may be fostered in other areas of the curriculum, the arts can further develop imagination and creativity because in creative activity, thinking and feeling are intimately linked.

As arts education deals with the daily behaviours of children, there is a natural broadening of school based experiences in the visual arts, in music, drama and dance into their daily lives.

Continuity is assured only by the support, initiative and affirmation of parents and the local community.

Michael O'Reilly worked with both the NCCA and PCSP on the design and implementation of the arts curricula. He currently works as a shared learning support teacher, based in St Fintan's NS, Lismacaffrey, Co Westmeath, as head of the Visual Arts Department with Hibernia College, as an in-career course designer and as an author with Gill and MacMillan.
Construct a light box for growing seedlings indoors: Seedlings in the classroom will tend to grow towards the window light and can quickly become long and straggly. A light box will ensure that they all get an even amount of sunlight. Now is a good time to prepare a light box for the busy growing season. All you will need are the following: a strong cardboard box about 40cm x 40cm x 25cm, scissors, roll of tinfoil, non-toxic glue, pencil. Mark diagonal lines on the sides of the box and cut across the lines. Remove the off-cuts. Line the inside with tinfoil and glue it to the box. Place a tray in the bottom and put the little pots of seed on the tray. Place it facing the window sill in the classroom. See www.blackrockec.ie. Click on Paddy’s School Garden.

Continue studying birds: See www.birdwatchireland.ie for 18 activities to do in school when studying birds. Also take part in their bird survey once a week.

Observe what is happening around the school and submit records: See www.ispynature.com for information on how to monitor biodiversity around your school. Report sightings of buff-tailed bumblebee, hazel catkins and snowdrops to www.phenology.biodiversityireland.ie. This site gives a list of insects, plants and birds where first sightings can be reported. Also check www.greenwave.ie. On the latter site you could send in sightings of 6 plant species from February onwards. This site also has useful information and activities on how to monitor wind, temperature and rainfall around the school.

Collecting and analysing data is an important skill in science and geography: By participating in the five surveys mentioned above in January/February the children will be very much engaged in this skill.

Survey 1: Bird Survey
Survey 2: Plant survey
Survey 3: Rain, wind and temperature
Survey 4: Lichens
Survey 5: School grounds survey

Make an ecology tank to study the growth of tadpoles. See www.blackrockec.ie. Click on ‘Environmental Activities’ and then ‘Make and Do’.

Sprout potatoes in the classroom. Purchase c. 5kg of early seed potatoes in late January or early February such as Home Guard or Colleen. Place them in empty egg cartons, making sure the sides with the most eyes are facing upwards. Position the tray in the shadiest part of the classroom so that they will develop strong sprouts.

Daffodils and hyacinths that have finished flowering indoors. Remove dead flowers. Leave them in place for about a month until the leaves have turned brown. Clean the bulbs at this stage and leave them in a cool place until the autumn. They can be planted outside then.
OUTDOOR

1 Check to see are the school grounds bird-friendly with this survey:

Are the school grounds bird-friendly?

Food

- Shrubs with berries?
  - Pyracantha
  - Viburnum opulus
  - Native shrubs with berries?
    - Holly
    - Hawthorn
    - Alder
  - Shrubs with insects?
    - Hawthorn - 149
    - Holly - 7

- Native hedgerow?

- Trees with fruit and seed?
  - Oak - 284
  - Scots Pine – 91
  - Lime – 31

- Flowers with seeds?
  - Sunflower
  - Teasel
  - Snapdragons
  - Asters

- Tree with insects?

- Rotting logs?
- Heap of leafmould?
- Nuts in a feeder?
- Water in container?

Health

- Bird Bath?
- Hollow place with sand?
- Muddy place?

Shelter

- Thick hedge?
- Evergreen shrubs?
- Wooded area?

Nesting

- Stone wall with crevices?
- Hole in tree trunk?
- Native hedgerow?
- Nesting boxes (facing east or south-east)?
- Trees of different heights?
- Wide eaves for swifts, starlings and sparrows?
- String bags with feathers, wool, hair and moss for nests?
- Honeysuckle?

By Paddy Madden and Marian Rollins

2 Make a scarecrow: This is a good time to make a scarecrow before the busy planting season begins. You will need: a 2m piece and a 1m piece of 7cm x 3cm wood; 3 mm x 5mm screws; screwdriver; old jumper; trousers; pillow case; straw or bubble-wrap used in packing; twine; old mop-head; permanent marker; saw. See www.blackrockec.ie. Click on ‘Paddy’s School Garden’ on ‘How to make a scarecrow’.

3 Make a cultivation bed: See the above link on how to do this. Ideally each class should have one of these. Also on www.into.ie check the November 2007 issue of InTouch p47.

4 Begin studying trees in the school grounds. Children in senior classes could get the height of a tree by following the link above. All you need are equilateral, right-angled isosceles triangles made from cardboard. Children should work in pairs at this activity. Get them to estimate the height of the trees first. Buds can be identified with a simple key: see www.irishtimes.com/timeseye/trees/pdf/classroom.pdf. Follow the instructions there on how to have a bud race in the classroom.

5 Investigate your garden soil: Put a handful of soil from the garden in a jam jar. Cover it with water. Shake the jar and wait for the contents to settle. The biggest and heaviest particles will sink to the bottom (sand); the smallest and lightest will settle on top (clay). Silt will settle in the middle. Humus will float on top of the water. Take samples from different parts of the garden. If the soil is too sandy it will require humus to hold the nutrients. If it has too much clay it will also require humus to open it up so that drainage can be improved. A loamy soil is ideal: it contains a good balance of sand, silt and clay particles.

6 Plant snowdrop plants in a shaded area...

Paddy Madden lectures in SESE in Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education. The monthly articles, ‘Working in tandem with the seasons’, are based on the very successful course of the same name which was pioneered in Marino in 2009. This year the course will take place in the Blackrock Education Centre on one Monday every month from September to June commencing on 27 September. Enquiries to Catherina@blackrockec.ie. The Centre will also produce 5 short videos every month based on the monthly sessions. They can be downloaded from www.blackrockec.ie. Click on ‘Paddy’s School Garden’. 
**Linking RE and family Sunday masses**


Bernadette considers the practicalities involved in planning and preparing the family Mass. In the ‘Getting Started’ chapter every aspect is explored from ‘location and space’ to ‘creating a sense of the sacred’. The multi-sensory approach advocated will deepen and enrich the child’s experience of the sacred. The multi-sensory approach advocated will deepen and enrich the child’s experience of the sacred. Each Sunday is presented with ideas for décor, theme and colour, as well as a suggestion of concrete objects for the entrance and gospel processes. There is a welcome message, an explanation of the theme, an introduction to the first reading and to the Gospel. Suggestions are offered for the Homily. The Prayers of the Faithful are presented in plain language, as are the Reflections. There is a chapter providing the contextual information for each gospel and first reading for Year A.

The appendices include the Mass responses, everyday prayers and additional education. There are suggestions for dramatisations of the gospels which liven the event and broaden the children’s experience of the occasion.

This book is an invaluable resource for the Catholic primary school, providing material to forge links between the family Sunday Mass and the children’s religious education. Individual teachers will find the content very useful if preparing the Sunday Mass with the children, particularly in the Communion and Confirmation classes.

Published by: Veritas, ISBN: 1847302467, price: €15.99

Reviewed by Julie Ryng, Scoil an Athar Mattiú, Togher, Cork.

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**Leabhar iontach – ó thús go deireadh**

Bernadette understands the need to present the liturgy of the word in an interesting and child-friendly manner. Each Sunday is presented with ideas for décor, theme and colour, as well as a suggestion of concrete objects for the entrance and gospel processes. There is a welcome message, an explanation of the theme, an introduction to the first reading and to the Gospel. Suggestions are offered for the Homily. The Prayers of the Faithful are presented in plain language, as are the Reflections. There is a chapter providing the contextual information for each gospel and first reading for Year A.


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Amhráin do gach chinéal páiste

S a leabhar agus CD álainn seo tá 24 amhráin spleodrach úr. Tá amhráin anseo do gach chinéal páiste, amhráin grín, suantraí, gníomhamhráin agus amhráin le damhsa leo. Tá an leabhar agus an dlúthdhoisca an-óirúinach do mhuinteoirí le fáil mar chuid de na rudaí a d’fhág ina shaol. Tá an leabhar agus an dlúthdhoisca léirí a chur in iniamh domhanda sa cheathrú bliain agus is féidir a d’fhág mar dhuine go mór.


Léirmheas le SUSAN DOHERTY, SN Naomh Colmcille, Contae Dhún na nGall.

ICTs in the Primary School
Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century

Jerome Morrissey, Director, NCTE, Bernadette McHugh, Director, Navan Education Centre, Gerard McHugh, Director, Dublin West Education Centre, Robert O’Leary and John O’Mahony, authors, pictured at launch of book.

The Dublin West Education, in association with the National Centre for Technology in Education and Navan Education Centre, has published a book which will explore the myriad of ways that ICTs can transform education: how the use of technology can transform schools and classrooms, transform how teachers work, and above all, transform how children learn.

It also examines the unlimited power of modern technology to enliven, to stimulate, to motivate, to excite and to inspire. As such, this book will be of enormous interest to teachers and student teachers.

One copy of the book will be placed in every primary school in the country.

The book, entitled ICTs in the Primary School, Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century, will contain two sections:

Section One, written by Robbie O’Leary and John O’Mahony, provides a range of practical advice and strategies for teachers, and those who aspire to be teachers, at whatever level of ICT competence they may be, to implement modern technologies to support teaching and learning in their schools.

Section Two presents a selection of papers, from invited guest authors, all of whom have made very substantial individual contributions, in a wide range of areas, to the development of ICTs in Irish education. These authors represent some of the most innovative, dynamic and inspirational educationalists in this country and their chapters have been included to offer further layers of understanding and areas of additional interest to those presented in Section One.

All of these authors are at the forefront of ICT in education in Ireland and have considerable expertise and experience in this field. This publication will add extraordinary value to teachers’ understanding of ICT and how to use it in teaching and learning, consequently it will make a tremendous contribution to Irish society.

The book was launched by Jerome Morrissey, Director, NCTE on 13 December 2010 at the Dublin West Education Centre. Cost is €20 plus €3.50 p&p.

For further information or to order please contact: Siobhán Kerr, 01 452 8000, skerr@dwe.ie
Finishing Touches

Resources for teachers, Noticeboard of Upcoming Events and the Comhar Linn Crossword

STSG

The INTO Separated Teachers’ Support Group. Separated, divorced, widowed, lone parents from INTO, ASTI, TUI and IFUT welcome. Annual membership subscription €20.

March meeting: Saturday, 7 March at 11 am.

Venue: Club na Muinteoirí, Parnell Sq, Dublin 1.

For further information please contact: Chairperson Teresa Feeney at 091-849048/087-7537595 or Secretary: Noreen Carroll at 01-2896405/087-2988502.

Study Visit to Berlin

Holocaust Education Trust Ireland. Date: April 2011 (Subject to flight confirmation) This programme involves visits to authentic Holocaust sites and is an intensive course which will introduce teachers to some aspects of the complex and challenging subject of the Holocaust. Lectures, seminars and interactive workshops, will feature on this programme.

COST: €595 incl flights, hotel, study visits and seminars (based on two people sharing).

Places limited. For further information contact HETI, Clifton House Lower Fitzwilliam Street Dublin 2

Tel: 00 353 1 6690593 Email: info@hetireland.org Website: www.hetireland.org

Copy you wish to have considered for publication in the March issue of InTouch should arrive in Head Office by 7 February 2011. The April issue deadline is 14 March.

Feature Articles

We have a number of feature articles on file that we are hoping to publish this term so please be aware that if you are submitting a feature article to InTouch the first issue it could be considered for is May 2011.

IPPEA Conference

Irish Primary PE Association 8th Annual Conference Saturday, 5 March 2011: 10am – 4pm

Marino Institute of Education, Dublin

Theme: Fundamental Movement Skills in the Primary Classroom

More details available shortly on www.irishprimarype.com, IPPEA facebook page or from cliodhna@irishprimarype.com

Maintain Hope

For details of Maintain Hope 2011, contact Gerry O Donoghue on 087 2642887 or email maintainhope@gmail.com.

Web: www.maintainhope.org

Maintain Hope’s work in Kenya is supported by the INTO Solidarity Fund.

Medugorje

A trip to Medugorje for teachers, is planned for July 2011. A substantial discount applies if booked early. Please ring Detta @ 086-8197111 for details.

Carysfort Reunion


Email Eilis Dillon (Gilmartin) on edillon@sess.ie to express your interest.
FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Check out Engineers Week: 14-20 February 2011

Engineers Week is a week-long programme of nationwide events with the aim of celebrating the world of engineering in Ireland. Events for primary, post-primary students and families will take place across the country during the week. Engineers Week 2010 was a great success with 17,000 participants and over 140 organisations taking part. Each student participating in this year’s event will be in with the chance of winning a fantastic trip to visit the NEMO Science Center in Amsterdam! Log on to www.engineersweek.ie to find out more about the free interactive events taking place in your county for Engineers Week 2011!

Limerick Soccer Blitz

The 2011 Limerick Primary Teachers’ Indoor Soccer Blitz will take place on the weekend of Friday, 11 and Saturday 12 March, 2011. There are three competitions:
• Men’s Open (restricted to a maximum of 32 teams)
• Women’s Open (restricted to a maximum of 16 teams)
• Men’s Over 35 (restricted to 8 teams)

Fee €80 per team.

Entries/enquiries to be directed to Ray D’Arcy, Scoil Ide, Corbally, Limerick. Closing date for entries is 18 February. (rdarcy@scoilide.ie)

The Limerick Strand Hotel, Sarsfield Bridge, Ennis Road, is offering a very competitive rate of €40 pps (triple room). (Breakfast included). When contacting the Strand Hotel, quote Soccer Blitz 2011. Phone: 061 421800. Fax: 061: 4211866.

Email: hello@strandlimerick.ie

Comhar Linn Crossword NO 127

A draw for 2 x £100 will be made from all correct entries. Simply complete the crossword and send it to InTouch, 35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, before Friday 25th February, 2011

Logs on to www.engineersweek.ie to find out more about the free interactive events taking place in your county for Engineers Week 2011!
EARLY SCOLIOSIS DETECTION

To the ordinary lay person, the very mention of words like Scoliosis, Kyphosis or indeed Spinal Deformity, especially when used in relation to their own children, can strike a cord of fear. Couple this with today’s phenomenon of looking everything up on the internet, often getting the wrong information about your particular condition and you have a recipe for unnecessarily upset patients and stressed out parents.

A concise DVD has been put together by the experts working in the field of Spinal Deformity. There are no long-winded medical explanations. It is, instead, a very practical explanation and demonstration of the various types of Scoliosis, how to screen the spine, how to refer the patient onto a Consultant if necessary and what spinal surgery involves, should it be required.

As with other conditions, early detection is vital. This DVD should be utilised to encourage the earliest possible detection. Education in the area of detection is paramount, after all it is easier to find something when you know what you looking for.

We would do well to remember these children are our future, we owe it to them to quite literally “watch their backs!”

For further information please contact: Frances McDevitt (Scoliosis Assessment Specialist) frances.mcdvitt@gmail.com Phone: 00353-87-2598363.

Friends of the Elderly publish Biography Guide for Schools

The central aim of the Friends of the Elderly Primary Schools Programmes is to give time for the young and old to enjoy each other’s company. The planned activities will give the students a greater appreciation of the values of the elderly, of how life was lived in Ireland during the 30s, 40s and 50s, of what the elderly have achieved and what they are passing on to us.

It is hoped that students will take with them the knowledge that the elderly are good company, that ageing is an integral part of life, and that a life well led should be celebrated.

The Friends of the Elderly Primary School Programme is designed so that all students, either as individuals, as a class or as part of the entire primary school can participate and receive certification on completion. A Biography guide for Primary Schools has now been published. See www.friendsoftheelderly.ie for info.

Maths classroom resources

The New Maths classroom resources have recently been added to the INTO website. These series of Maths games are suitable for use from junior infants to 6th class. There are approximately 18 or 19 games for each class level, covering every strand and strand unit in the curriculum, which will be of benefit to any teachers and children who use them.

The resources can be found at the following link: https://www.into.ie/ROI/MembersArea/ClassroomResources/Mathematics/ You will need to log in to view.