At the time of writing the government has invited the public service unions to discussions on further productivity measures and reductions in the cost of public services. Depending on these discussions, government has stated its willingness to negotiate a workplace agreement with the public service unions.

To date all targets under the Croke Park Agreement have been achieved and the agreement is currently saving the taxpayer over €1.5 billion a year in payroll savings, while reforming public services. The Government has said it needs additional productivity and savings.

The INTO will listen to the rationale for that request. If the unions subsequently agree to enter into negotiations, members can be assured that there will be a union agenda to bring to the negotiating table.

Obviously, the INTO’s priority will be to protect the pay and pensions of primary teachers against further cuts and to protect against compulsory redundancies. Primary teachers have seen salary cuts in addition to additional taxes and charges imposed on all workers.

Yet to date, the quality of primary education has been protected due to the professionalism of teachers.

No one should underestimate the challenge in reaching an agreement that can be put to members in a ballot. We will provide regular updates over the coming challenging months.

On behalf of the INTO, I would like to extend Christmas greetings to all our members, in particular to staff representatives and committee members at branch, district and national levels. Greetings too to our many colleagues and friends in other kindred organisations including management authorities, teacher and other trade unions, Department of Education and Science officials, teacher training institutions, InTouch advertisers and members of the media.

The Organisation will not be sending Christmas cards this year. Instead it will donate the costs associated with the sending of cards to the Jack and Jill Foundation.

Beireann buan bua.

Sheila Nunan

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Beireann buan bua.
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Talks to begin on Croke Park deal

At the time InTouch goes to print initial discussions have taken place between public service unions, including the INTO, and Government representatives in relation to the future of the Croke Park deal. An informal meeting between Minister Brendan Howlin, TD, his officials and officers from the Public Service Committee of ICTU, which includes INTO General Secretary Sheila Nunan, took place in November where he signalled his intention to seek Government approval for an invitation to talks, which was subsequently issued. A full briefing for all public service unions then took place on 28 November.

The Government has stated that it has identified unallocated savings totalling €1 billion in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure carried out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform last year. The Government has also said that while it is not evoking clause 1.28 of the Croke Park Agreement, which would collapse the Agreement, and that the guarantees are still in place, it has indicated that it will be seeking an extension of the Croke Park Agreement in return for substantial savings and work practice reforms.

The CEC will consider whether to enter talks with the Government at its meeting in December when both the scope of the issues to be discussed and an exact timescale for talks will be clearer. It is clear, however, that any talks will be scheduled to take place in the immediate future and the Government has indicated that it wants to see implementation and savings early in 2013. The outcome of any process in which INTO is involved will, as with previous proposed deals, be put to ballot of members. Further updates will be posted on this most important issue on the INTO website on an on-going basis.

New teachers on wrong salary points

It has come to the attention of the INTO that a number of new teachers who graduated this year are being paid at the wrong scale level. Following the decision that new beneficiaries, with effect from 1 February 2012, would begin on the fourth point of the existing salary scale, no Circular has yet issued to formally outline the 2012 salary scales and to whom they will apply. In the absence of this, the DES has, as a holding position, been putting newly appointed teachers up on the payroll on either the unqualified rate or alternatively the first point of the salary scale. This means the DES will owe teachers money rather than the other way around. There was a great deal of negative publicity for the DES when the Comptroller and Auditor General highlighted that the DES was owed substantial money by teachers as a result of certain over payments following a salary adjustment last year. It is clear the DES is taking a very cautious and defensive approach to this matter.

The INTO, however, does not regard the actions of the DES as in any way justifiable and has been in regular contact with senior DES officials to seek to have this matter sorted out for NQTs and to get an authoritative and reasonable time scale within which this will be done. The INTO formally raised this matter in October at the Teachers’ Conciliation Council and pointed out both the unfairness (and potential unlawfulness) in paying younger teachers incorrect wages and also the risk that the length of time in sorting it out could see arrears taxed at the higher rate if not paid until the new tax year in 2013.

The INTO has also considered a number of legal possibilities in relation to this including initiating a payment of wages claim. This, however, is not straightforward and, depending on how it is pursued, may actually hinder rather than help the process. The matter, if not resolved, will be considered by the CEC at its December meeting.

|| The INTO has been engaged in an intensive pre budget lobby of Government politicians. The INTO pre budget submission covered issues including the importance of class size, funding for schools, teacher employment, provision for school buildings and ICT for primary schools. Full details of Budget 2013 are on the INTO website.

| Circular, 38/2012, was published on 9 November dealing with panel access for fixed term (temporary), substitute and part-time teachers to the supplementary re-deployment panels. The INTO organised a series of 11 information meetings in relation to the criteria for accessing redeployment panels. Frequently asked questions were published on the INTO website and are being updated on a regular basis.

| The National Education Welfare Board has published proposals regarding One Child, One Team, One Plan, NEWB service delivery.

Following the publication, the NEWB invited people’s views on the issues on their website. In addition to this, the INTO organised two meetings about the new plan in Dublin and Athlone and also posted an online survey on the INTO website. The CEC will consider the matter further at its December meeting.

| Other consultation processes currently taking place relate to the entry standard for those who wish to become teachers and also the issue of school placement procedures during the course of teacher training. A meeting was also held at the end of November with the Presidents of the Colleges of Education in relation to these issues. The proposals for both teacher entry and teacher placement will be available on the INTO website in due course.

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Many members will have heard that substantive changes to the Sick Leave Scheme for Registered Teachers are to be introduced following the Labour Court recommendations in July 2012. The effective date for the main body of these changes has yet to be agreed. Further deliberation between the DES and the Joint Teacher Unions must first take place over the coming months, but, on the recommendation of the Labour Court, the earliest date that the changes can be introduced will be in 2014.

The changes to the sick leave scheme in relation to the counting of uncertified sick leave days was covered in the November InTouch (page 9). The remainder of the changes to the sick leave scheme relate to the entitlement to paid and unpaid sick leave and these changes are summarised briefly as follows:

**Current paid/unpaid sick leave**
- 12 months’ full pay (over a rolling 4 year period).
- 24 months’ unpaid leave.

**New scheme**

**Standard:** three months’ full pay/three months’ half pay/unpaid leave or temporary rehabilitation pay

*Critically ill:* six months’ full pay/six months’ half pay/12 months’ temporary rehabilitation pay/12 months’ unpaid. (The rolling four period also applies to the new scheme.)

*Temporary Rehabilitation Pay (TRP) is a payment based on pensionable service i.e. the payment will be equivalent to the teacher’s accrued pension benefit e.g. a teacher with 20 years’ service would get TRP of 20 eightieths of their salary at the time the payment is calculated.*

For the majority of teachers, these changes will have no direct impact, until, of course a time occurs when they are ill. Statistics show that for the vast majority of teachers, the sick leave absence rate is approximately eight days annually. There are, however, a small number of teachers who, through no fault of their own, find themselves facing a serious or critical illness at some point in their lives.

Currently, and up to the official date of the change, as noted above, the Sick Leave Scheme provides for 12 months’ paid leave over a rolling four year period. It is understood, that some members may have already exhausted the 12 months’ paid leave, while others may now be starting on an extended period of leave to deal with treatment and/or surgery for some serious illness and may exhaust all, or the majority, of the 12 months’ paid leave by the operative date of the new scheme. The question of how these teachers will transition to the new scheme has yet to be examined in detail, but, will form part of the discussions between DES and the teacher unions, as mentioned above. For the moment INTO advice is, first and foremost, to discuss the application of your sick leave entitlements with your medical advisors. If time is needed to ensure a full recovery, any curtailment in the availing of paid sick leave entitlement, at this stage, out of concern for future eligibility for paid sick leave, should only be considered with full medical approval.

The full details of transition arrangements will be published in good time following agreement between the DES and the teacher unions.
Making the most of the INTO website

Our new look INTO website was launched at the end of October. To date we have had very favourable feedback from members and we hope you are finding it easy to navigate your way around the site. Over the next few issues of InTouch we will be highlighting some of the features available on the new site. This month we give some helpful hints on keeping up with the latest INTO news.

If you have any comments or questions about the website please email feedback@into.ie

Guidelines for motions – Congress 2013

INTO Annual Congress is the forum for discussing policy issues, debating strategy and reviewing activities of the Organisation. Any member is entitled to submit a motion to their local branch for discussion at the Annual General Meeting, and, if agreed, for placement on the agenda for Congress.

Drafting of motions
- A motion is a proposition submitted for discussion and vote.
- It must ask Congress to declare an opinion or call for a course of action – or both.
- Motions shall be designed to promote the aims and objects of the Organisation as set out in Rule 3.
- All motions must be clear and unambiguous in meaning and intention and must be worded accordingly.
- All motions must be capable of implementation.
- Each motion should be brief and concise and should not contain argument.
- Each motion should deal with one topic only.

How priority is determined for items on the final agenda
The SOC has regard to the following considerations, inter alia, when determining priority for the Final Agenda:
- The consensus among the general membership in relation to the priority issues in any particular year.
- The consensus among the SOC in relation to the priority issues, and the motions which will result in the greatest degree of favourable and advantageous publicity for the Organisation.
- The degree of urgency attending to a particular motion.
- The extent to which a particular motion will further the objects of the Organisation.

Note: All motions and details of delegates for Congress are now submitted online via the Officer Extranet. A tutorial is provided on the Extranet.
Commemoration of TJ O'Connell

INTO General Secretary, trade union and political activist, Labour Party leader

The INTO organised an evening on 20 November in the Teachers’ Club in Dublin in commemoration of TJ O’Connell, former INTO General Secretary (1916-1948). Originally from Co Mayo, and following teacher service in Co Westmeath, O’Connell was elected INTO General Secretary in 1916. He was the first full-time General Secretary and from 1918 was also a member of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party (a single organisation at the time).

O’Connell was elected to the Dáil at the General Election of 1922 and 1927 (for the constituencies of Galway and Mayo South, respectively) and, following the election of 1927, he became the second leader of the Labour Party succeeding Tom Johnson, a position he held until 1932.

O’Connell presided over the agreed division of the labour movement into separate political and trade union bodies in 1930, at which time he was President of the Congress of Trade Unions as well as Labour Party leader. He also continued as INTO General Secretary during this time.

His INTO career continued for many years after and he was General Secretary during the time of the celebrated 1946 Teachers’ Strike. O’Connell wrote a history of the INTO, 100 Years of Progress for the union’s centenary in 1968.

The well attended commemoration was organised in conjunction with events held to mark the centenary of the Labour Party (1912-2012). Speakers included Joe O’Toole (who shared three of TJ O’Connell’s offices, as INTO General Secretary, ICTU President and Senator), Niamh Purseil, author and INTO historian, John Cunningham, NUIG historian and Noel Ward, INTO Deputy General Secretary. Their contributions focussed on TJ’s career, his professional and political life, his contribution to the INTO and his legacy. Video clips of the presentations are available on the INTO YouTube channel, which is linked from www.into.ie/ROI.

Pictured at the commemoration from left are: Anne Fay, INTO President, John Cunningham, NUIG historian, Sheila Nunan, INTO General Secretary, Noel Ward, INTO Deputy General Secretary, Niamh Purseil, author and INTO historian, Georgina Glackin, INTO staff, Evelyn Ryan, TJ’s granddaughter, Senator Joe O’Toole and TJ’s grandson, Brian O’Connell.

Special Education Conference on the theme of Assaults

250 delegates from branches and districts will attend the INTO Special Education Conference on the theme of assaults in the Croke Park Conference Centre on 8 December. The Conference will hear addresses on the theme of assaults and challenging behaviour from NCSE, NEPS and SESS. The delegates will also hear the results of INTO research on assaults, and discuss draft guidelines for schools on preventing and responding to assaults in schools. A full report on the conference will appear in the January/February InTouch.
In brief...

Our Bill of Health – Health, Disability and Carers in Ireland

The CSO has published *Our Bill of Health – Health, Disability and Carers in Ireland*. This report is based on the results from data collected during Census 2011 and profiles the health of the population, with a specific focus on disability and carers who provide unpaid assistance.

In relation to disability the report has found:

- 13% of the population had a disability in April 2011.
- 51.3% of those who have a disability are female while males with a disability account for 48.7%.
- Just over 1% of the population are blind or have a sight-related disability.
- 2% of the population are deaf or have a hearing related disability.
- 1.3% of the population had an intellectual disability.
- 5.3% of the population had a difficulty with basic physical activities.
- 2.1% of the population had a psychological or emotional condition.
- 6% had a disability connected with pain, breathing or another chronic illness or condition.
- 30% of people with a disability participate in the labour force.


ICTU Disability Seminar

ICTU recently held their annual Disability Seminar which was attended by INTO delegates from the Republic and Northern Ireland. The seminar heard from disability activists, including members of the Leaders Alliance, who recently held an all-night protest outside government buildings against planned cuts to personal assistant services. Representatives of public service unions in the health sector, including INMO and Impact also spoke. There was lively discussion on the second day of the seminar on the issues which has been raised. Full details of the seminar are available on [www.ictu/equality](http://www.ictu/equality)

Equality Authority booklet – Your Maternity Leave Rights Explained

The Equality Authority recently published a booklet *Your Maternity Leave Rights Explained*. This booklet provides information about:

- Health and safety leave during pregnancy.
- Time off for antenatal classes and breastfeeding.
- Job security while on maternity leave.
- Leave entitlement for fathers.

To download the publication in full click on either of the following links:


Yellow Flag School Diversity Awards

INTO President Anne Fay attended the Yellow Flag School Diversity Awards which were held in Dublin on Tuesday 6 November.

The awards honoured schools for promoting equality and inclusion through an eight step accredited programme.

The Yellow Flag programme reflects diversity in schools and a school environment where every child is valued and included is developed and unfair racist bullying and discrimination is challenged.

For more information log on to [http://www.yellowflag.ie/](http://www.yellowflag.ie/)

Equality Conference 2013

The Equality Committee met on 23 November and preparations continue for the Equality Conference in March 2013.

The EQC would like to express their sincere gratitude to all the teachers who took the time to respond to the religion questionnaires. Your responses will inform the discussions which will take place at the Conference.

They would also like to thank the teachers who responded to their requests for teachers who have experience of mental illness to come forward. Again, these teachers have greatly assisted in preparations.

The EQC were also addressed by a speaker from St Patrick’s Hospital in relation to mental illness at their November meeting. Nominations for the Equality Conference will be made at branch AGMs in January.

Cathal wins Rebel Award

Cathal Ó Riada, Chairperson of the INTO LGB Group was recently awarded the Public Representative of the Year Award at the Cork Rebel Awards, for his work with the INTO LGB Group. He beat off stiff competition from Senator Katherine Zappone and Cllr John Buttimer, Lord Mayor of Cork. The Cork Rebel Awards are an annual (non profit) awards ceremony to recognise people and organisations for the work and support that they have done or given to the Cork LGBT community. The awards were based on a popular vote, and presentations were made at a ceremony in Cork on 10 November.
In the media

In the national press

We will overturn the cuts no matter how long it takes
A recent report on teacher education by internationally regarded experts in the field recognised the high calibre of entrants to teaching in Ireland and concluded that their academic standard is among the highest, if not the highest in the world. It argued that this rich resource should be highly valued.

Clearly government feels it can disregard this important advice. Diminishing employment opportunities and lower salaries send a clear signal to student teachers and newly qualified teachers that this country does not value this rich resource. Opinion piece by Sheila Nunan, The Irish Times, 30 October 2012

Trade unions vow to fight cuts to members allowances after withdrawal of 88 perks
Unions have vowed to fight the “smash and grab” of public sector allowances through the industrial relations machinery of the state.

They have complained that they were not consulted in advance by the Government about the withdrawal of 88 allowances, and have vowed they will not support any moves to take more money out of their members’ pockets. The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation has also said it will challenge cuts to allowances for new and existing teachers. Irish Independent, 1 November 2012

ICTU urges 48% tax rate for wealthy to stave off further cuts
The Government should introduce a 48% tax rate for high earners in the budget and squeeze further taxes out of profitable businesses, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has said.

In its pre-budget submission yesterday, ICTU said the Government should focus more on raising taxes than cutting expenditure.

The Government is working off an approximate 2:1 ratio of spending cuts to tax hikes, believing the latter are too much of a drag on the economy. And the Coalition has ruled out increasing income tax, saying to do so would impact on jobs. Irish Examiner 8 November 2012

Union – TD pension loophole “salt in wounds” of young teachers
The Government is rubbing salt in the wounds of young and unemployed teachers by allowing ex-TDs and senators who get re-elected to escape a new lower paying pension scheme, a union has claimed ...

However, the INTO, which argued against the new scheme for future teachers will accrue lower pensions than some colleagues, said there was no justification for treating politicians differently to all other public servants ...

Sheila Nunan (INTO) said schools would need resources to implement the guidelines and encourage resentment. The decision to slash the pay and conditions of young teachers when they come into the profession while protecting the terms of existing staff is now being heavily criticised...

An INTO spokesman said: “We estimate that over a career the young teacher will lose out by €300,000.” Sheila Nunan told the Irish Independent, “All teachers see the government’s decision to cut the pay of newly qualified teachers as discriminatory against a group of young teachers”.

Irish Independent, 14 November 2012

Schools told to give themselves grades
Schools will draw up report cards on themselves as part of a new regime designed to raise education standards...

The guidelines are being welcomed, but the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO) said schools would need resources to implement it. The union said that many schools were struggling with the moratorium suppressing promotions to middle management posts, which impacted the introduction of initiatives such as this...

Irish Independent, 20 November 2012

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In the regional press

Grant cuts could send Galway schools back to the blackboard
Primary schools in Galway city and county are facing increasing funding pressure this winter as the impact of the recent abolition of the minor works grant becomes apparent ...

INTO representative for Galway/Roscommon Joe Killeen told The Herald that many of the primary schools across Galway, especially older schools in rural areas, will suffer as the winter weather takes its toll on old buildings.

“Schools are realising that there is no money to replace a faulty door or fix a broken window. The grant has been a very important piece of funding for schools,” he said. The Tuam Herald, 31 October 2012

Teachers oppose further budget cutbacks
The president of the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO) told a rally of thousands of teachers that there is no room for further cuts in primary schools in the next budget. Anne Fay of Cap-pawhite told the protest outside Leinster House last week that primary schools already have the lowest funding and biggest classes. “They are on the bread line already. There is no room for further cuts,” she said. Limerick Post, 3 November 2012

Young not to blame for economic crisis
Young people have not created the country’s economic problems, Margaret Bernard, the Limerick representative on the INTO national executive declared this week. “A new intergenerational solidarity deal is required to stop the price of one generation’s recklessness being loaded onto another,” she, the union representative said.

Limerick Leader, 3 November 2012
The last term has been a very busy one for those involved in the INTO Trade Union Training programme. During the course of the term, five training sessions were provided for branch secretaries, organisers and cathaoirí. The training took place in the INTO Learning Centre in Parnell Square and was facilitated by INTO Head Office staff and officials. Over 200 officers took part in the training sessions which covered:

- Branch organisation.
- Running effective meetings.
- Guidelines on drafting motions.
- Using the INTO IT system.
- Financial management.
- Drafting branch bye-laws.

The training for officers followed on from a training seminar for members who had volunteered as district training tutors in their districts. These tutors, following the training, have rolled out a series of local training modules for INTO staff representatives and newly qualified teachers around the country.

The next phase of the Trade Union Training Programme will be training sessions next term for officers of the INTO Principals’ and Deputy Principals’ Forums around the country. This training will also take place in the INTO Learning Centre and details will issue to the officers concerned in January. The INTO Learning Committee, which incorporates a review of Trade Union Training activities and which is a sub committee of the CEC, is also looking at the roll out of training seminars for staff representatives on a release day basis in districts around the country.

In addition to the activities outlined above, the INTO has organised a series of 11 information meetings on redeployment panel procedures for the relevant teachers, two retirement planning seminars have been organised and three seminars on appointment procedures for principal teachers will be held next term. These appointment procedures seminars follow on from the very successful series of seminars that took place last school year in which over 700 principals participated.

Further seminars for principals are being developed and are due to take place in both the second and third terms of the coming school year. Further details are posted on page 27 of this issue.
School self evaluation

Last month, guidelines on school self evaluation (SSE) produced by the DES were launched by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The INTO has always supported the concept of school development planning to which SSE, if properly utilised, can make a valuable contribution. Teachers regularly reflect upon and evaluate their practice in order to improve teaching and learning. Indeed many of the tools in the DES guidelines on SSE can be found in the INTO Education Committee publication An Approach to School Review in 1999.

Background

The Programme for Government (2011-2016) states that self-evaluation will be introduced, requiring schools to evaluate their performance year on year and publish information across a range of criteria. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy also requires schools to engage in self-evaluation and set targets for improvement. Therefore, according to Circular 39/12, schools are obliged to engage in school self-evaluation. The guidelines produced by the DES are intended to help schools in this regard.

Summary of SSE

In summary, over the next four years schools are expected to review three curriculum areas (literacy and numeracy being two) and draw up and implement a school improvement plan (SiP). As part of this review each school is expected to gather evidence from a number of sources such as standardised test results, other assessments and/or the views of teachers, parents and pupils. This is important as the INTO strongly opposes any attempt to centre a process of SSE around the outcomes of standardised tests only. Out of this each school should develop a plan of action that recognises the school’s strengths and areas where improvement is needed.

Limitations

The implementation of the guidelines in each school must take account of local circumstances. Many schools are struggling with moratorium suppressing promotion which impacts on the introduction of initiatives such as this.

School self-evaluation must be small enough to fit into a school’s Croke Park hours along with every other demand and hidden curriculum issues like bullying which all compete for limited teacher time.

Teacher professionalism

A preliminary analysis of the DES guidelines is that the process places trust in the professionalism of teachers in different school settings. Every school is different and, therefore, schools are empowered to adapt or modify any tools they choose to use from the guidelines. SSE is not seen as a one size fits all exercise. In some schools, SSE will be significantly advanced and there will be no need for these guidelines. Similarly within schools and within an overall SiP, different issues may be prioritised depending for example, on the age of pupils.

The INTO is advising all members that SSE is a long-term project made up of small manageable steps involving the whole school community. It is important to get the process working successfully rather than quickly.

The guidelines explicitly advocate that SiPs are short documents. The INTO also strongly urges schools to keep paperwork to a manageable level in the evidence gathering phase required to arrive at a SiP. Data overload is a potential danger in this process. The INTO strongly advises that all schools highlight their many strengths as part of this work.

Prior to publication, the CEC established a working group to study the DES proposals on SSE. This group also gathered and considered members views on the issue. This group will continue working and will prepare advice and guidelines for members on the implementation of the process including advice on the limitations of standardised tests.

This group will conduct an on-going review of the process including an audit of time taken up by SSE. Further meetings for members will be held during this school year and the INTO PDU will develop professional development materials to support schools.

The General Secretary has written to the Minister for Education and Skills demanding the resources required to support school self evaluation, in particular an alleviation on the moratorium on posts of responsibility, professional development, facilitation service for schools where required, and support from the PDST.

Teachers regularly reflect upon and evaluate their practice in order to improve teaching and learning. ☜
INTO service plan

INTO representatives and Head Office staff deal with hundreds of queries, emails and letters each week. All sections of Head Office deal with members in accordance with the service plan that covers response times and procedures for dealing with emails, correspondence and queries. There are also well-established protocols for dealing with legal cases and legal advice. A special sub-committee of the CEC was established to make recommendations on best practice in case work, between elected representatives and full-time officials. These recommendations were subsequently adopted by the full CEC and have also been implemented.

As part of the development of the new website, the privacy policy, accessibility procedures and copyright rules were reviewed. Appropriate guidelines for internet and social media interaction are also under development at present.

The Jan/Feb InTouch will outline in more detail the service plan and the level of queries and cases dealt with by the INTO.

Registering with the Teaching Council

Changes have been made by the Teaching Council to the process for the renewal of registration and it is important that teachers familiarise themselves with these changes so that their registration does not lapse. The changes to the registration renewal process, which were necessary to bring the Teaching Council’s rules in line with the provisions of the Education (Amendment) Act 2012, reduce the length of time between a lapse in registration (due to failure to renew) and removal from the register.

Renewal of registration on time is strongly advised to ensure that registration is maintained. This is vital for teachers because Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001 is due to commence in the 2012/2013 school year. Its commencement will mean that the Department of Education and Skills and the VECs will no longer be legally allowed to pay a salary from State funds to a person who is not registered. From now on a single Registration Renewal notice will be posted to teachers by the Teaching Council approximately four weeks in advance of their renewal date. If registration is not renewed by the expiry date, a Final Notice will be issued to the teacher by registered post. If registration is not renewed within 30 days of the date on the Final Notice, the teacher’s name will be automatically removed from the register.

The Teaching Council has notified those teachers not already registered about the consequences of failing to register when Section 30 is enacted. Notices have been placed in InTouch and, to date, two letters have issued to the teachers concerned. The INTO has consistently supported the establishment and functions of the Teaching Council. The CEC has decided that the INTO will not support teachers who consciously decide not to register with the Council.

INTO meets with DES on School Accommodation

The INTO met with officials from the Planning and Building Unit (PBU) of the Department of Education on 13 November.

A range of issues were discussed including the Building Programme, the Minor Works Grant and the Summer Works Scheme.

The five-year building programme and the annual programme which run in parallel with each other are progressing. Details of both are posted on the DES website www.education.ie and are updated on a monthly basis. It is expected that the 2013 programme and the list of projects included will be posted on the DES website in December. The PBU are experiencing some difficulty with delays in the draw down of grants by schools. The INTO advises schools to draw down their grant as soon as work commences in order to keep the programme running smoothly.

At the meeting the INTO President, Anne Fay, stressed how badly schools will be affected by the non-payment of the Minor Works Grant in December. The INTO also expressed its concerns that the cancellation of the Summer Works Scheme would have a detrimental effect on school buildings. It is vital that these grants continue to be paid. The DES also indicated at the meeting that, at this stage, there is no provision for either the Minor Works Grant or Summer Works Scheme in 2013 and that this was due to resources being targeted at additional schools/ classrooms to meet the increasing number of primary pupils in schools.

Relevant Contracts Tax/Value Added Tax

In the June and November issues of InTouch we outlined the new tax regime for boards of management with regard to RCT and VAT. At the November meeting the DES outlined the submissions they had made to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Revenue Commissioners seeking an exemption for schools with regard to this new legislation. Unfortunately their appeals were rejected. It remains the view of the INTO that this new tax regime is a financial matter and the responsibility of the treasurer of the BOM in consultation with the chairperson (See November InTouch).

For further information on RCT and VAT see: www.revenue.ie and www.cpsma.ie.
CEC representatives reflect on their recent round of branch meetings

Branching out – anyone for afternoon tea?

The prospect of spending long, dark nights travelling lonely roads to meet small groups of tired teachers was one of the less appealing aspects of becoming a member of the CEC. I was pleasantly surprised, therefore, when Fran Moloney, North Carlow Branch Secretary, suggested a joint meeting of four branches on a Tuesday afternoon. I arrived at the Talbot Hotel, Carlow, to find a large number of teachers (young and... young at heart!) from Carlow, Baltinglass, Muine Bheag and Tullow, eager and interested to discuss a wide range of issues including NQT salary cuts, school self-evaluation, panel rights, sick leave and crèche facilities if there is sufficient demand. As I travel from branch to branch it is noticeable how much more attractive teachers were interested in hearing about the views of people in other branches. The large crowd generated its own type of atmosphere. Having a number of branches together allowed ‘newer’ branch officers the support of more experienced officers.

Afternoon meetings are now the norm in District X. In places like Gorey, New Ross, Wexford, Enniscorthy, Portlaoise, Kilkenny City, Mountrath and Rathdowney the afternoon meetings start with refreshments. Teachers enjoy meeting for a coffee and scones and a chat beforehand and usually meetings are finished between half five and six. Some branches are offering crèche facilities if there is sufficient demand. As I travel from branch to branch it is noticeable how much more interaction there is between teachers at the afternoon meetings. Joint meetings are useful too, as they provide a wider variety of views and opinions. They also help the CEC representative to spend less time on the road!

Branch meetings continue to play an important role in communicating information within the INTO. They facilitate a nuanced and considered appraisal of the issues of the day. In addition to the various online interactions available on the INTO website, the branch meeting provides a valuable forum for expressing opinions. At CEC meetings, great emphasis is placed on the issues that are raised at branch meetings. As a new member of the CEC, I was surprised at the difference in the types of issues raised in different branches. Where self-evaluation was a hot topic in one area, redeployment panels was a burning issue in another. All branches were, however, agreed on the need to support the newly qualified teachers in reversing the recent pay cuts.

The next branch meetings are in January. Come along... and bring a friend.

Joe McKeown,
CEC Representative, District X

Change, a force for innovation

District 13 is a lively, vibrant District. It serves Limerick and Kerry and the 17 branches range from large, urban branches with membership tipping the 750 mark to small rural branches struggling to stay afloat with around 30 members.

There are branch officers, hugely committed to the INTO who have tried a variety of innovative measures to encourage branch members to attend meetings. Some of the more successful ones have been experimenting with meeting times. Members were surveyed and against all the odds the Tralee Branch found that 4 pm was a hugely successful time, so the AGM will also be an afternoon meeting. Members in Glin, a very small branch are willing to hold a meeting at 6.30pm so I can attend and still fit in Abbeyfeale at 8pm. Similar cooperation from other branches, the most significant being Limerick City and Limerick East holding joint meetings, has meant that I can attend all the meetings, allow time for discussion and debate and also deal with members individual queries.

25 October was the very last meeting of Dromcollogher branch. This was a wonderful branch to attend. High participation rates and lively debate served to make it a most enjoyable evening over the past few years. Members were well informed; very many of the attendees had served as branch officers, there was a friendly supportive atmosphere, yet all the business of the meeting was quickly disposed of, so that people could really engage both socially and professionally. For a variety of reasons, some global, some particular to the branch, members had come to an impasse. Members concluded they could access information on the website, I was a phone call away to deal with specific queries and most important of all there were three other branches in very close proximity who would be delighted to welcome them. They made the difficult choice to dissolve the branch. They also felt that membership of a union in 2012, is not as localised as it was when the structures were initially set up.

Well done Dromcollogher Branch for grasping the nettle. Will this be the end of participation for people in the affected schools? Anything but! Members have already been on to the Membership Section to see which branch they will be assigned to. Fear not, the District Secretary has it in hand and all members will be contacted in the coming weeks.

Change, well managed can be a force for innovation, energy and immense satisfaction. The winds of change are blowing in District 13 and hopefully all these good outcomes await us.

Margaret Bernard,
CEC Representative, District XIII

Joe McKeown,
CEC Representative, District X
Our group of six teachers spent two weeks working in orphanages catering for child victims of the fallout from the Chernobyl reactor explosion. These children are enduring the effects of exposure to radiation and the other social and economic problems facing them in Belarus.

Our first week was spent working in Guordische Orphanage to the west of Minsk and the second week in Cherven Orphanage, to the east. We spent each day giving the children what they needed most – care and attention.

We visited the units every day and we brought the more able-bodied children outside to play or spend time in the sensory room which was built by the Burren Chernobyl Project. For the bedbound children, we simply spent time interacting with them, blowing bubbles, playing with balloons, or giving their hands and feet a gentle massage.

We helped feed the children, which was rewarding as many of the children had been trained to pour food down their throats, it was nice to adopt a gentler approach.

In the second week, an overnight trip to Minsk was arranged, we visited a funfair and walked in a park. We brought a large group to the cinema to see the Smurfs (in Russian!) and a disco at a cost of around €70. The average monthly wage in Belarus is approximately €370, so excursions and treats are greatly appreciated. The children rationed the sweets we bought them at the cinema for future consumption.

By the end of our trip, we had €500 left to donate to the orphanage which was used to purchase nappies, as there is a shortage of nappies, children were changed once in the daytime and once at night.

We left with a heavy heart. Many of these children could thrive if they were given the opportunities which are a basic right here in Ireland. It was a fantastic experience and we are truly grateful for the generosity of our INTO colleagues, the Solidarity Fund and Dublin North Bay Branch for their sponsorship.

The six teachers, Alan Bedford, Rowena Curran, Clare Cunningham, Anita Foley, Gemma Desmond and Éilis Dowling, wish to thank their INTO colleagues, the Solidarity Fund and Dublin North Bay Branch for their sponsorship.

Link Community Development, improving the quality of education in Africa

Link works at all levels of the educational system – with communities, schools and governments – to identify and remove obstacles to quality education. The Link School Improvement Programmes currently reach over 4,000 schools in rural Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, South Africa and Uganda, and there is demand to extend their work to other countries. Link raises awareness of important global issues through the Link Schools Programme, as well as raising funds and supporting work in sub-Saharan Africa.

Check out their new Virtual School resource which is an interactive visit to a school in Africa, exploring the everyday challenges and issues faced by pupils, teachers and communities.

Click Virtual School on www.lcd.ie or go directly to www.lcdinternational.org/virtualsecondary
Savings with Membership Plus

This month on Membership Plus, the INTO member benefits programme, there are two great competitions for you to enter along with some fantastic new offers.

Win a gift voucher for 3 driving lessons with Pinnacle Driving School

Some driving school lessons can be a stressful experience but Pinnacle Driving School lessons ensure you can enjoy driving right from the very start while also picking up the good habits that will stay with you for life.

Driving lessons are designed not only to help you to pass the test at the first attempt but to teach you a skill you will use for the rest of your life.

With your Membership Plus card, you can enjoy discounted driving lessons with Pinnacle. To find out more and to enter our competition to win a gift voucher for three driving lessons – visit the Membership Plus website.

Win a chrome and 23 Carat gold plated pen worth €80 with Ronan Campbell Jewellers

New to Membership Plus is Ronan Campbell Jewellers which prides itself on being able to offer their customers very competitive prices without sacrificing quality.

Membership Plus card holders can now enjoy 12.5% off their wide range of products including watches from brands including Emporio Armani, Tissot and Guess and Jewellery from brands including Crislu, Hot Diamonds and Calvin Klein.

New offers from Membership Plus

This month we have added a wide range of new offers including Converse, Ronan Campbell Jewellers, Legs Love, Shoesonline and Hampers & Co.

To see where you can save with Membership Plus or to enter these fantastic competitions, visit the Membership Plus website by clicking on the Membership Plus button at www.into.ie.

Great news! You can now get HSF health plan, the low cost alternative to private health insurance

HSF health plan has provided health cash plans for both individuals and families in Ireland for over 60 years. Dental check-ups and treatment, sight tests, glasses, contact lenses – the cost of health can add up to a large annual bill. Getting Cash Back with HSF health plan will be a great benefit to your household budget as well as your health and wellbeing.

You can choose from the ONE Scheme especially designed for individuals or the Family Scheme that covers you, your spouse/partner and any dependent children (up to age 21). One simple plan can offer you and your family benefits including:

- Dental (including cosmetic dentistry).
- Optical (including glasses, contact lenses and eye laser treatment).
- GP and prescriptions
- GP advice line
- Stress counselling, medical information and legal helplines
- Birth and adoption grants
- Payments if off work from injury (up to 52 weeks after 30 days)
- Practitioners (including chiropody and physiotherapy)
- Specialist and investigation (including hepatitis and other vaccinations)
- Hospital overnight and day case benefit
- Partner and children covered at no extra cost
- Contributions are not age or claim related.

HSF Health Plan is Ireland’s leading health cash plan provider offering simple, affordable health cover for everyday healthcare bills. It gives money back for a wide range of everyday healthcare costs including GP, prescription, consultant, dental, optical, physiotherapy and chiropody, along with grants for hospital stays, birth grants and worldwide accident cover. Whilst a health cash plan doesn’t pay private hospital or operation costs, it provides benefits of up to 100% money back on dental and optical visits up to a maximum of €800 per year and practitioner and specialist investigations to a maximum of €1,700 per year, and much more.

In addition, all HSF Health Plan policyholders have free access to a qualified doctor, 24/7 all year round, through a GP telephone advice line. What’s more, there is no excess required and claims usually only take up to five working days to process. For those that can no longer afford private health insurance, HSF Health Plan provides benefits that families will use offering real value for money. Policies start from €2 per week to €17 per week and one policy covers you, your partner and children under age 21.

HSF Health Plan, which has been operating in Ireland for over 60 years, is regulated by the HIAB and covers over 100,000 people in Ireland.

For more information on all the schemes available contact HSF health plan on Lo-Call 1890 451 451 or visit www.hsf.ie

CEC Support: The Central Executive Committee (CEC) has decided that INTO will support the efforts of the Hospital Saturday Fund to secure a deduction at source facility from the DES payroll. In deciding this, the CEC was conscious of the non-profit nature of the Fund, as well as affordability issues for members.”
Delegates at the INTO Education Conference in Galway on 16 November responded enthusiastically to a request from the INTO Global Solidarity Network to sign/send a letter to the Bahraini Embassy for Ireland and the UK, seeking the following from the Bahraini authorities:

- Release immediately and unconditionally Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila al-Salman, the President and Vice-President respectively of the Bahraini Teachers’ Association (BTA), as their judicial case is unsubstantiated.
- Set up a full, impartial and independent investigation into their reported ill-treatments and bring those responsible to justice.
- Reinstate the BTA as a registered teacher union.
- Respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of teachers, students and union activists in accordance with international standards.
- Set the conditions for a respectful and all inclusive dialogue that addresses the legitimate aspirations of all Bahrainis, to promote social justice to bring about a peaceful transition to democracy.

This renewed campaign followed news from Education International that, while Mr Abu Dheeb’s sentence was to be commuted to five years’ imprisonment, for endorsing the peaceful demonstrations for democracy in Bahrain in 2011 during the Arab Spring, Mrs Al-Salman was re-arrested to serve the remaining 10 days of her six month sentence but was transferred to the women’s prison of Isa Town on 7 November after being summoned, without explanation, to the Investigation Department in Manama.

Her lawyer and family have not been allowed to accompany or contact her.

In the meantime, there are serious concerns about Mr Mahdi’s health. He is a diabetic and has been denied medical assistance on many occasions while in prison.

Please enquire further about this campaign and discover the true nature of the Bahraini regime. Letters are available for signing by contacting your branch secretary.

Further information on the INTO Global Solidarity Network can be obtained by contacting jobrien@into.ie at INTO Head Office.

The Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education is an alliance of teacher unions and development NGOs. Its membership currently includes Action Aid Ireland, ASTI, Concern, and ICTU, INTO, KADE, National Youth Council of Ireland, Plan Ireland, SUAS, TUI and VSO Ireland.

The objective of the Coalition is to promote the Education for All goals arising from the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the international community in Dakar in 2000. The Coalition is a member of the Global Campaign for Education which is a key partner with UNESCO in seeking the achievement of Education for All – EFA goals.

The Coalition works at governmental level, in the education sector and with civil society organisations to promote the EFA goals as we move towards 2015.


The Coalition, with the assistance of Irish Aid, has formed a connection with Intel to promote the launch of the latest UNESCO Global Monitoring Report on the progress of attainment of Millennium Goals in respect of Education for All goals.
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 INTO Congress of 1956, held in Belfast decided to organise a suitable memorial as a tribute to the memory of Vere Foster.
The memorial takes the form of a Vere Foster medal, and is generally awarded by the INTO to the student obtaining the highest mark in Teaching Practice and/or Curriculum areas of Education.

Anne Fay, INTO President, presenting the INTO Vere Foster Medal at the graduation in St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra, to Megan Whyte, BEd. Also pictured is Daire Keogh, College President.
Picture: Joe Gavin, Gavin Photography

Gemma Anthony from Douglas, Co Cork, receiving her Vere Foster Medal from Anne Fay, INTO President, at the Hibernia College graduation ceremony on 10 October.

Patrick Burke recipient of the Vere Foster Medal, the Kieran Burke Fellowship, the College Medal in Psychology, a Teastas sa Chreideamh Medal, and the College Medal for First Place on the B.Ed in Education and Psychology programme, with Anne Fay, at a Conferring of Academic Awards Ceremony at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Picture: Don Moloney

Anne Fay presenting Sinead Kirby, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, with her Vere Foster Medal at the recent graduation ceremony.
Picture: Don Moloney
Defining ‘Wellbeing’

Pat Collins, who represents District 4 on the Education Committee, outlined definitions of wellbeing and what helps constitute a feeling of wellbeing. Then, in relation to the wellbeing of children, he took the historical perspective and traced the development of the status of the child in society and education in Ireland since the beginning of the last century. The changing status and role of the teacher was also looked at, and reference was made to a number of studies that had been conducted on teacher satisfaction and stress.

Wellbeing as a starting point for curriculum

Sarah Fitzpatrick, NCCA, then gave a presentation to delegates entitled ‘Wellbeing as a starting point for curriculum … and everything else!’ She outlined the results of the consultative process conducted by the NCCA in relation to priorities for Education. These emerged as:

- Life-skills through a broad curriculum.
- Communication.
- Wellbeing.
- Literacy and numeracy.
- Motivation and engagement.
- Identity and belonging.

Sarah then went through how these areas could be addressed through the curriculum.

Finally, she considered Aistear, the early childhood curriculum and outlined the aims of the programme as being:

- Children will...
- be strong psychologically and socially.
- be as healthy and fit as they can be.
- be creative and spiritual.
- have positive outlooks on learning and on life.

Findings of Education Committee

Karen Devine, District 5 Representative on the Education Committee, presented some of the findings from research conducted earlier in the year by members of the Committee. A series of focus groups and interviews with teachers in a number of centres around Ireland had been held to discuss aspects of teacher and pupil wellbeing. From an analysis of the transcripts a recurring theme emerged that teachers felt most satisfaction when they got the opportunity to teach in the way that was planned with as few interruptions as possible. This theme was of particular significance for the teaching principal. Teachers and principals set targets and strive to meet them over the course of the working day and week and failure to meet these targets could lead to feelings of guilt and cause them to be dissatisfied in their roles.

Wellbeing in the Classroom

This year’s annual Consultative Conference on Education took place in the Clayton Hotel, Galway on Friday 16 and Saturday 17 November. About 350 delegates arrived in Galway on Friday afternoon to consider the topic of ‘Wellbeing in the Classroom’.

The President, Anne Fay, opened the conference by welcoming delegates and outlining the programme of speakers, discussion groups and workshops. Chairperson of the Education Committee, Dympna Mulkerrins, D XIV, then described the work and current research topics being considered by the INTO Education Committee. It was then the turn of members of the Committee to outline the work done in preparing for the Conference and the background document that had been produced and circulated to all delegates prior to the Conference.

Anne Fay, INTO President, opening the conference

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Moya O’Brien, Director of ICEP Europe, was the keynote speaker for the final plenary session on Friday evening. Her presentation on The Flourishing Teacher: Cultivating and Sustaining Wellbeing was a very well received and thought-provoking session.

Dr O’Brien began by noting the importance of cultivating wellbeing as teachers teach who they are. Teaching as a profession is value-laden and teachers bring that to their job, from their own beliefs about why they came into the profession to how they respond to discipline in the classroom. Being an ‘authentic teacher’ was seen as central to wellbeing and this required awareness and self-reflection. She also noted the importance of the flourishing school and outlined the characteristics of such schools as:

- demonstrating good leadership
- supportive of all staff
- developing strong peer connections / group support
- celebrating achievements
- making individuals feel competent.

She introduced 10 tips to cultivate happiness and closed her presentation by reminding delegates that ‘Teaching is the greatest act of optimism’ (Parker Palmer, 2007).

INto coNSUltatIVe coNFereNce oN eDUcatIoN

Moya O’Brien, ICEP Europe, addressing delegates

Sheila Nunan, General Secretary, updated delegates regarding current issues at the Education Conference. She stated that primary education is the cornerstone of any attempt to rebuild Ireland’s economy. Primary teachers in schools up and down the country are committed to protecting this vital service.

Irish class sizes are the second highest in the EU, marginally behind the UK. On average Irish teachers teach 4 extra children per class more than their EU colleagues. The academic standard of applicants to teaching in Ireland is amongst the highest, if not the highest, in the world. A recent international report recommended that this rich resource be highly valued.

At the very time a prestigious international report is advising government to value its excellent teachers the government demeans their work and erodes their goodwill by cutting their pay. The Government cannot continue to cut pay and expect to attract the brightest and the best into teaching.

Primary teachers have co-operated effectively with redeployment of large numbers of teachers. In addition, schools have co-operated with on-going modernisation and change which has delivered significant benefits to parents and pupils and enabled education to make progress despite very difficult economic circumstances.

In conclusion Sheila stated that the trade union movement warned this government like we warned the previous administration that austerity wouldn’t work, it has not worked and it will not work. Yet there is a determination to persist with a doomed policy that will destroy jobs, accelerate emigration and mortgage defaults, reduce living standards and increase poverty. The trade union movement has long argued for government retrenchment over a longer time frame coupled with a coherent strategy for growth along with protection for homes and jobs.

Address from General Secretary

InTouch December 2012
Delegates enjoy workshops and catch up with old friends at conference. More photos on Flickr at http://www.flickr.com/photos/irishnationalteachersorganisation/

Thanks must go to members of the local Galway branch who manned an information desk to provide delegates with local tips for sightseeing, restaurants and shopping.

Workshops

On Saturday morning, all delegates were assigned to two workshops where different aspects of teacher and pupil wellbeing were considered.

Guest presenters in the workshops included:
- Anne Caulfield, Motivational Waves
- Danielle Abraham, Incredible Years
- Kathleen Tan, Roots of Empathy
- Róisín Úi Fhearraigh, Restorative Justice
- Deirdre MacIntyre & Moya O’Brien, ICEP Europe
- Niamh Clarke, HSE

Playing at and imagining being well

Dr Michael Finneran is Head of the Arts Education Department in Mary Immaculate College. He spoke to delegates at the final session on Saturday afternoon on Playing at and Imagining being well – Reflections and Challenges.

Michael spoke about the need for teachers to reflect on what made them well and emphasised the importance the role of the arts and creativity as well as the physical environment play in contributing to wellbeing. He argued that teachers need to model creativity in their classrooms; be prepared to take chances and fail safely; innovate and change and respond to the world around them.

Notwithstanding the challenges of a recessionary climate, workload, external demands and changing nature of society and communities, he encouraged delegates to “play at being well and co-create the future with our children”.

Please note that the background document produced by the Education Committee for the Conference, in addition to all available presentations, are available on www.into.ie
School leaders in primary schools face many challenges at present. At a time of diminishing resources and cutbacks, more demands are being placed on an already underfunded primary school system. The CEC of the INTO has been considering the challenges facing school leaders at recent meetings, as has the INTO Principals’ and Deputy Principals’ Committee.

As InTouch goes to print a series of seminars are being organised around the country for principal teachers in relation to the implementation of School Self Evaluation Guidelines, recently launched by the Minister for Education and Skills. It is important to emphasise that SSE is a long-term project, made up of small manageable steps involving the whole school community. More details on the INTO advice on this issue, which will form a central part of the school planning process, is outlined on page 17.

Changes have now been agreed on the operation of the redeployment panels, which should make for a speedier and more efficient operation of redeployment panels later in the current school year. The INTO encourages all those involved, both in schools and on the redeployment panels, to proactively engage in the process. At this time of uncertainty and austerity, it is important to safeguard the protection that redeployment panels offer, both to individual teachers and to the school system.

Other issues being considered include a recently developed plan by the National Education Welfare Board about attendance and retention of pupils in schools. A consultation process on this issue is currently underway by the NEWB and also by the INTO. Further details on this will be posted on an ongoing basis on the INTO website.

The Teaching Council is currently considering issues around school placement, and individual colleges of education are formulating models of school placement in the context of the introduction of a four year B Ed programme and a two year post graduate programme. The proposals around school placement will directly impact on schools and the INTO advises all members to engage in this consultative process and make their views known.

As the role of leadership becomes more challenging and more complex the INTO has been developing a range of initiatives to support school leaders. These include the provision of specialist seminars on particular topics for school principals. Last year over 700 principals attended a series of seminars on appointment procedures and three further seminars will be run by the INTO next term. As well as this, the INTO is also developing further specialist seminars on issues including anti-bullying procedures, managing difficult inter-personal situations and child protection procedures. The Professional Development Unit of the INTO has also developed an interactive IT package on child protection procedures, for use as part of the implementation of the Croke Park hours. This package will be launched shortly and details will be available on the INTO website.

At local level INTO Principals’ and Deputy Principals’ Forums will be holding meetings during the course of February next. The CEC is encouraging all principals and deputy principals to avail of the opportunity to attend their local forum.

Energy saving tips for schools

www.energyineducation.ie is an initiative of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and DES designed to promote energy efficiency in schools. The site gives practical guidance and tips on managing energy in schools and has many resources including:

- An energy management booklet.
- Workbooks and tools.
- Factsheets.
- Case studies.
- Videos and.
- Teaching resources.

The website can also be used to support implementation of the energy theme of the Green Schools Programme.
The probationary process, which must be completed satisfactorily by teachers if they are to fulfil the conditions of their registration with the Teaching Council, incorporates two elements: the service requirement and the professional competence requirement. The service must take place after a teaching qualification has been successfully completed and comprise either two periods of at least 50 consecutive school days or one period of 100 consecutive school days during which the professional competence of the teacher will be evaluated by the inspectorate (Ref: Circular 0026/2012: Part C). However, the teaching post must be recognised for probationary purposes in a primary school, so that an NQT can fulfil these requirements.

There are certain positions in which an NQT cannot apply for probation such as Learning Support teacher, Language Support teacher or a mixed LS/Resource or a Home-School Community Liaison (HSLC) teaching position. Schools should try to ensure that the teaching post assigned to an NQT is a post in which the NQT can be probated. This is a real and practical way in which the teaching profession could support NQTs, during that critical entry period in their professional lives, thus enabling as many NQTs as possible fulfill the requirements of the probationary process.

For further information on NIPT supports contact Mary Burke, National Co-Ordinator (Primary), National Induction Programme for Teachers. Website: www.teacherinduction.ie

The following workshops will take place in term 2 as part of the NIPT workshop programme

Practical assessment in my classroom: How?
The workshop aims to equip NQTs with a range of assessment methodologies which can be effectively applied across the curriculum. The NCCA Assessment Guidelines for Schools is the key reference for the workshop. Participants are afforded an opportunity to ask questions, share examples of work to date and examine ways of building and developing assessment to assist with effective planning, teaching and learning in the classroom.

Behaviour management: What is good practice?
This workshop builds on the Classroom Management workshop held in term one. It will aim to give NQTs an understanding of, and strategies and skills to manage, individual and group behaviour, in a positive and proactive manner. The NEPS Guidelines on Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support is used as a key reference for this workshop. Relevant case studies will be examined and participants’ own concerns will also be addressed.

Literacy: What is effective practice?
The workshop will focus on the planning, organisation and teaching of a reading lesson, using a variety of texts. The reference for this workshop will be Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020.

Numeracy – developing good practice in mathematics teaching: How?
This workshop will focus on the principles of good practice in mathematics teaching. A key emphasis will be placed on the development of higher order thinking skills and the potential of ICT to broaden pupils’ experience and understanding in the area of numeracy. Opportunities to discuss and share strategies and ideas will be a central element of this workshop.

Differentiation in Practice: How?
The workshop emphasises the need to cater for the variety of learning needs and styles within the classroom and provides practical examples and ideas for resources to ensure differentiation within the classroom. NQTs are afforded an opportunity to discuss a variety of scenarios that arise in the classroom and are encouraged to reflect on and discuss effective strategies. Uses of video clips, reference to key websites for resources are important elements of this workshop.

Múineadh na Gaeilge
Is é príomhchuspóir na ceardtainne seo ná deiseanna a thabhairt do na ranpháirtithe a bheith ag obair i ngrúpaí. Cuifear béoim ar ais an teanga agus ar structúr an cheachta Ghaeilge, in an cur chuige cumarsáide, acmhainní, meascúní agus araille. Beidh deis ag na ranpháirtithe freisin plé le cásanna dífríúla ó thaobh mhúineadh na Gaeilge.

Inclusion: Meeting the diverse needs in the classroom – What is effective practice? (Cross-sectoral)
This workshop will be interactive and will focus on the classroom environment and classroom planning to support inclusion. It will explore practical ideas for teaching EAL and will also identify approaches and methodologies which are particularly suitable for intercultural education. The IILT Diversity Toolkit will be a key reference for this workshop. Emphasis will also be placed on working with children with special educational needs.

Happy Christmas. Ba mhaith le foireann an Chláir Náisiúnta londuchtaithe do Mhúinteoirí Nollaig shona shuaímhneach a ghui ar phriomhhoide, meántóirí, éascailtheoirí, agus múinteoirí nua-cháilithe ar fud na tíre. Go raibh mile maith agaibh go léir as bhur gcuid tacaíoche i gcaitheamh na bliana.
What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disease which is often referred to as thinning of the bones or brittle bone disease.

Bone is a living tissue and is constantly being removed and replaced. As we get older more bone is lost than is replaced. This can lead to loss of structure and strength, leaving bones fragile and susceptible to fractures. It is known as a silent disease. Osteoporosis is very common, affecting one in two women and one in five men over the age of 50. It is not, as is commonly thought, a disease which only affects women.

You may have no symptoms until you sustain a fracture (a broken bone) with minimal trauma. Any bone can be affected but the more common fracture sites are the wrist, hip and vertebrae (spine). The good news is that bone loss can be detected long before you may suffer a fracture.

We all have some degree of bone loss as we get older, the amount and significance of loss varies greatly, depending on density and strength of bone achieved while growing and various risk factors. To determine those at risk a DEXA scan (Bone Mineral Density scan) can be carried out. This is a simple, straightforward test to measure bone mineral density and fracture risk. These scans are available throughout the country. A full list of centres is available locally or on the Irish Osteoporosis Society’s website. You will need a referral letter from your doctor. Alternatively, scans are also carried out as part of some comprehensive health screening programmes such as is available at the Mater Private Hospital. It is also helpful to have a full risk assessment for osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is a treatable disease. The main aim in detection and treatment is to prevent further loss, maintain bone mass and strength thus preventing fragility fractures in the future. These can be very painful and debilitating leading to loss of mobility and independence.

Prevention where possible is the best cure with early detection and intervention helping to improve bone strength, thus lowering the risk of fracture. Don’t worry there are lots of treatment options available.

We can all help ourselves by eating a well balanced, calcium rich diet with adequate vitamin D to fully absorb calcium at all ages and stages of life. Regular weight bearing exercise is very important right throughout our lives, to build and maintain bone. There is a wide variety to choose from including walking changing pace intermittently as we go, dancing, golf, running, jogging, tennis and team sports such as football, basketball and hockey.

So get active, have some fun and look after those bones. See www.irishosteoporosis.ie for further information.

Looking after your bones

Health Check

Offering discounts to all INTO members/retired members/immediate family.
For brochure or information visit www.healthcheck.ie or tel: 01 885 8257/885 8258.
Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to some of the most common queries dealt with on a weekly basis:

Q1 How do I check that I am getting my correct salary?

You need to look at your salary slip, find the gross fortnightly figure and multiply it by 26.09 to get your annual salary figure. Up to the latest cut for new beneficiaries (the abolition of qualification allowances) teachers’ basic salary was calculated by adding the relevant point from the common basic scale, your qualification allowance (honours or pass level) and the supervision allowance together. You can find the relevant salary scales and allowance schedule on the INTO website.

If you are in substitute work, the daily rate you are being paid should be clear from your payslip.

Q2 What is the qualifying age limit of children for entitlement to parental leave?

Under Circular 21/2012 the maximum age of the child in respect of whom teachers may take parental leave is increased from eight to thirteen years. In the case of an adopted child, where the child is eleven years or more but less than thirteen, the parental leave must be taken within two years of the adoption order. In the case of a child with a disability, the age limit of sixteen years will still apply.

Q3 What is necessary on a medical certificate for certified sick leave?

Under the terms of Circular 60/10 a medical certificate must state the nature of the illness, be signed by a duly qualified medical practitioner registered with the Irish Medical Council, and cover a period of no more than one month.

Q4 What is the final date for applying for supplementary panel rights for the 2013/2014 school year?

Under the terms of Circular 38/2012 the final date for receipt of completed application forms from non-permanent teachers for supplementary panel rights is Friday 14 December. See more info on INTO website at www.into.ie/ROI

Q5 Is there a standard application form for teaching posts?

The INTO, CPSMA, Church of Ireland Board of Education and the Department of Education and Skills reached agreement in relation to a standard application form for primary teaching posts. There are separate forms for a post as principal and a post as teacher.

Schools may use the relevant form as an alternative to seeking a curriculum vitae and copies of the forms (both English and Irish versions) are available to download from the INTO website under the ‘school staffing’ section. The relevant form can also be uploaded to web-based advertisements for teaching posts.

Q6 When do I have to apply for a career break?

Under Circular 10/2011 a teacher seeking a career break must submit a written application to the employer not later than 1 March of each school year prior to that in which s/he proposes to commence/continue the career break. The application must provide clear details of the exact purpose of the career break. A late application may be considered by the employer in exceptional circumstances.

Q7 What written preparation must a teacher make?

Each teacher is required to make adequate written preparation for his/her school work, as follows:

- to prepare at the beginning of each school year or school term a long term programme of work in each subject in accordance with the Primary School Curriculum, the school plan and the learning needs of his/her pupils; the long term programme of work to include a class timetable, outlining the weekly allotment of time for each subject;
- to prepare fortnightly or, in the case of probationary teachers, weekly in advance a short term plan of work.

In the case of class teachers, at the close of every month, the portion of the curriculum dealt with during the month should be noted in a progress record, the format of which will be agreed at school level. The progress record is an important school record, the custody of which is one of the duties of the principal teacher. It should be available in the school at all times during the school year to which it relates and for at least one complete school year after the end of that year.

Learning support and resource teachers are required:

- to plan appropriate learning programmes in respect of pupils in receipt of supplementary of resource teaching, and;
- to maintain group or individual pupil progress records, as appropriate.

Therefore long term planning by probated teachers may be undertaken on a termly or yearly basis and short term planning may be undertaken on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

Schools and teachers have a number of arrangements in place to record monthly progress in the delivery of the curriculum and the format of the cuntas míosúil may vary, even within the same school. It is desirable that every school should agree a common format for the cuntas míosúil in the context of school planning.

1. Class teachers can record progress by writing a narrative account of the portion of the syllabus covered in different areas of the curriculum for each month. This is the most commonly used approach at the moment.

2. Another possibility for recording progress is by means of common templates agreed at school level. These templates may contain prompts or headings for subject areas and are completed by class teachers on a monthly basis and retained by the principal teacher.

3. Technology can be used to quickly generate a progress record from short-term plans. This can be done in a variety of ways. For example, portions of the plan can be copied and pasted to generate a narrative record of completed work. Another approach is to paste portions of the plan into a prepared template. This
approach is compatible with both the narrative approach and template approach.
4 A further approach is to signal clearly on the short-term plan what portions of the work plan have been completed. Explanatory text can be added as required. Whatever system is used by schools in completing a cuntas miosuil, the total record for the school should be maintained by the principal teacher. It is, therefore vital that individual teacher records of this nature should be capable of straightforward extrapolation for whole school purposes.

Rule 126 of the Rules for National Schools was amended following discussions and agreement between the inspectorate and the INTO in 2005 and recorded in InTouch that year.

Q8 Can we continue to have three half in/half out staff meetings as set out in Circular 14/04?

The existing arrangements for staff meetings are set out in Circular 14/04 which states: “In respect of one staff meeting per term all schools will make provision to allocate from normal school time a period equivalent to the time given outside school. (Example: a staff meeting of two hours duration which was normally held before school closing time should now take place one hour preceding and one hour following normal school closing time)”

The half in/half out arrangement arose from the Sustaining Progress Agreement and commenced in the 2004/2005 school year. This existing commitment to half of three staff meetings being held outside school time remains. However if a school decides to have these three staff meetings completely outside tuition time, the Croke Park hours could be used to remove the half in element.

Where more than the three staff meetings provided for in Circular 14/04 are held they will now take place outside tuition time from the time provided by the Croke Park hours.

In respect of parent-teacher meetings Circular 14/04 states: “In each school year there will be one formal parent/teacher meeting. This meeting will normally commence at 3.15 and will end at 5.45 pm unless otherwise agreed at local level between all relevant parties.”

This existing commitment to a two and a half hour parent teacher meeting outside of tuition time also remains.

The Croke Park hours could be used to extend the duration of this meeting or to provide for formal parent/teacher meetings on more than one afternoon/evening.

Q9 I am seeking work in a primary school either as a substitute, temporary or permanent teacher. What should I include with the application form?

With the application form you should enclose a copy of your Teaching Council registration certificate, a Garda vetting clearance certificate and copy of the statutory declaration in relation to child protection which is covered under Circular 63/2010.

Given the current teacher employment difficulties, a number of recently qualified teachers are handing in CVs directly to schools. Any CVs handed in should have the three documents outlined above attached as well to minimise administrative issues for the school when employing teachers as substitutes.

The INTO has also negotiated a facility under the Rules and Constitution of Boards of Management of Primary Schools whereby online applications can be facilitated by schools.

Further information on all these issues are available in the information for new teachers’ section of the INTO website.

Q10 Are recently qualified teachers members of the revised pension scheme based on a career average salary?

The implementation of a revised pension scheme for public servants based on a career average salary is part of the commitment to the Troika under the terms of the bailout scheme. The legislation for the revised pension scheme has been passed by the Oireachtas, however, no implementation date has yet been confirmed. This means that for recently qualified teachers at least one day’s employment before the legislation is enacted will suffice.

In the FAQ section of the INTO website you will find answers to many frequently asked questions on issues such as panel rights, sick leave, career breaks, maternity leave and patronage.

InTouch December 2012

Further information on all these issues are available in the information for new teachers’ section of the INTO website.
INTO honours retired members

In the following pictures, submitted by INTO branches, members are pictured at functions celebrating their retirement. The INTO thanks all our retired members for their commitment and years of involvement with the Organisation. We wish you all a long and happy retirement.

Arklow

Pictured standing, left to right: Emer Kinsella, Chairperson, Sadie Biddulph, Terry Bolger, Sally O’Toole, Colette Kavanagh, Kate Blake, Diarmuid Kavanagh, Branch Secretary. Seated, left to right: Mary Loughlin, Billy O’Keefe, Anthony Byrne, former Branch Secretary, and Miriam Seale. Absent from picture but whose retirements were marked are Anne Hall and Liz Wilson.

Ballina

Pictured are: back row, left to right: Vincent Duffy, Branch Secretary, Ann Sheahan, Tony Keane, Damian McHale, Liz Boland, Sean Lavin, Mary Robinson, Gabriel Lavin, Ann Walkin, Sean Rowley, former INTO President, Liz Syron, and Pat Stenson, CEC Representative. Front row, left to right: Mary Kenny, Sr Nancy Clarke, Geraldine Mulchrone, Siobhán Leonard, Johanna McKenna, and Michelle Bonner, Cathaoirleach.
INTO honours retired members

Ballinasloe

Pictured left: Ballinasloe retirees Marian Kelly, Michael Walshe, Maureen Doohan and Anne Kenny-Ryder along with Branch Officers Ciara Delaney and Noel Lohan.

Carrick on Shannon

Back row, left to right: Catherine Curran, colleague of Margaret Kelly, Orla Kenny, Branch Secretary, Dessie Doyle, Acting Chairperson, Helena Brett, colleague of Mary Gilhooley.
Front, left to right: Margaret Kelly, retiree, Stradbraggan NS, Michael Weed, CEC Representative, District III, Mary Gilhooley, retiree, St Brigid’s NS, Kilnagross.
Missing from photo, Chairperson Monica Delaney.

Donegal

Standing, from left to right: Danielle Diver, Branch Secretary, Christy Callaghan, St Francis’ NS, Pauric Daly, St Eunan’s NS, Michael Weed, CEC Representative, Seosamh Mac Suibhne, Gaelscoil na gCeithre Mailstri, and Paula Muldoon, Branch Chairperson
Seated, from left to right: Mairead McLoone, Scoil an Linbh Iosa, Loretta Campbell, Scoil an Linbh Iosa, Mary Gallagher, Scoil Aodh Rua agus Nuala, and Angela Ferriter, St Peter’s NS
Missing from the picture is Noreen McGarrigle, Scoil Aodh Rua agus Nuala
District III

Pictured at a presentation to Gerard McGeehan, former CEC Representative for District III, were from left to right: Liam McGowan, Treasurer, Paula Muldoon, Secretary, Gerard McGeehan, Anne Fay, INTO President, John McGroarty, Chairperson, Bernie McLoughlin, Vice Chairperson, and Michael Weed, CEC Representative, District III.

Dundalk

Front row: Joe Mulligan, Francis Curley, Feargus Boyle, Joe McKenna, Tom Reilly, Tom Quinn, Eoin D’Arcy.
Back Row: Rosena Jordan, CEC Representative, District V, Maeve Donald, Angela Rankin, Mary McVerry, Gabrielle O’Hanlon, Brendan O’Sullivan, Leas Uachtaran CME, Ailish Markey, Mary O’Brien, Margaret Watters, Joseph Ó Haire and Tom Kindlon.

Earagail

Ina suí: Pól Mac Aodha, a d'éirigh as a chuid dualgaí mar Phríomhoide Scoil Phádraig Dobhar, an Bun Beag lena bhean céile Nóirín.
Ina seasamh: Anne Curran, Eagraí; Seán Ó Domhnaill, Cathaoirleach; Bernadette Ní Dhuibhir, Rúnaí agus An Dr Pádraig Ó Baoill, Cathaoirleach Bhord Baintistiochta na Scoile.
District XII

Retirees from District XII celebrate in Cork with INTO President Anne Fay and CEC Representative Emma Dineen

Photographer: Kathryn Cashman

Elphin/Strokestown

Back row, left to right: Hugh Lynn, Branch Chairperson, Phia Gannon, Branch Secretary, Joe Killeen, CEC Representative District VI.
Front, left to right: Kathleen O’Dowd, Scrabbagh NS, Fionnuala Hussey, Clooncagh NS, Ann Fallon, Ballyfeeney NS.
Missing from photograph are Síle O’Connor, Frenchpark NS, Angela McHugh, Rooskey NS, and Julie Breathnach, Whitehall NS.
Edenderry

Pictured are: standing back row, left to right: Kevin Duffy, Branch Secretary, Declan O’Brien, retiree Derrinturn NS, Josephine Byrne, Branch Chairperson, Muiris Ó Scannláin, retiree Edenderry BNS, Pat Chambers, retiree Edenderry BNS.

Front row, left to right: Irene Chambers, Branch Organiser, Mary Fayne, Retiree St Mary’s PS, Edenderry, Noreen Flynn, INTO President and Rosaleen McCabe, Retiree Clogherinkoe NS.

Kinsale

Pictured are: left to right, Denis Bohane, former INTO President, Anne McCarthy, Branch Secretary, Margaret Carty, Eamon Kelly, Helen Kiely, Rose O’Regan, Branch Chairperson, Emma Dineen, CEC Representative, and Derry Keogh.
INTO honours retired members

Listowel

Back row left to right: Kay Murphy, Branch Organiser, Elizabeth Reidy, Bridie MacNamara, P.J. Kenny, Paddy Keane, Cathal Fitzgerald, Anne Marie Lynch, Seamus Long, former CEC Representative District XIII, Kay Diggins, Branch Chairperson, Julienne Donegan, Branch Vice-Chairperson, Tom O’Sullivan, Assistant General Secretary INTO. Middle row left to right: Teresa Molyneaux, Pádraig Ó Conchubhair, Dónal Molyneaux, Dan Joy, Jim McEllistrim, Jackie Walsh, Michael McEllistrim, Noreen Dalton, Mary O’Connor, Branch Secretary. Front row left to right: Bridie Hackbarth, Helen McEnery, Joan Lyons, Anne McCarthy, Anne Woods, Anne Lanigan, Grace O’Sullivan, Margaret Broderick and Gerardine Galvin.

Monaghan

Back Row: Seamus Grundy, Niamh Coyle, Roseana Jordan, CEC Representative, District V, Anna Mai Rooney
Front Row: Sr. Maire Cannon, Rosetta McMahon, Hugh McMahon, Gearoid MacThaidhg, Maureen Kelly and Anthony Gorman (Retirees)
Mallow

Pictured are: back row, left to right: Caitriona McCarthy, Secretary, Carmel Nagle, Mary Ladd Hernon, Anne Cox, Eileen O’Regan, Sheila O’Keeffe, Marie Daly and Mary Magner, CEC Representative, District XVI. Front row, left to right: Margaret O’Connor, Jerry Sheehy, Anne Fay, President INTO, Paul Moroney, Branch Chairperson, and Marie O’Connor.

Photo was taken by Bríd Coakley.

Rosguill and Doe

Pictured are: seated, left to right: Netty Gibson, retired Principal, Scoil Eoin Baiste, Carrigart, Maureen Doohan, retired Principal, Murroe NS, Dunfanaghy.

Middle row, left to right: Michael Weed, CEC Representative District III, Willie Boyle, retired Principal, Glassan NS, Creeslough, Tina McDaid, Branch Secretary, Michael Murray, retired Principal, Faugher NS, Port-na-Blagh, John Carr, former INTO General Secretary. Back row: Simon McGinley, retired Principal, Holy Cross NS, Dunfanaghy.
INTO honours retired members

Skibbereen

Back row from left to right: John Collins, retiree, Jo Mac Eoin, Branch Secretary, Fachtna Hamilton, retiring Branch Secretary, Bernard O’Callaghan retiree, Renee O’Mahony, Chairperson, John Daly, BFC, retiree.
Front row from left to right: Mary O’Mahony, retiree, Sheila Nuan INTO General Secretary, and Emma Dineen, CEC Representative.

West Clare

Pictured are: back row left to right: Noel Considine, Branch Chairperson, David Dillon, Paddy McInerney, Declan Kelleher, former INTO President, Sean McMahon, CEC Representative District XI. Front Row, left to right: John McGuire, Brid Hanrahan, Branch Secretary, Brendan O’Sullivan, INTO Vice President, Fionnuala Murnane and Tom Prendeville. Kay Clancy and Mary Egan also retired but could not be present on the night.
Positive findings from an evaluation of a two year programme to improve outcomes for pupils with special educational needs in 450 schools in England were presented at a National Council for Special Education (NCSE) research conference Wednesday, 21 November.

Rigorous evaluation of the Achievement for All (AfA) programme showed significant improvements for pupils with special needs and disabilities:

- 37 per cent of children achieved or exceeded expected levels of progress for all pupils nationally in English;
- 42 per cent of children achieved or exceeded expected levels of progress for all pupils nationally in maths;
- behaviour of pupils improved, with reductions in teacher-reported bullying and behaviour problems;
- there was better engagement with parents and teachers – with schools reporting excellent relationships with parents rising from 12 per cent to 48 per cent.

“This research suggests that the AfA programme was extremely successful and for the first time, we now have a proven framework for intervention that can improve outcomes for pupils with special needs and disabilities”, Professor Neil Humphrey of the University of Manchester and lead author of the evaluation told conference delegates in Croke Park.

Teresa Griffin, CEO, NCSE, told the conference delegates that “We support an inclusive education system that enables pupils with special educational needs to achieve their potential. We know that children with special needs can thrive in our classrooms. We know that the annual €900m in additional teaching and care supports is having a direct impact and is improving the educational lives of thousands of pupils who have learning and special educational needs. We need to be able to measure educational engagement, progress and outcomes to demonstrate the brilliant achievements of pupils with special needs. We need to learn from programmes like the AfA to drive even better outcomes”.

The conference also heard about a research review commissioned by the NCSE to examine how we measure and assess progress and outcomes for pupils with special needs in Ireland and what we can learn from international experience.

The review, carried out by researchers at St Patrick’s College, Dublin and Birmingham University, England, found that it is difficult to get a sense at national level of how these pupils are doing in the education system and that many children with special needs do not participate in national assessments. As a result the report recommends the development of a more inclusive assessment system that fully captures the achievements and well being of pupils with special needs, and that can help us understand what supports and interventions make a positive difference.

Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn, TD, opened the conference with a pre-recorded message and said “There has been very little research in the area of special education in Ireland. The NCSE’s substantial programme of research is filling this gap. Research is critical as it provides an evidence base to inform policy advice given to the Department of Education and Skills and it underpins good practice guidelines and information for schools and parents on special education matters”.

See www.ncse for further information and presentations.
**Scoil Mhuire Lourdes hosts Technology Week**

Scoil Mhuire Lourdes, Carrigaline, Co Cork, hosted a ‘Technology Week’ in the school from the 12 to 16 November. Parents and members of the public were given the opportunity to see classes display a variety of technologies being used in the classroom. Visitors were very impressed at seeing such technologies as Scratch Programming, Comic Life, Podcasting, Visualisers, Stop/Start Animation and many more on display. Technology Week also incorporated the visit of Comenius Partners. The school’s Comenius project is titled ‘Once Upon A Technology’.

Pictured above are teachers from Scoil Mhuire Lourdes, with teachers from Comenius partner schools in England, Belgium, Germany and Sweden.

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**Lime Tree Theatre opened in Mary I**

The Lime Tree Theatre is a brand new, state-of-the-art 510 seat theatre, situated in Mary Immaculate College in Limerick city centre. Officially opened on 30 October, the venue will be host to a wide range of performances, including theatre, music, comedy, traditional arts, schools’ performances and conferences.

As a large scale theatre, it will be a significant addition to the national cultural infrastructure and, most especially to the cultural, social and economic life of Limerick and the mid-west.

The Lime Tree Theatre is situated on the rapidly expanding campus of Mary Immaculate College. The Theatre is funded by the Mary Immaculate Foundation. Find out more on www.limetreetheatre.ie

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**Education Matters Yearbook launched**

*Education Matters Yearbook* provides a comprehensive record of significant events, trends and debates in Irish education in any given year, across all levels from preschool to further and higher education.

The 2012 edition was launched last month in the offices of the National University of Ireland, Merriion Square, Dublin by the Minister for Education and Skills Ruairí Quinn.

This year *Education Matters Yearbook* includes articles from several INTO members on various aspects of education.

Speaking of the announcement, Dr Tony Hall of NUI Galway and Editor of the Yearbook 2012, said “*Education Matters Yearbook* 2012 provides an invaluable, unified resource of information about Irish education – practice, policy and pedagogy – from across all sectors of the educational system: preschool and early childhood, primary, post-primary, the Irish language, third and fourth levels. It is a unique repertory of information and insight on Irish education.”

For the coming year, Michael Gallagher, principal teacher in Scoil Einde in Galway and PDC representative for District VI will represent primary education on the editorial committee of the *Yearbook*.

*Education Matters Yearbook 2012* is available from info@educationmatters.ie for €12.95 plus 4.00 p & p.

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**Minister Ruairí Quinn and Noreen Flynn, INTO ex-president at the launch of the Education Matters Yearbook**

Photo by Brendan Lyon Photography.
Teaching Council launches information video

Teaching Council Director, Tomás Ó Ruairc, has filmed the Teaching Council’s first online video, outlining his vision for the role of the Council in the education system.

During the video, Tomás reflects on the importance of the teaching profession to Irish society and the trust that the public places in the profession. He discusses how important regulation is in the context of a society where trust is fragile.

The video also details the significant work being currently undertaken by the Teaching Council. For example, this year the Council has processed 17,000 applications for registration and 1,200 applications for registration from teachers coming to work in Ireland from overseas.

Eight existing Initial Teacher Education programmes have been reviewed and over the next two years, the Council will review and accredit 45 re-conceptualised programmes of Teacher Education.

A new Code of Professional Conduct was also developed this year and distributed to every registered teacher. This document will have important legal standing when fitness to teach is introduced and it is important that every teacher is aware of what it says.

The video can be viewed on www.teachingcouncil.ie. A further series of videos which provide information to teachers and prospective teachers are planned.

The Teaching Council provides regular updates on its work in an e-zine for registered teachers. If you do not have an email address recorded on the register, you may add one via the registered teacher login via the homepage of www.teachingcouncil.ie.

You can also follow Teaching Council on twitter: @TeachingCouncil
2012 was another terrific year for all associated with Tipperary Cumann na mBunscol. Our hurling finals staged over two hugely enjoyable days in Semple Stadium and The Ragg on 7 and 8 June were a huge success. This year we staged 26 hurling finals over two days. 2012 also saw a continuation of the ‘Go Games’ Model for our Under 11 competitions. The GDA officers were of tremendous assistance in organising and implementing the necessary changes relevant to the ‘Go Games’ Model. Our ultimate goal was greater participation in our Under 11 competitions. We have definitely achieved this target with increases in participating schools competing in hurling, camogie and football. More schools than ever got an opportunity to play in the Cathedral of Hurling.

We had 49 different schools represented over the two days of hurling finals. Almost a third of Tipperary schools who participate in Cumann na mBunscol activities got to walk out on the hallowed turf of Semple Stadium or The Ragg on County Final Day. Our football finals took place at different venues around the County from 6-10 November. Tipperary Cumann na mBunscol was also recognised at national level with awards for the County Cóiste and Anacarty NS.

In handball we had a huge number of schools participating. This ensured a very enjoyable and competitive handball competition. Sincere thanks to Paddy Collins for helping to co-ordinate the handball competition.

Approximately 170 schools are currently affiliated to Cumann na mBunscol in Co. Tipperary with a large number of schools contributing to our website: www.cumannnambunscol.tipperary.gaa.ie Photos, match reports, reporter of the week, player of the week and Cumann na mBunscol events and fixtures can all be accessed on the site. Our website has proven very popular among pupils and teachers throughout the county. We now also have a Twitter account: @TippCumanNamBun. Twitter affords us the opportunity to get our message out instantly to all involved with Tipperary Cumann na mBunscol.

Cumann na mBunscol would like to extend a special thanks to all the teachers for their total dedication and commitment to the development and promotion of Gaelic Games in Tipperary.

Best of luck to all the schools involved in this year’s competitions and always remember: “Ní neart go cur le chéile”.

John Manley, Public Relations Officer, Tipperary Cumann na mBunscol

Donegal teachers honoured

While the celebrations in the North West may have calmed down lately the teachers of Donegal took time out to celebrate and honour their fellow teachers who won All Ireland glory in September.

Donegal players, Rory Kavanagh, Frank McGlynn and Martin O’Reilly were honoured at a function in Heaney’s, Ballybofey, recently by the committee of Cumann na mBunscol, Dhún na nGall, for their achievements in being a part of Donegal’s All-Ireland winning football team.

Frank McGlynn receiving his award from Maria Doherty.

Martin O’Reilly receiving his award from Maria Doherty.

Rory Kavanagh receiving his award from Maria Doherty, Chairperson, Cumann na mBunscol, Dhún na nGall.

St Pat’s GAA … adding excitement to campus life

In St Pat’s, GAA, by a long shot the largest and most vibrant of the many thriving clubs on campus, in which the students create the buzz and add to the exciting atmosphere of campus life. The day to day roles that reflect a pulsating GAA Club are carried out by the students on behalf of the students with whole-hearted help from a dynamic Students’ Union led by Mayo man, Thomas McCormack.

From coaching to managing teams, all of the administrative duties associated with fielding eleven college teams are dealt with efficiently and effectively. The college staff are justifiably proud of the sports exploits of its remarkable students and is generous in supporting and acknowledging their every engagement.

Pictured, the College Trench senior footballers with Captain Pat Hughes in fine form against IT Blanchardstown
1973 was the year Ireland joined the European Economic Community, De Valera retired from office at the age of 90, Childers moved into the Áras and Ryan Tubridy was born. It was also the year that the world of education and technology merged with the founding of CESI – the Computers in Education Society of Ireland.

The aims of the Society were simple: to facilitate training for teachers and to introduce computer studies into the second level curriculum. In the last 40 years CESI has been hard at work bringing computers and new technologies into schools and colleges across the country. This work is just as important today as it was when it began. CESI promotes the integration of technology in teaching through their mailing list (www.cesi.ie), CESImeet (informal evenings of sharing best practice) and the jewel in the crown – the annual CESI Conference.

Over the years, the way in which CESI has worked to promote their message may have changed but the essential message remains the same: using technology to support and enhance the learning which is happening in classrooms the length and breadth of the country. The initial focus of the Society was on second level but it wasn’t long before teachers at primary and third level got in on the act. Forty years after it began CESI is still going strong, supporting a vibrant community of practice with educators across all levels of education sharing best practice on a daily basis.

They say that life begins at 40! With this milestone birthday approaching CESI intends to celebrate in the way we do best: with a conference in February. As CESI was founded in Galway we are going back to our roots and hosting this year’s conference in the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology. The big birthday bash will take place on the weekend of 22/23 February with the conference on the Saturday and a CESImeet the night before. A series of mini and nano presentations at the CESImeet will give the audience a brief glance at the work done in the classroom and whet the appetite for the conference the next day. The CESImeet is a semi-formal gathering with a friendly relaxed atmosphere and a great chance to share ideas and thoughts with colleagues and friends. Over the last number of years it has become an integral part of how CESI promotes technology integration.

This year’s theme celebrates both our 40th birthday and our rich history as well as looking forward to what is yet to come. The many and varied presentations will reflect this and focus on the theme of ‘CESI 4.0 – Back to Our Future’. It will be an occasion to see the amazing and often world class pioneering work of colleagues: this conference will have it all. There are top-secret keynote speakers – information so tightly guarded that it’s almost a state secret! The keynote speakers are, however, highly respected educators who have worked and keynoted all over the world. That is the only hint you’re getting! Very exciting times are ahead for everyone involved in CESI. For more information keep an eye on the CESI mailing list and website www.cesi.ie.

‘CESI 4.0 – Back to Our Future’ takes place on Saturday, 23 February, 2013 in the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, with the CESImeet event on the 22 February. For further details, visit www.cesi.ie/conference-2013

Consider yourself invited!

Helen Bullock, CESI Executive Committee.
Supporting teachers, supporting

Play methodologies and infant classes

The publication of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009) and Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (DES, 2011) has refocused attention on teaching and learning in infant classes. The national literacy and numeracy strategy highlights “...play as a key process underpinning the learning of young children and as a methodology for facilitating learning. Good quality learning activities of the sort recommended in Aistear can make a very significant contribution to improving children’s acquisition of literacy and numeracy” (DES, 2011, 48). In this context, a series of focus groups was held as part of doctoral research to explore teachers’ views on the use of play methodologies in infant classes. The good news from the perspective of the literacy and numeracy strategy is that teachers believe that play methodologies are effective in promoting young children’s development across a range of skills, but in particular their oral language, which is fundamental to literacy success: “And through play, it is so good for their oral language and their social skills, co-operative skills and everything and they have come on in leaps and bounds since September because of play. So I think it is huge and I will continue to do it for the rest of the year.” However, this is not the whole story.

Change in practice presents a challenge

The literacy and numeracy strategy recognises that changing current practice in infant classes represents considerable challenge (DES, 2011, 48). Teachers of infant classes are at the heart of that change, and must be supported in meeting the challenge of introducing and developing play methodologies. Their willingness to engage with change is evidenced by the numbers attending Aistear workshops and summer courses. In the last two years, over 5,600 teachers and principals have attended such courses. But change is not just about teachers.
change in infant classes

The information gathered through the focus groups shows how the expectations and actions of principals, parents and the Inspectorate are important factors – either as constraints or supports – in teachers’ decisions about play in their classrooms.

Principal’s role is crucial

The principal emerges as a crucial support for teachers: “...we are very lucky here as well that [the principal] is so on board.” Nonetheless, one of the points made by the participants is that there is not widespread understanding, as one teacher succinctly put it, “...that infants are their own thing”. While there are no statistics that I am aware of on the number of school principals who have experience of teaching infants, it is likely to be a minority. Lack of experience in teaching infants may succinctly put it, “… that infants are their own thing”. While there are no statistics that I am aware of on the number of school principals who have experience of teaching infants, it is likely to be a minority.

Parental expectations and reactions

In the discussions among the focus group participants, parental expectations emerged as a very powerful influence on teachers’ decisions about teaching and learning in their classrooms. The figure of the ‘parent at the door’, the weight of parental expectations about how their children should learn in school, and the impact of parental reactions to changing methodologies were very prominent in all the discussions which took place about play pedagogy: “Maybe there might be a bit of trouble with parental aspirations or parental expectations.” “… the parents would be saying – what in God’s name are they doing down in that school? Are they learning anything at all?”

Within the conversations about parental attitudes to play based learning in infant classes was a recognition that parental expectations are based on parents’ own school experience: “Parents don’t realise how important play is... I suppose it wasn’t really important when they were going to school. It was just reading, writing and maths.” “I suppose one issue I have with [play] is educating parents about it because parents have a set idea of what school is meant to be.” The need for parents to be part of the change process towards more play based practice was expressed in every focus group, and, while not every participant felt it was the work of schools and teachers to educate parents in this regard, there was general agreement about the need “...to educate parents as to the value of [play] as well.” In this context, it appears that support for change is required before the change can be initiated, which brings us back to the point about principals understanding the need for, and nature of, the changes required. Communicating with parents and providing a safe space in which teachers can have “...the opportunity to learn [play methodology] and make mistakes and just put it down to experience and then move on and refine it over the course of a year” is a crucial role for principals.

Commitment to improved outcomes

If there is a serious commitment to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for all children, then Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life is clear that play methodologies as described in Aistear must be implemented in infant classes.

InTouch December 2012

Jacqueline Fallon is lecturer in Early Childhood Education in the Church of Ireland College of Education. She is completing a doctorate in Trinity College, Dublin with Dr Carmel O’Sullivan.

* Sincere thanks to the 47 teachers of infant classes who gave their time and efforts so generously to make the research possible.

1 Figures courtesy of Sligo Education Centre and Arlene Forster, NCCA.
Intervention programmes and training disseminated through DEIS have concentrated on improving behaviour and social skills in the classroom. The Incredible Years Classroom Dina Curriculum; the focus of this article, is one such intervention strategy. Carolyn Webster-Stratton, the author and founder of the Incredible Years Series, asserts that there are three ways to assure that children who are struggling, receive the support they need to succeed in school and life. Drawing from these elements, my focus was on the implementation of The Incredible Years Classroom Dina Dinosaur Curriculum otherwise known as ‘Dinosaur School’. This programme teaches skills such as anger management, self regulation, empathy, turn taking, communication skills and problem solving.

In September 2011, I undertook a qualitative research study in the cheerful and progressive Holy Family JNS, Co Clare, and adapted the Incredible Years Classroom Dina Curriculum as an aid to promote first class children’s personal, social and emotional competencies and to redress problematic behaviour. I decided to investigate its effectiveness as a tool to deliver a solid SPHE programme in the junior school, and to consider its effect on children presenting with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Therefore, the overarching question of how effective is the Incredible Years Classroom Dina Curriculum in redressing emotional and behavioural difficulties in young children was underpinned by a series of embedded questions, intended to examine children’s, parents’ and teachers’ attitudes, opinions and feelings on the implementation of the IY Classroom Dina Curriculum.

Data collected during this study provided a unique insight into the challenges faced by teachers in Irish classrooms, while also showing the changes in children’s behaviour over the intervention period, as well as the success of the Incredible Years Classroom Dina Dinosaur Curriculum. This programme was easily integrated into my classroom and met my goals for the development of the overall social development of my class. It was hugely successful in providing me with the positive strategies to better manage problematic children, and through its very precise and constructive procedures, empowered me to identify triggers and connect with children when they exhibit challenging behaviours and help them control these behaviours. Children who started with the lowest social skills showed most improvement after implementing Dinosaur School.

In order to comprehend the remarkable improvement in children’s behaviour as the Classroom Dina Curriculum was implemented, my teacher daily observational diary provided snap shots of the reality of how some children presented in class, and the impact of this behaviour upon teachers and other children. These recorded snap shots provided empirical evidence of the range of behaviours facing teachers, as well as justifying the crucial need for behavioural and social intervention. Every lesson objective delivered in Dinosaur School, permeated throughout the school day. The class were consistently reminded about Dina rules and consequences, whilst I captured teaching moments to model giving a ‘strong ignore’ to inappropriate behaviour and distractions, problem solving and finding solutions. Children presenting with behavioural issues and social deficit seemed to be reassured by their peer’s support of their progress, and the positivity they were now channelling was changing their perspective of school life. The diary entries which were characterised by accounts of aggressive and anti-social behaviour changed its theme by November. There is no doubt that the importance of praise and encouraging good behaviour, redirecting and emotional coaching had been moulding these children into happier sociable members of the class.

The ability for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, to see themselves in a positive manner became more evident throughout the year. Most entries from January onwards record evidence of positive behaviour, and is testimonial to their growing ability to identify their feelings, problem-solve and, most importantly, to self-regulate. Post-implementation recorded that each child demonstrated an understanding of feelings and emotions, and the ability to express his or her needs appropriately. It became clear that children took on board many positive strategies such as keeping their feet on the floor; using an ‘indoor voice’ and keeping their bodies to themselves. The overall authority acceptance of the class greatly improved, thereby creating a peaceful and happy class environment managed by a less stressed teacher. The ability to problem-solve and offer effective solutions was evident during the study. The children took pride in their success as problem-solving and feelings detectives. They demonstrated their understanding of the importance of trading; sharing; turning-taking and reaching out to an adult to support them in reaching positive decisions.

Angry thinking in children is a huge trigger for angry feelings and violent explosions. Therefore, changing a child’s thinking pattern is imperative for self-managing their negative emotions. Verbal aggression, lack of control and unmet emotional needs are also triggers that lead to anger. Through the use of the puppets, Principal Dina, Molly and Wally®, the children learned positive coping strategies that helped them recognise angry feelings. They got to practise positive ways of telling others when they were feeling angry and were praised, supported and encouraged by their teacher and peers each time. Post implementation of the classroom management strategies, this class teacher was more confident in her ability to manage behavioural problems in the classroom. The Incredible Years philosophy provided an invaluable opportunity to embellish her theoretical knowledge into practical applications in the classroom.

The IY teacher training programme has been incorporated into our whole school policy in the form of its behavioural policy. All staff in this junior school have been trained in this programme, and are effectively using the IY classroom management strategies in their teaching. This school has integrated the IY Classroom Dina Curriculum with the SPHE curriculum in Junior Infants and Senior Infants this academic year.

In conclusion, I believe that the Incredible Years Classroom Curriculum is a very effective tool to promote the personal, social and emotional development of children. I will hold the knowledge that the child who is encouraged and praised, will learn confidence and to appreciate and respect others.

Ireland and the European

The European School System traces its origins to the establishment of the six-member European Coal and Steel Community under the Treaty of Paris (1951). The first European School was opened in Luxembourg in 1953 and since then the system has expanded to its present total of 14 nursery, primary and secondary schools operating in 7 member states of the European Union.

European schools have been established in cities in which there are functioning institutions or bodies attached to the European Union. Currently there are schools operating in Alicante (Spain); Bergen (the Netherlands); Brussels (four schools) and Mol (Belgium); Culham (England); Frankfurt, Karlsruhe and Munich (Germany); Luxembourg (two schools) and Varese (Italy).

Member states of the EU second teachers from their own national systems to work in the schools on fixed term contracts. The schools provide primary and second-level education to the children of officials attached to the institutions of the EU which meets with an equivalent standard to that which they could expect to receive in their home countries. For this reason each school is divided into language sections to facilitate instruction through the medium of the child’s mother tongue. From primary 1 the study of a second language becomes compulsory for all students.

Educated side by side, untroubled from infancy by divisive prejudices, acquainted with all that is great and good in the different cultures, it will be borne in upon them as they mature that they belong together. Without ceasing to look to their own lands with love and pride, they will become in mind Europeans, schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers before them, to bring into being a united and thriving Europe.

Jean Monnet, Luxembourg, 1953
This second language must be any one of the three languages of the EU (German, French or English) which is not the language of the student’s language section.

Ireland’s involvement in the European Schools project dates back to 1972 when the first Irish officials arrived in Luxembourg and Brussels to pave the way for Ireland’s entry to the European Economic Community in January 1973. Provision has been made for the teaching of the Irish language as an optional third language to primary students of Irish nationality since that time. Irish students can continue to study the language in the European Secondary schools up to the level of the European Baccalauréate.

During the school year 2010-11 there were 63 Irish teachers on secondment to the European Schools (26 primary and 37 secondary). During the same period there were a total of 21,887 pupils enrolled in the European Primary and Secondary Schools of whom 479 were of Irish nationality. The annual contribution of the Irish government to the European Schools in 2010-11 was approximately €12,500 while during the same period it spent €3,928,000 on the salaries of seconded Irish teachers (€1,560,000 for primary and €2,368,000 on secondary).

Irish students and the European primary schools 2010-11

During the course of the school year 2010-11 there were 231 pupils of Irish nationality enrolled within the 14 European Primary Schools, of whom 92.2% were enrolled within the English Speaking Section.

During this period the Irish language was being taught within eleven of the 14 European Primary Schools, the exceptions being Bergen, Karlsruhe and Mol. Of the 231 Irish pupils enrolled within the Primary system at that time, 162 (70%) were following non obligatory courses in the Irish language. Teachers and students of Irish within the European Schools follow a revised Syllabus which was launched in 2007. Closely modelled on the Curaclam Leasaithe (1999) this programme is tailored to meet the unique pedagogic needs of students and teachers within the sui generis context of the European Schools.

The European Schools Project emerged from the smouldering ruins of a continent decimated by the cataclysm world war. For almost 60 years these schools have sought to realise the vision of their founding fathers in instilling in students both a pride in national identity and an enhanced consciousness of a shared European heritage. It is a mission which remains enduringly important and especially valuable during these challenging times.

Oliver Brennan, Our Lady’s BNS, Ballinteer, Dublin. Oliver spent 9 years on secondment to the European school in Luxembourg.

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From Kansas to Kenya

On 6 November 2012 Barack Obama was re-elected as 44th President of the United States of America. In third grade (3rd class), he wrote an essay titled, ‘I Want to Become President’ – and he is, to this day, determined to show the world that, yes, he can. Born in the USA, the son of an African father and an American mother, a boy who spent his childhood in Indonesia and Hawaii, Barack Obama’s story is inspirational for all cultures today. Barack Obama has traced part of his heritage to Ireland. On 23 May 2011 he visited Ireland and travelled to his ancestral home in Moneygall, Co Offaly.

The first black president of America, his election marked a watershed in American history and a symbol of hope for all black Americans. His story presents many opportunities for reflection and exploration in primary classrooms. His life story is presented in picture book format in Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope.

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus – and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace ….

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to suffering outside our borders; nor can we consume the world’s resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it.

Extract from Barack Obama’s first Inauguration Speech

Barack Obama has also written his own picture book. In his book Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters he honours a group of 13 American heroes whose traits he sees in his own children. Each two-page spread highlights a particular hero and his or her contribution to the world, repeating the phrase, “Have I told you that you are… smart like Albert Einstein, a man who made ‘giant advances in science’, …strong like Helen Keller, who ‘taught us to look at and listen to each other’.”
The book, illustrated by children’s artist Loren Long, begins by asking “Have I told you lately how wonderful you are?” and goes on to offer repeated phrases of praise and encouragement to the daughters, while introducing them to the examples of 13 great Americans who shaped the nation – from Martin Luther King, who “taught us unyielding compassion” and “opened hearts”, to Jackie Robinson who “swung his bat with the grace and strength of a lion and gave brave dreams to other dreamers”.

The list takes in George Washington, the first President, who “believed in liberty and justice for all” and “helped make an idea into a new country, strong and true”, while Labour activist César Chávez – whose cry “Sí, se puede!” (“Yes, you can!”) was famously adapted by Obama for his first campaign slogan – also gets a mention. The book is based on Americans from all walks of life – all races, ethnicities, ages, and time periods. Some heroes may be familiar, like George Washington and Martin Luther King Jr. Some people are known for their great works, rather than their names, such as Maya Lin who designed the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in Washington, DC.

The book is beautifully illustrated by Loren Long. The first page shows Sasha and Malia walking with their Portuguese water dog, Bo. On turning each page, the girls are joined by a child-sized version of each hero holding a tool of their trade, such as an artist’s palette for Georgia O’Keefe, a baseball bat for Jackie Robinson, or a toy rocket for Neil Armstrong. The last page showing a large group of children of “different races, religions and beliefs” is wonderful.

**References**


These books are recommended for your school libraries and can be ordered through your local book shop or from www.amazon.com.

Dr Anne Dolan is a lecturer in primary geography in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.
I went into my classroom one morning, first thing... and when I went in my heart was stopped in my mouth. The blackboard was covered with writing. Awful, awful things, saying “Mr X is a faggot. Mr X is bent.” I nearly died...” (Barry)

This quote, along with others throughout this article, is taken from a study conducted almost ten years ago in which seven gay and lesbian teachers were interviewed about their experiences of working in Irish schools (O’Fathaigh, 2003). Unfortunately, Barry’s experience was not unique, and the research revealed the challenges experienced by these men and women as they endeavoured to negotiate a safe space between their professional and personal lives. The overarching theme which emerged throughout these interviews was that of fear. Interviewees were fearful that, should their sexual orientation be revealed, personal and professional relationships with parents, colleagues, school management and, in some cases, family, would be irredeemably and fundamentally compromised. The result of such a disclosure could, they maintained, make it problematic for many of them to continue in their chosen careers as teachers. The experiences of another interviewee, Fidelma, who was employed in a temporary capacity in a rural school illustrates this point dramatically. She had enjoyed a positive relationship with parents, pupils and colleagues for a number of years, but when a permanent post was advertised in the school the principal told her “even if you were to apply for the job, I don’t think that you’d be brought to interview”.

Though initially shocked and mystified, she subsequently learned that a colleague had informed the principal that Fidelma is a lesbian and therefore “unsuitable” for a permanent position. Fidelma, who subsequently left the school, remarked ruefully, “How could I stay? They made it clear I wasn’t wanted”.

Changes in attitudes

“I don’t want to be talking about my sex life! (laughs) I just want to be able to say in the staffroom that I have a boyfriend or that we went to a (gay) club at the weekend... or just for a walk! Just the ordinary stuff that they talk about... without being afraid that something will happen if I do.” (Barry)

Since the completion of this study in 2003, it may be argued that there has been significant attitudinal change among Irish society in relation to homosexuality. This is evident from both the corresponding decrease in homophobia, and an improvement in tolerance towards gay people in general (MacSweeney, 2001 and Ferriter, 2012, for example). 2001 saw the first Civil Partnerships for same-sex couples in Ireland with almost 900 men and women availing of this public affirmation of their relationships since then. On a related theme, a recent survey indicated that 73% of respondents believed that same-sex marriage should be allowed in the Irish constitution. Despite these changes, however, evidence suggests that a significant cohort of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) teachers are employed in schools where their dignity is compromised and their right to a safe workplace undermined on a regular basis (Gowran, 2004). Many remain silent about their personal lives; monitoring and censoring their conversations, dress, and mannerisms, so as not to draw attention to their sexuality (Neary, 2012). As one interviewee said “On different days I’d say ‘Oh, I can’t wear those boots to work or to a staff do I watched everything I did...what I wore, how I did my hair, what my opinions were. I was really careful about not letting anyone know anything about my personal life. I had to pretend to be like everyone else. Pretend to be normal!” (laughs) (Donna)

Irish equality legislation – a contradiction in terms?

“37(1) A religious, educational or medical institution which is under the direction or control of a body established for religious purposes or whose objectives include the provision of services in an environment which promotes certain religious values shall not be taken to discriminate against a person for the purposes of this Part or Part II if... (b) it takes action which is reasonably necessary to prevent an employee or a prospective employee from undermining the religious ethos of the institution.” (Employment Equality Act, 1998)

Comparatively speaking, Irish workers generally have access, on the following nine grounds: gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, and membership of the Traveller Community.

In the context of workplace discrimination, with the explicit naming of “sexual orientation” as one of the nine grounds, gay, lesbian and bisexual teachers should have little to fear. However, the Employment Equality Act (1998) contains within it a clause, known as Section 37(1), which allows institutions that have a denominational/religious ethos (e.g. the vast majority of primary and secondary schools, many hospitals/clinics, some nursing homes and a number of NGOs) to take “action which is reasonably necessary” against an employee or a prospective employee whose behaviour/actions may be determined as having the potential effect of undermining the religious ethos of that institution. How precisely an employee may “undermine” an ethos and what constitutes reasonable necessary action remains unclear. The nebulous and imprecise nature of such wording means that, in theory, any teacher – straight or gay – who lives with their unmarried partner, for example, or who does not attend religious services on a regular basis could legitimately be passed over for promotion or fired from their job. In other words, because of Section 37(1), employees (gay and straight) who work in denominational institutions do not enjoy the same levels of protection against discrimination as their colleagues employed in secular organisations. This has serious implications for LGB teachers whose lifestyle has been described as “intrinsically disordered” by the Vatican.

While the INTO has consistently signalled its willingness to vigorously protect its LGB members should a discriminatory situation arise, it is highly unlikely that such a teacher would experience blatant or overt homophobic discrimination. In practice, few boards of management would knowingly provoke the teachers’ union in such a way and drawn upon themselves the resultant public controversy. However, it may be argued that the very fact that such a clause was included in
legislation, which was designed ostensibly to promote equality in the workplace and protect workers from discrimination, is indicative of the continuing influence of denominational/religious based bodies and values on education systems in Ireland. For LGB teachers, Section 37(1) acts as an oppressive spectre; controlling and regulating their behaviour by communicating implicitly the potential consequences of acting in a way that is considered inappropriate, destabilising or challenging to the institutions religious ethos. Interestingly, on 20 November 2012, Alan Shatter TD, Minister for Justice offered support for legislative change and said “... it is unjust that people whose wages are paid by the taxpayer and who are employed to provide essential public services, like education or healthcare services, should feel oppressed or feel a need to live their lives in secret for fear that their sexual orientation should lead to victimisation by an employer.”

Despite (some may argue, because of) the overwhelmingly denominational nature of the Irish education system, some schools have fostered a truly inclusive school culture which demonstrates their commitment to supporting and valuing all members of the school community equally. In fact, every school is required to be inclusive and embracing of diversity. Individual schools, regardless of the denominational standpoint, cannot omit any of the nine grounds outlined above from relevant policies and procedures (e.g. admissions policy, code of discipline, bullying policy, staff relations policy, equality policy etc.) on the basis that they consider them irrelevant/not applicable to their own particular circumstances. The recently published Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers states this explicitly, and demands that all teachers should be “committed to equality and inclusion and to respecting and accommodating diversity including those differences arising from gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, membership of the Travelling Community and socio-economic status” (Teaching Council, 2012).

Nonetheless, one gay teacher highlighted his frustration with the way his identity was “managed” by colleagues in his own staff room.

“In my school, I’m fine. It’s accepted. But I’ve noticed now that the topic is never brought up... You can talk about your kids, your wife, but never ask Cathal is he with somebody, or does he have a partner? That’s never brought up in conversation. I’m annoyed that as a gay teacher I’m ‘tolerated’... and ‘Oh, it’s fine, but we don’t really need to know about it.’” (Cathal)

The critical role of research

“...and I think for the future, as this issue becomes more and more debated in the light of much greater and probative forensic scientific research, I think our church is then you’re never going to be in a position to empower others. And empowering children to learn and be all they can is the gift of a good teacher... I had a huge problem at first, reconciling being gay with being a good moral person. I’ve overcome that. I’m a good teacher, a mother ... I have a huge confidence in our life here as a family –an alternative family –but still a family. I only want to be recognised as such.” (Ellen)

Dr Declan Fahie holds an Irish Research Council Post-Doctoral Fellowship at the School of Education, University College Dublin. (See online version of this article for print references.)
Teachers are asking if e-books can improve learning outcomes for primary pupils compared to existing textbooks. This article argues that the debate is not limited to textbook versus e-book but is part of a wider discussion involving the use of digital content to support learning and teaching. Though e-books have been available for a number of years the use of educational e-books in primary schools is still quite limited.

What are e-books?
E-books are electronic or digital publications in various formats which may be ‘read’ online or downloaded to personal computers, laptops, tablets, dedicated e-book readers or other personal devices. While the Oxford Dictionary defines an e-book as “an electronic version of a printed book”, it is fair to say that the definition is an evolving one. Educational e-books differ from other types of e-books, such as novels. In addition to text and image content, educational e-books may include weblinks, animations and videos, as well as interactive content, activities and assessment in a blended presentation form. Educational e-books may also facilitate the inclusion of annotations/notes.

E-books and digital content
In the wider context educational e-books from publishers provide one form of packaged content within a curricular area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of digital content supported</th>
<th>Books (from publishers)</th>
<th>E-books (from publishers)</th>
<th>Websites or online learning tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Static text and image content (e.g., PDF)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic content (e.g., links, animations, video)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactive content, pupil activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free or Open Educational Resources (OER)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher-generated content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pupil-generated content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-publishing, sharing and collaboration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment of/for learning and peer assessment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As we can see in Table 1, e-books can provide additional functionality to textbooks including dynamic and interactive content and pupil activities. Beyond books and e-books, websites and online learning tools offer even more digital content options for teachers and pupils.

Educational considerations
The use of e-books or other forms of digital content should complement the achievement of learning outcomes. There is a general concern among teachers regarding the focus on textbooks rather than on learning outcomes and the mere replacement of textbooks by e-books may achieve little more than to reduce the weight of schoolbags. Pupils should continue to have access to relevant, high quality books.

Purchasing considerations
In general the current versions of e-books available from Irish educational publishers are static versions of their paper textbooks (not unlike PDF files) and include limited interactive content. Schools should be aware that an e-book ‘demo’ may not reflect the overall functionality of the e-book. Furthermore, e-books require a ‘reading’ computing device and some devices, such as Apple’s iPad, do not support Flash-based interactive content. The licensing options available may differ between publishers (e.g., e-books can be purchased outright or licensed for a period of one or more years). As a result, passing on e-books to younger siblings and managing school book rental schemes may be impacted.

E-books advice sheet
For more information go to: http://advicesheets.ncte.ie

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Your School’s Summer Course 2013

It’s not too early to start planning for a summer course in your own school. Schools can apply to their local education centre to have a PDST Technology in Education (formerly NCTE) face to face course provided as whole school training (WST) in their own school. Application deadlines are usually in late January, so interested schools should contact their local education centre now to apply. See also the WST request form in our 2012/2013 ICT courses for teachers booklet.

Consider courses on:
- ICT in the junior classes.
- ICT across the primary school curriculum.
- Specific applications, such as digital video or Scratch programming.

All PDST Technology in Education summer courses focus on the use of ICT to support literacy and/or numeracy development. Summer courses on integrating ICT in teaching and learning are also provided online.

For more information, sign up for our newsletter and check our website’s training page noticeboard for summer course updates: www.ncte.ie/training

Compiled by PDST Technology in Education (formerly NCTE).
An Teagasc agus An Fhoghlaim i Seanfhocail na Gaeilge

Tá go leor seanfhocail ar chúrsaí foghlaimh agus teagaisc sa traidisiúin Gaelach i gcotinne. San alt seo déanann an Dr Marie Whelton ó Rannóg na Gaeilge, Institiúid Oideachais Marino, rangú ar shampái Leanbh de seanfhocail a bhainneann le téama an teagaisc agus na foghlama. Miníthear na seanfhocail sin agus féachtar ar na léargais a thugann siad d’aisteáil is móra as ar chúrsaí oideachais i gcotinne.

Uathúlacht an pháiste (Uniqueness of the child)
Is í an tábhacht a bhaineann le meas a léiriú ar dhúchas agus ar nádúr sainiúil gach páiste atá faoi bhéim sna seanfhocail sa chéad ghrúpa seo. Cuireann siad i gcuimhne dúinn go bhfuil (h)uathúlacht féin ag gach páiste agus go léirítear í sin i bpearsantacht, i suáilcí agus in acmhainn an pháiste. Tugann na seanfhocail seo, dush-lán don oide tuiscint a fháil ar an uathúlacht sin. idirídhéalún a dhéanamh dá réir agus aisteantas a thabhairt d’aon mháistreacht as an pháiste a bhí ann ag gach uair. Tugann an seanfhocail seo, dush-lán don oide tuiscint a fháil ar an uathúlacht sin. idirídhéalún a dhéanamh dá réir agus aisteantas a thabhairt d’aon mháistreacht as an pháiste a bhí ann ag gach uair.

‘Roinneann Dia na suáilc’
roinn = share; suáilc = virtue.
Tugann an seanfhocail seo, dush-lán don oide tuiscint a fháil ar an uathúlacht sin. idirídhéalún a dhéanamh dá réir agus aisteantas a thabhairt d’aon mháistreacht as an pháiste a bhí ann ag gach uair.

‘Is treise an dúchas ná an olllúint’
treise = strength, dominance; dúchas = ancestral nature; olllúint = nurture, upbringing, training.
Bionn an nádúr níos lándra ná an t-oideachais.

‘Is leor nod don eolach’
nod = a hint; eolach = learned;
Ní gá gach rachadh a dhéanamh do dhúine éirímiúil/cliste.

‘Ní hé lá na báistí lá na bpáistí’
lá na báistí = rainy day; lá na bpáistí = the children’s day.
Bionn ar pháistí fanacht istigh ar lá nuach agus ní raibh le do linn é sin.

‘Is leor ó Nóthor a daichéal’
Mór = ainm calíin, a girl’s name; daichéal = best; deńskiej.
Ní féidir a bheith ag súil le níos mó ná a (h)aracht is fearr ó aon duine.

Moladh agus ionchas (praise and expectation)
Na seanfhocail sa dara grúpa seo, cuireann siad leibhéal a thabhairt ar mholt na daoine oga a thabhairt ar aghaidh. Spreagann na seanfhocail múinteoirí fearann le hiomnaitheal acraíochta agus an dáchraíocht lártha atá i bhfeidhm. Tugann an seanfhocail seo, dush-lán don oide tuiscint a fháil ar an uathúlacht sin. idirídhéalún a dhéanamh dá réir agus aisteantas a thabhairt d’aon mháistreacht as an pháiste a bhí ann ag gach uair.

‘Mol an óige agus ticofaidh sí’
mol = praise; tar = come/grow.
Má dhearbháitheoir daoine oga, bláthóidh sí.

‘Is minic a dhein bromaichín gioblach capaillín cumasach’
bromaichín = a colt; gioblach = ragged; capaillín = pony; cumasach = able.
Is minic nach maith le páistí bhoithéimséal iomlán amach go dtí go mbíonn siad níos sine.

‘Cuir póiríní is gheobhaidh tú póiríní’
cuir = sow; póiríní = small potatoes; gheobhaidh tú an rud a mbíonn tú ag súil leis.

Éagsúlacht agus scéalta (varied stimuli and stories)
Dearbhaíonn an chéad agus an dara seanfhocail sa tríú grúpa seo tábhacht na héagsúlachta sa teagasc. Molann an seanfhocail sin don oide oga an iomarca ama a chainteach mar aon abhar amhain nó le modh teagasc ar leith. Tugann an seanfhocail sin leis an tuairim go bhfhorbraonadh páiste scileanna éisteachta agus scileanna sa teanga labhartha tríd an scéalaiocht.
‘An rud a théann i bhfad téann sé in bhfuairte’
- bhfad = a long time; bhfuairte = colder.
- Cailleann an rud a bhíonn ar siúl ró-fhada a mhealltacht.

‘An rud is annamh is iontach’
- annamh = rare, unusual, seldom; iontach = wonderful.
- An rud nach dtarlaíonn go minic, biónn sé suaiinthinseach.

‘Tarraingionn scéal scéal eile’
- tarraing = to draw, extract; scéal = story.
- Spreagann scéalta níos mó scéalta (agus níos mó cáinte).

Tús maith agus foighlaim leanúnach (a good start and continuous learning)
Tá go leor seanfhocal sa traidisiúin a thagthaíonn don tábhacht a bhaineadh le tús maith a chur le tionscnaimh agus a thagthaíonn don tábhacht a bhaineadh leis an dea-ullmhúchán. Tá dhá shaol de na seanchocail sin anseo thíos. An seanchocail deireanach thios, cuireann sé bheim ar an gleachtadh agus ar an obair mhóir a bhiom ag teastáil chun freabhhas a bhaint amach i ndiscliplín ar bith. Tá leagan eile den seanchocail sin sa traidisiúin, freisin, is é sin, ‘úspaireacht a dhéanann máistreacht’, agus is fearr mar a léirionn an focal ‘úspaireacht’ gurb é an síorchleachtadh leanúnach, an fhoghlaím ar feadh saoil atá i gceist.

‘Tús maith leath na hoibre’
- tús = start; leath = half.
- Má dhéantar an t-ullmhúchán, biónn níos lú oibre le déanamh san fhadtréimhse.

‘An té nach gcuireann san earrach, ní bheartfadh sé san fhomhar’
- an té = an duine; cuir = sow; bain = reap.
- An duine nach ndéanann an t-ullmhúchán, ní bheartfídh sé torthaí a chuid oibre.

‘Cleachtadh a dhéanann máistreacht’
- cleachtadh = practice; máistreacht = mastery.
- Má dhéantar cleachtadh ar rud éigin, beifear ar fheabhas ag an rud sin.

Clabhsúr
Tá atseanta le fada go bhfuil an machnamh criticiúil ar chleachtas ina dhluíthghné d’fhorbairt leanúnach muinteoirí agus glactar leis gceabhardh gan machnamh sin le muinteoirí athnuachan agus claochlú a chur i bhfeidhm ina gcuid cleachtais. Is cinnte go gcothaíonn na seanchocail Ghaeilge atá pléite thuas machnamh ar ghnéithe lárnacha den oideachas. Táthar ag súil leis go spreagfaidh an t-ailt ina iomláine muinteoirí chun tuilleadh machnamh agus ceistithe a dhéanamh ar a dtaithí muinteoirí na fein trí lionsa na seanchocail céanna.

Dr Marie Whelton, ó Rannóg na Gaeilge, Institiúid Oideachais Marino, Baile Átha Cliath 9.
As a new school year begins so does the planning of a new set of long term schemes. Included among the various planning headings is integration. This article analyses the 1999 Primary Science Curriculum with regard to science integration. There is much debate about integration. One aspect of the debate is to define integration. “A common definition of integration does not exist” (Czerniak, Weber Jr, Sandmann and Ahern, 1999, p22). Advocates of integration stress the importance of how children learn, “nothing is learned in isolation” (Gibson-Quick, 1999, p1). While the argument against integration looks at weakened disciplines of knowledge with the debate hinging on the child’s learning, “what is integrated by the learner?” (Driver, 1983, p79).

The challenge of time
Time can be a huge challenge in the primary school classroom. One of the advantages of an integrated topic is that it, “can extend across timetable and subject boundaries” (Harlen, 2000, p238). Carefully integrated topics can allow for more flexibility in time tabling. “Where topic work is the predominant way of working, the timetable usually allows this to take place for extended periods of time” (Harlen, 1996, p119). A cross curricular approach can help to achieve progress in science. It will allow for a larger slot of time which aids children’s skill development in that they have more time to use the skill. When the time allocated for each subject is rigidly time tabled it restricts the “opportunities for children to try things out, discuss them, try other ideas whilst things are fresh in their minds and so derive maximum learning from their activities” (Harlen, 1996, p119). A cross curricular approach allows, “time for children to carry out investigations which would not fit into small time slots” (Harlen, 1996, p119). For example, if skill integration were the focus for a month, activities in design and make, maths, art, geography, could be carefully chosen to promote the chosen skill or skills.

Diluted subject content
One of the disadvantages mentioned is that subjects become diluted in terms of their content. Perhaps teachers should approach integration with caution. Integration can work to the detriment of science. “In practice, the integration of science with other subjects is extremely difficult, when not done well it has been criticised by school inspectors for leading to fragmentation of the subject and compromising activities that do not justify the label of ‘science activities’” (Harlen, 2000, p238). If integration is planned, it is very important that valuable learning in science as well as valuable learning in other subjects takes place.

Science and history
The curriculum promotes the integration of history and science in terms of content. The history curriculum has a strand titled, continuity and change over time. One of the objectives is to, “study aspects of social, artistic, technological and scientific developments over long periods” (G.o.I., 1999(c), p71). Scientists worked in the past, made mistakes and learned from their mistakes. Integrating science and history could enable students, “to appreciate the creativity of previous scientists” (Lin, Hung and Hung, S., 2002, p454).

Science and geography
The curriculum promotes integration by designing a cross curricular strand environmental awareness and care common to both geography and science. “Environmental studies provide a very important context for curriculum integration” (Siraj-Blatchford and MacLeod-Brudenell, 1999, p80). Environmental awareness is an area that is difficult to box into a specific subject area. The science and geography curriculum also have a set of skills in common. The science curriculum refers to these set of skills as working scientifically and the geography curriculum refers to them as geographical investigation skills. These skills have identical labels and the wording of the skill objectives is almost identical. It is ultimately up to teachers to look closely at the scientific skills and then the skills in other curricular areas to check for cross curricular skill development and integration.

Science and art
I also examined how the curriculum promotes the integration of science and art. I enjoy teaching art and science and in my opinion they could be integrated a lot in terms of content as “There is also a strong link between science and art” (Harlen, 1996, p116). Art fosters creativity in children. Children need to be creative when working scientifically. The science teacher guidelines suggest integrating science with art, “The skills outlined in designing and making and the tasks suggested in the exemplars in the science curriculum are equally dependent on the child’s aesthetic awareness and craft-handling skills” (G.o.I., 1999h, p45). When I cross checked the teacher guidelines for art in the curriculum I found a lot of information about integrating art with science. It suggests integrating science with the following strands and strand units.

Strands
- Environmental awareness and care.
- Energy and forces.

Strand units
- Plant and animal life.
- Properties and characteristics of materials.

In my opinion the construction strand of the art curriculum can be integrated with design and make skills.

Integrating science with other subjects requires time. However, the curriculum offers many opportunities for integrating science with history, geography and art. Integration can provide for increased time to be spent on science content and the development of scientific skills. It is important to consider the debate for and against integration in order to prevent science becoming diluted.

Sarah Losty, B.Ed, M.Ed (Science), teaches in Caragh NS, Naas, Co Kildare.

References available in the Intouch section of the INTO website.
According to the most recent nationwide survey completed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI, 2009), newcomer students represent 10 per cent of the primary school-going population. The opportunities and challenges this presents for our teachers and students are ones that need continued attention. Supporting the culture of these students is one which most schools have adopted with open arms and enthusiasm. Hand in hand with supporting culture is a necessity to support children’s own mother tongue languages.

The identity of a child, the culture of which language is a huge part needs to be fostered so that the child is both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn. The work of Jim Cummins, an Irish born academic, living and lecturing in the United States has pioneered much research in this area.

What research is telling us
Research into second language acquisition and bilingualism has provided evidence that point to a link between proficiency in the first language and academic achievement in the second. Cummins (1979) suggested that children need to attain a critical level of mother tongue proficiency in order to avoid negative cognitive consequences and as a result have increased success in second language acquisition.

He developed the Threshold Theory to explain that there may be threshold levels of linguistic competence which bilingual children must attain both in order to avoid cognitive deficits and to allow the potentially beneficial aspects of becoming bilingual to influence.

Alongside that he developed the Interdependence Theory which explains that concepts and skills acquired in the first language is transferable to the second language (Cummins, 1984, 1991) and affect the rate and level of development in the second language. The idea is that the greater the first language abilities and the more underlying linguistic knowledge available to support the development of the second language, the more rapid and complete the acquisition.

These functions develop alongside thinking skills. Related to this is the notion of Cummins that there is a Common Underlying Proficiency where concepts and skills acquired in the first language are transferable to or are accessible through the second language (Cummins, 2000). This widely accepted theory explains that if the Common Underlying Proficiency is weak, this will affect the development of the second language.

In order for children to have successful language acquisition attention needs to be given in schools to the value of both the Threshold and Interdependence Theory.

Bernhardt, 2000, reinforces this thought that instruction needs to accommodate the array of first languages that come into play.
tongue in our schools

to learn among learners of second languages.

The theory behind Cummins’ thinking is written into our Intercultural Educational Strategy 2010–2015. We are reminded of the importance to “give due cognisance to the importance of mother tongue, by encouraging migrant students to maintain a connection with their mother tongue and culture, to assist in the development of their sense of identity, belonging and self-esteem, as well as their proficiency in the language of instruction.”

The strategy also recognises “that Mother tongue proficiency assists additional language acquisition.”

What can we as teachers do?

As educators we need to teach in a way that fosters transfer of concepts and skills from the students’ mother tongue and identity to their current context and language. Research has shown this type of cross curricular transfer in schools has the potential for supporting bilingualism.

It is hard to argue that we are teaching the whole child when school policy dictates that students leave their language and culture at the schoolhouse door. Cummins et al, 2005

It is important to remember we are limited to the extent that we cannot teach children their own language or allow too much class time to be spent on children speaking their own languages. We can however, acknowledge its importance and take certain steps to promote and support mother tongue proficiency.

Ultimately it is necessary that a school keeps an overall vision in mind in its approach to literacy. That is, literacy is not solely about the development of proficiency in English but the development of proficiency in any language.

How to strengthen use of the mother tongue

- Use of online language translation tools, efforts to source texts in other languages are some opportunities teachers can explore further. The classroom should be a place where multiple languages are celebrated and supported.
- Children could be encouraged to do projects on similar themes in their own languages.
- Read books and engage in some oral work within same language circles or read dual language books on their own.
- Utilise parents to help setting up foreign language shared reading groups during Reading for Fun or CAPER (Children and Parents Enjoy Reading) time.
- Paired reading between senior classes and junior classes within same language groups.
- When new vocabulary and elements of grammar is introduced in English, links between it and other languages should be explored.
- Encourage a tolerance for allowing children to speak their own language during informal class time or in the yard.
- Allow children an opportunity to teach other classmates simple greetings and frequently used expressions.

At a school level it is necessary that there exists an official school policy on intercultural education. This should explicitly state the academic value in supporting both the culture and mother tongue language of newcomer children. It should be a target of every school that this is worked towards. A school policy should have procedures in place to educate and inform parents of the need to continue speaking, reading and writing with their children in their mother tongues. Efforts should be made to include parents in occasional classes where they could be of some support to teachers.

At a class level, teachers can make efforts to support the mother tongues of all their students. Every effort should be made to tailor resources to allow this to allow some mother tongue instructions to happen. Some ways of achieving this are suggested below (see box):

- Overall a continued vision that is evident in the whole school should be reflected in the classroom and school that language, every language is important.

Julie O’Connell is a Learning Support Teacher in North Presentation Primary School, Gerald Griffin St, Cork. Her school is currently piloting a Polish Paired Reading Group funded by a Literacy Development Award from the Reading Association of Ireland.

Bibliography


Background information
Holly is a native evergreen shrub. It tolerates shade and often grows in the shrub layer of an oak wood. Its leaves are leathery and shiny and often have sharp spines on the margins. Their waxy surfaces prevent water loss. The flowers of both male and female hollies are white and emerge in May/June. Pollen from the male flowers is transferred to the female flowers by insects; the red berries which develop from the female flowers each contain four seeds.

Ivy (Hedera helix) an evergreen, native climber uses aerial roots along its stem to adhere to a host so that it can reach light. It is not a parasite as some people believe. It has its own root system completely independent of the host plant it uses for support. Its yellow-green flowers bloom from September to December; these develop into black berries which are found in January and February.

Active learning indoors and outdoors

**Indoors**
- Make an ivy wreath. See www.ehow.com

**Outdoors**
- **Stratify holly berries**
  The cutting of whole trunks and boughs from trees has resulted in a scarcity of this native species. Schools can assist in its regeneration by growing Ilex aquifolium from seed. All that’s needed are holly berries from native trees, a large flowerpot of sand and of course patience! It will take over a year for the seeds to germinate in the damp sand. See ‘Paddy’s School Garden’ on www.blackrockec.ie

- **Examine ivy leaves**
  There are two types of leaves: lobed and oval. There are three or five lobes on an ivy leaf. The non-lobed leaves produce the flowers and fruits. All leaves are leathery and glossy and coloured dark-green on the top and pale-green underneath. The veins are light-green. There is minimum overlapping of leaves to maximise exposure to light. Some lobes are pointed; some are rounded.

- **Grow an ivy bush**
  As we have seen the flowering shoots of ivy have oval-shaped leaves. If cuttings are taken from these they will grow into ivy bushes that will stand on their own. They will have no climbing roots and will be fertile.

- **Grow a holly hedge**
  A holly hedge on its own is very attractive. It acts as a barrier against wind because it filters it between its leaves and stems. It prevents intruders from entering the grounds and of course it’s also very useful for wildlife. It can also be planted in a mixed native hedge.

Plant bare-rooted hollies in any month with an ‘r’ except April and September. Use the guidelines on Chapter 9 of ‘Go Wild at School’ for planting same or watch an instructional video on www.blackrockec.ie Click on ‘Paddy’s School Garden’.

The Ivy debate: friend or foe?

**PROS**
- Flowers full of nectar in autumn when it’s scarce elsewhere.
- Food for late-flying insects such as honey bees and wasps.
- Fruits in winter.
- Food for hungry birds such as blackbirds, mistle thrushes, robins and pigeons.
- Roost for birds.
  - Haven for hibernating insects and butterfly larvae.
  - Prevents erosion of soil.
  - Attractive plant in winter landscape.

**CONS**
- Can hinder growth by smothering leaves and preventing tree from breathing through its bark.
- Can weigh down branches until they break.
- By acting as a sail can increase risk of storm damage.
- Destroys old walls and buildings of historical interest.
- Increases dampness in walls.

Holly in snow
Useful websites
www.logainm.ie
www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild Factsheet on holly

Useful books
Irish Trees Myths, Legends & Folklore (2003) by Niall Mac Coitir
Irish Wild Plants Myths, Legends & Folklore (2006) by Niall Mac Coitir
Wild Things at School (2009) by Eanna Ní Lamhna

Placenames associated with holly and ivy
- Killaney – Ivy church
- Inagh – Place abounding in ivy
- Gleninagh – Glen of the ivy
- Clonenagh – Meadow of the ivy
- Cullen – Place abounding in holly
- Kilcullen – Church of the holly
- Glencullen – Glen of the holly
- Moycullen – Plain of holly
- Cloncullen – Meadow of holly

Folklore of holly and ivy
Holly was classified by the 8th century Laws of Neighbourhood as one of the seven ‘nobles of the wood’. These included as well oak, ash, yew, Scots pine, crab apple, hazel.

It had a high ranking because it was a most useful tree for war (making chariot shafts and spears) and for feeding livestock. The fine for cutting down one of these trees was two and a half milch cows; for cutting a branch a one year old heifer; for cutting a fork a two year old heifer. Holly and ivy were used for protection against evil spirits. In winter holly was brought indoors so that the “good people” could find shelter in it from the cold. Like ivy it was a symbol of green life which would come in spring.

The word ‘holly’ comes from the word ‘holy’ and was associated with Christ’s suffering: the thorns represented his crown and the berries his dripping blood.

Both holly and ivy leaves were put under the pillow to foretell marriage. This rhyme was recited:
“Oh ivy green and holly red,
Tell me, tell me when I shall wed”.

The holly blue butterfly
This butterfly is unique because its caterpillars eat the flower buds of different food plants. In spring the females lay their eggs on the buds of holly flowers; the adults which emerge from this brood lay their eggs on ivy flowers. These spend the winter as pupae often well-hidden in the ivy.

Strand Units covered this month
Environmental awareness, Caring for the environment, Plant and animal life, The local natural environment.

Mature holly hedge in the National Botanic Gardens

Ivy flower

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Ireland’s unique heritage

Primary Education in Ireland, 1897–1990

Last year – 2011 – marked two major milestones in the history of Irish primary education. Firstly, it was the 180th anniversary of the inception of the primary system between 1831 and 2011. Secondly, it marked the completion of two distinct halves in terms of governance: ninety years, from 1831 to 1921, under British rule and another ninety years, from 1921 to 2011, under Irish rule.

This is territory which is very familiar to Dr Thomas Walsh – former primary teacher and current DES inspector – who has recently published a fascinating book on an aspect of the period. Specifically, he has concentrated on three epochs of primary curriculum reconstruction: 1897 to 1922, 1922 to 1971, and 1971 to 1990.

This is a 488-page book of scholarship, enlightenment and erudition. He has homed in on three distinct curriculum projects: (i) Revised programme of instruction (1900); (ii) National Programme of primary instruction (1922); and (iii) Primary school curriculum (1971). All three projects have been scrutinized and analysed in intense detail – warts and all – under three divisions: how they were initiated; introduced; implemented.

I strongly recommend this book to student teachers, serving teachers and senior citizen former teachers who, in the past, shed satchels of blood, sweat and tears implementing various curricula whilst secretly pondering if the more things change – the more they remain the same!

ISBN: 978-3-0343-0751-2. Publisher: Peter Lang AG, Bern, Switzerland, Price: €55.90

Reviewed by Austin Corcoran, former INTO President, 2004–2005.

My Apollo Summer is a novel written by Pierce Feiritear. Pierce is a primary school teacher who has written a number of children’s novels so we know we are in safe hands!

It is published by Pixie Books, an Irish publisher that has also published primary school favourite books like Paddy the Pigeon and The Irish Famine.

The novel opens up with our protagonist, Danny Sullivan, having been told that his family are going on holidays to Ireland for the summer. Under normal circumstances, this news would be welcome to Danny. But, this summer is when Apollo 11 is attempting to land on the moon and Danny is an avid space fan!

The rest of the novel is set in a very remote area of Kerry and the author captures the voice of a young boy very well. This novel would be perfect for 5th and 6th class, for boys and girls alike, as there are some strong and likeable female characters in the novel too. There’s an obvious link with the SESE subjects for those of you who like to integrate!

I enjoyed the book and especially the theme of the outsider and how he is drawn into the small Irish community.


Rozz Lewis is the principal of Saplings Special School for Autism in Carlow.
Tubaiste ar an Titanic


Leabhair a úsáid i múineadh na Gaeilge

Scéalta nu a Futa Fata

Tá cúig cinn de scéalta bríomhara foil­sithe ag Futa Fata le déanaí: Amh, An Philuís, An Dosaen Dain­séarach, Dochridthe agus Cuileog – An Scéal foi i Chiarán Ó Mianáin. Tá each­traí, scéalta spóirit, scéalta faoi chuirdeas, faoi thriobhlóidí ar scoil agus faoi chuirdeas gan choine an bhuí na scoile sna leabhair. Tá an t-ábhar siúin spreagúil agus bheadh siad anne do chuid taispeáintí a bhreacadh síos ina leabhair. Tá an t-ábhar spéisialta agus spreag iad chun scéal a scríobh i leabhar nótaí scríbhneoireachta pearsanta. Tá tabhairt as na leabhair, nádúrtha na gcainte –is cuid thábhachtach mar 'fhiorleabhair' spreagúil agus bheadh siad an llevartha duilleogaí, agus a bhfuil leabhair a chur in ann cumhachtachtaí a úsáid a bhí in ann cumhachtachtaí a úsáid. Tá cáilte agus spreagúil suas an chuid eolais ar an leanbhacht. Tá cáilte ar na cumhachtí atá a fhósadh. Tá cáilte ar na cumhachtí atá a fhósadh.

Nuair a bhíonn Ciarán, a dheirfiúr agus an bhalú ceannas glasáilte sa scoil agus gadaíte sa tóir orthu nó iomr dó na cumhachtí atá aigh a úsáid gan mhioil!

Gníomhaoíochtai

Dear clúdach agus scriobh blurbra don leabhar atá á léamh ag Ciarán: "CONAS CUILEOG A DHEANAMH DIOT FEIN". Tá an t-ábhar spéisialta agus spreag iad chun úsáid a bhaint as na hannah annscéal. Tá scribhneoirí a bhíonn i bhfadán mar fhiorleabhair léitheireachta do pháistí ó rang 3 ar aghaidh, agus do bhuaigh all chugaf gheidhreachta. Tá cáilte ar na cumhachtí atá a fhósadh. Tá cáilte ar na cumhachtí atá a fhósadh.

Gníomhaoiachtai le linn léitheoireachta

Léigh an tacs ar lasus agus ar rithim nádúrtha na cainte – is cuid thábhcachtach den phróiseas é an múinú léitheoireachta seo. Tá cáilte ar na cumhachtí atá a fhósadh. Tá cáilte ar na cumhachtí atá a fhósadh.

Gníomhaoiachtai iarlitéitheoireachta

Is í dheas mo chónaithe ar scéal na gaeilge. Tá cáilte ar na cumhachtí atá a fhósadh. Tá cáilte ar na cumhachtí atá a fhósadh.

Finishing Touches

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

NOTICEBOARD

Copy date

Copy you wish to have considered for publication in the January/February issue of InTouch should arrive in Head Office by 7 January 2013. The March issue deadline is 11 February.

Need loan of Lets Go Maths

Would any school have a copy of the video Lets Go Maths (circa 1985) that Fiona Dwyer at St Thomas’ JNS, Esker, Lucan, Co Dublin could borrow? Please phone Fiona directly at 01 6282691. Thank you.

ILSA Spring Seminar

The Irish Learning Support Association annual spring seminar will take place on 8 March 2013. Theme: ‘Finding Better Ways’ Venue: The d Hotel, Drogheda, Co Louth. There will be a wide selection of presentations on topics of interest to Learning Support, Language Support and Resource teachers and a display of educational resources by suppliers. www.ilsa.ie

Music and Drama

Marissa Magner (primary teacher and PRO Malahide Musical and Dramatic Society) writes to tell us about their upcoming production For One Night Only. Venue: Portmarnock Sports and Leisure Centre. Date: Sunday, 2 December at 19.30. Featuring well known songs from musicals and films, Christmas favourites, dance and more. Tickets €10. €8 for large groups. Contact malahidemusicalsociety@gmail.com or phone 086 6035320. Also, the Society are looking for more men to join their production of Crazy for You scheduled for February.

Volunteers needed – The Gambia

Teachers needed: retired, career break etc for a rewarding project in The Gambia. Working holiday: Mid February to mid March 2013. Choose from the following options:
1. Mentor Trainee Teachers
2. 2nd Chance Vocational Education in Skill Centres
3. Individual Help for Students

www.giveireland.ie www.rte.ie/doconone – old school-new school. Contact Joe Griffin 087 22 55 040 Email: info@giveireland.ie

InTouch  December 2012
Preparation for Seachtain na Gaeilge 2013 Festival gets underway

Seachtain na Gaeilge is an international Irish-language festival promoting the use of Irish language and culture, both at home and abroad, running over a fortnight in March every year. The festival has built up incredible momentum in recent years, becoming the largest celebration of our native language and culture held in Ireland every year and sweeping other countries up in the whirlwind along the way. The festival gives absolutely everyone a chance to enjoy the Irish language, be they native Irish speakers, language learners or those with only a few words. Next year’s festival runs from 4 to 17 March 2013 as part of the year-long Bliain na Gaeilge Irish celebrations and The Gathering 2013.

Seachtain na Gaeilge is encouraging schools, to register events with them before 25 January 2013 in time for next year’s festival.

Visit www.snag.ie for more information or contact the Seachtain na Gaeilge office at eolas@snag.ie or (0)1 4757401.

Across

1. It will provide various colourful views of the cloak episode. (12) 7. Two return with a loud finish. (3)
9. Prevent the return of utensils. (4)
10. What the teacher gives when the diary is emptier? (6)
11. Barrie’s pirate positions me between cardinals. (4)
14. Fourteen pounds worth of rock. (5)
15. Worked topless, being lubricated. (5)
16. Give Celtic jewellery to the Roman Catholic. (4)
18. Some bird! Mother’s embraced six! (5)
21. Performing a dingo dissection. (5)
22. He thought a lot about how — quietly — to get the French to write his name. (5)
23. The precise centre of reflex actions. (5)
24. Would such a notion occur to an aide? (4)
25. Have nothing to do with a vacuum. (5)
26. Melts what’s possibly there. (5)
29. Early morning girl. (4)
33. Note the bird-dog. (6)
34. Sounded the bell for Irish class. (4)
37. Tragedies men can create when there’s lack of consensus: (12)

Down

1. Equipment that includes potassium with it. (3) 2. Behold, gym class cause such a gait. (4)
3. Troubles caused by Clinton’s decapitation. (4) 4. Attack where the film-stars work. (5)
5. Conor might sing thus. (5) 6. The cheese is made up. (4)
8. More and more pupils appear to find this in class! (12)
9. Con II is not the principal player! (6,6) 12. Descriptive of the slopes that make Jolson yearn. (6)
13. Proverb of the commercial era. (5) 14. Dance with Samuel, the graduate. (5)
17. What the public speaker is at (among alternatives). (6)
19. What may be cast into a stove. (5) 20. Make a statement at the southern summit. (5)
27. Scavenger encased in patchy enamel. (5)
28. Grew a hybrid for a bet. (5) 30. Not D, but d, this unwanted plant! (4)
31. Give up as an editor in Clare. (4) 32. Plant this right in the golf equipment. (4)
35. Ton up? Negative. (3)

Gordius – Comhar Linn InTouch Crossword No. 142

Winners are: Kay Butler, Listerlin N.S. Mullinavat, Co. Kilkenny and Andrea Doran, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford

Bumper Xword 143

Winners and solutions will be published in the Jan/Feb 2013 InTouch issue. Winners of Xword 144 will also be published in that issue
Life-long readers  
Promoting reading in primary schools

The International Research Center CARDET, in cooperation with partners from 6 countries have recently launched the project Life-long Readers (LiRe), a Comenius Multilateral project that aspires to bring positive changes, through a coordinated effort and collaboration at the European level in the field of reading promotion.

A lifelong learner is first and foremost a lifelong reader. Life-long Readers (LiRe) aims to provide school librarians, teachers, and administrators with guidance and tools for encouraging children of ages 6-12 to develop lifelong reading habits. LiRe will collect, develop, and exchange good practices for promoting the joy of reading, building reading communities, and sustaining reading cultures.

Find out more at www.lifelongreaders.org

Reminder: TRACS competition closing date is 31 December

The TRACS schools competition is now underway (see insert – October InTouch). TRACS wants to hear children’s ideas about the reuse and up-cycling of waste tyres, so don’t forget to enter your pupils’ most innovative ideas. They could win a €500 Buy4Now voucher as well as €500 for your school library fund.

The competition is open to 4th, 5th and 6th class pupils. A maximum of 3 entries per school can be submitted. Entries can be submitted on one page as either as a descriptive illustration or as an essay.

All entries should be addressed to: Schools Competition, TRACS, Unit 25, Guinness Enterprise Centre, Taylor’s Lane, Dublin 8.

Don’t forget to include pupil, teacher and school contact details.

Take account of Christmas postal loads to allow enough time for your entries to reach TRACS by Monday 31 December.

For further details see www.tracs.ie

Esker NS, Athenry
www.eskerns.ie
Colourful website with good solid basic information. Class links give great sense of school activity and the news section is very informative. The school have only recently started maintaining a website.

My favourite sites

1. Nourish Interactive nourishinteractive.com
Interactive tools aimed at students and parents. Some of the tools are specifically aimed at both groups.

2. CBeebies bbc.co.uk/cbeebies
Games and learning activities for the really young kids. Very colourful and engaging.

3. The Chocolate Muffin Tree thechocolatemuffintree.com
Gives inspiration on growing a creative life with children.

Ten ever-popular websites on Scoilnet for Christmas:

1. Scoilnet Christmas Theme page scoilnet.ie/Christmas_theme.shtml
Great starting point for all Christmas learning and activities.

2. Nativty Plays scoilnet.ie/NativityPlays.shtml
Series of links with sample texts and ideas.

3. Britannica – Christmas spotlight.britannica.co.uk/Christmas
Articles and activities. Very colourful.

Read the words and listen to the music. Ideal for sing-a-long.

5. Meaitseáil: Nollaig scoilnet.magicstudio.ie/interactive/view/71692
Matching exercise based on Christmas vocabulary.

6. Nollaig Shona nollaigshona.ie
Seomra Ranga resources with lots of Christmas links.

7. The Christmas Story whychristmas.com/story/the_christmas_story.shtml
The full story of Jesus’ birth written in an easy-to-read style.

8. Christmas Traditions around the World santas.net/aroundtheworld.htm
Country-by-country guide to the traditions.

9. Christmas in the Trenches youtube.com/watch?v=QTXhZ4uR6rs
Music video about the Christmas Day ceasefire in World War 1.

10. Finger Puppet Nativity bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/misc/makes/misc-fingerpuppetnativity
How to make a Christmas nativity scene with finger puppet characters.