Extending the Croke Park Agreement?
Towards a deal on pay and a deal on debt?

T

talks on an extension to the Croke Park Agreement brokered by the Labour Relations Commission are underway to see if a deal with public service management can be reached. Both unions and management have tabled proposals for talks.

The union side has made it very clear that any proposal that may emerge must be capable of achieving savings, be fair to all workers while protecting to the greatest extent those on low and middle incomes and be capable of putting to members in a ballot.

The talks are set against a government decision to seek further savings of a €1 billion on the public service pay and pensions bill which they indicated they would impose if necessary. The unions, including the INTO, accepted the government’s invitation to talks to minimise cuts and to protect incomes and conditions of employment to the greatest extent possible.

No one should doubt that these talks will be difficult with no guarantee of success. Attempts are already underway to undermine the trade union side by those who are hostile to our interests. This should not surprise members when there is clear evidence to show that trade union members in general have better pay and conditions of employment than non-union members.

In the face of opposition we must remain united, strong and determined to oppose failed policies such as the government’s policy of austerity. After five years of austerity we all know that without a bank deal there is no hope of recovery and that continuing with this failed policy will cripple Ireland for generations to come.

We must send a clear message across Europe that we need a deal on debt.

The ICTU Rallies on 9 February 2013 are your chance to send that message and to protest against the cause of our economic crisis – bank debt. A large turnout will show the EU leadership the depth of feeling in Ireland about the issue.

Don’t leave it to others to make your voice heard. March with us under the INTO banners.

Sheila Nunan

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InTouch is published by the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation and distributed to members and educational institutions. InTouch is the most widely circulated education magazine in Ireland. Articles published in InTouch are also available on our website www.into.ie

The views expressed in this journal are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the INTO.

While every care has been taken to ensure that the information contained in this publication is up to date and correct, no responsibility will be taken by the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation for any error which might occur. Except where the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation has formally negotiated agreements as part of its services to members, inclusion of an advertisement does not imply any form of recommendation. While every effort is made to ensure the reliability of advertisers, the INTO cannot accept liability for the quality of goods and services offered.

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InTouch January/February 2013

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Watch out for this symbol in InTouch news sections. It means the resource referred to is available to members both North and South.

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Zoom in on rocks p62

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Spring on www.intolearning.ie p16

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Croke Park extension talks underway

Talks on an extension or revision to the Croke Park Agreement began on Monday, 14 January. Talks are scheduled to continue over the next number of weeks to see if a deal can be reached.

At the initial meeting Management outlined its proposals under three strands – productivity, workplace reform and pay/pension measures. The union side also outlined its set of proposals for the talks. The unions made it clear that Management would have to demonstrate that their proposals would achieve savings, be fair to all workers while protecting to the greatest extent those on low and middle incomes and be capable of putting to union members in a ballot. In addition, the unions made it clear that Management would have to distinguish between temporary measures to address the crisis and change that would remain in place beyond the crisis. The talks are set against a government decision to seek further savings of a €1 billion on the public service pay and pensions bill which they indicated they would impose if necessary.

No one should doubt that these will be the most difficult set of negotiations ever undertaken and there is no guarantee of success. While the Croke Park Agreement has protected wages for serving public servants to date, it has also delivered significant industrial peace, workplace change and payroll savings.

If past experience is anything to go by attempts will be made to undermine the trade union side by those who are hostile to our interests. This should not surprise members when there is clear evidence to show that trade union members, in general, have better pay and conditions of employment than non-union members. The government’s austerity policies are affecting ordinary people more and more, showing the need for a strong trade union movement.

In the talks the INTO is represented by Sheila Nunan, General Secretary and Noel Ward, Deputy General Secretary, who are in regular contact with the INTO Executive Committee. See also pages 36 and 37.
Reduction in maternity leave/adoptive leave days in lieu

In Budget 2013 Minister Quinn announced the ending of days in lieu in respect of maternity/adoptive leave for teachers and SNAs. The savings on substitution costs, according to the Minister, will “avoid having to reduce the number of teachers in mainstream schools”. Teachers’ entitlement to paid leave and to unpaid leave for the statutory periods is not affected.*

The DES subsequently clarified that any days in lieu accrued prior to 1 May 2013 could be taken in the normal manner but after that date no further leave in lieu can be accrued.

Over the last number of weeks the INTO has dealt with queries from hundreds of individual members who will be adversely affected by this announcement. We are fully aware of the dismay and anger of our members in relation to this matter, particularly those women who are currently on maternity/adoptive leave and among teachers who are due to commence their maternity/adoptive leave shortly and who had planned their leave on the basis of the provisions set out in the current DES circular.

The INTO has had a number of engagements with the DES. To date these representations and those of other teacher unions have not secured a positive outcome.

The DES is insisting that the decision to abolish leave in lieu is a government decision designed to save on substitution costs. The DES is essentially arguing that in the course of a school year (or the following school year) there are sufficient school closures to adequately meet the statutory minimum entitlement of a worker for annual leave (20 days) even in the case of a teacher who is absent on maternity/adoptive leave during the course of the school year.

At this juncture we have had a number of engagements with our legal advisors. They have advised that it is open to us to seek redress in individual cases under a number of pieces of legislation where entitlement to a minimum statutory annual leave/public holiday entitlement is breached. They have also advised that this decision should be tested under the Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2011. However, as with any legal process, any claims initiated are likely to take at least several months to come to a Hearing, hence our preference to negotiate a resolution with the DES on this issue.

If such a resolution is not achieved the INTO will ask a number of members who have been adversely affected to take claims, with the full support and resources of the Organisation.

* Maternity leave: 26 weeks’ paid leave and up to 16 weeks’ unpaid leave
Adoptive leave: 24 weeks’ paid leave and up to 16 weeks’ unpaid leave

10 THINGS you should know

1. Talks on a possible extension of the current Croke Park Agreement have gotten underway in recent weeks. Further information on the process and the issues involved are outlined on pages 36 and 37 of this issue.

2. Following the reduction in maternity leave/adoptive leave days in lieu announced in Budget 2013, the INTO has been actively pursuing this issue with the DES, and details are printed on this page.

3. Significant difficulties have arisen for recently qualified graduates in relation to paying them the correct rate of pay for both substitution and temporary/permanent work. The INTO has pursued this issue with the DES, and made some progress. Further information is printed on page 7.

4. New regulations about sick leave referrals to the Medmark service came into force under Circular 0004/2013 (see this page, above).

5. Applications for teachers considering taking a career break or job sharing need to be with your board of management by 1 March. The relevant circular is highlighted under the ‘In Focus’ section of the INTO website.

6. The INTO has been developing a service plan to outline the management of queries and cases for members, as well as other INTO services. Details are outlined on page 15.

7. The next available INTO Retirement Planning Seminar will take place on 10 and 11 May 2013, in the Regency Hotel, Whitehall, Dublin. An application form is available in the Members’ Area of the INTO website.

8. The Nevin Economic Research Institute recently published its Quarterly Economic Observer bulletin. Details of the economic outlook and analysis are outlined on pages 40 and 41.

9. If you would like to work in INTO Head Office vacancies for an INTO official and two Paid Intern positions are advertised on page 14.

10. Following the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, the INTO contacted our counterparts in the American Federation of Teachers, to express our sympathy, and also opened a book of condolences which was subsequently passed on to our colleagues in the USA.
Making the most of the INTO website

The new look INTO website (www.into.ie) is proving popular and feedback we have received to date is very positive.

Last month we highlighted the news sections of the website. In this issue of InTouch we continue with some more helpful hints when using the site.

Check out the footer

The footer is located at the bottom of every page on the INTO website.

- It contains useful quick links to various areas of the website and topics of interest.
- It acts as an anchor to allow you to quickly navigate to popular sections of the website.

If, for example, you are on the INTO homepage and select ‘Info for Teachers’, you navigate to that particular section of the web.

You then decide to catch up on the latest news but, instead of having to navigate back to the homepage and select the ‘Latest News’ link or one of the news stories, you can simply scroll to the bottom of whatever page you happen to be on and select the link for ‘Latest News’ on the footer menu.

Tell us what you think …

Have you something to say about an article you have read in InTouch, or is there an issue on which you want to communicate with others? Email editor@into.ie or write to the Editor, InTouch, INTO, Vere Foster House, 35 Parnell Sq, Dublin 1.

Mark all such communications ‘for publication’ and give a contact telephone number and your INTO membership number.

A €50 book token will be awarded each month for the prize letter published. Long letters may be edited.

Connect via INTO e-newsletter

The INTO e-newsletter is emailed to subscribers to update them on news between issues of InTouch. Currently we have over 5,000 subscribers and invite all members to sign up.

A ‘comments’ facility is available so that members can send us their views on news items published on the e-newsletter – you can also now share news items with your friends.

Find the e-newsletter at http://into.newsweaver.ie.
Dealing with legal issues, attending CEC meetings, undertaking educational research and making presentations on teaching issues – does this sound appealing to you? If interested read on, if not, read on anyway! As I reflect on my experience to date as INTO Intern in Head Office, where I work across various sections, many experiences come to mind.

Within the Conditions of Employment section of the INTO, I am involved with a variety of members’ queries, specifically pension and maternity leave queries. With other INTO officials, I attend panel meetings presenting and answering questions relating to the panel. Attending meetings with representatives from the Department of Education and Skills, the Teaching Council and student unions are both interesting and informative as pressing and important issues for teachers are discussed and acted upon.

Within the Legal Industrial Relations and Equality section, I have attended the Equality Tribunal and the Labour Court. Assisting with colleagues on cases provides an invaluable insight into difficulties that teachers encounter in their professional lives. Meeting with members, legal counsel and liaising with different parties in helping members are some of the many key functions of the INTO with which I am involved.

Committee meetings has demonstrated to me the momentous work being undertaken in respect of committee members’ responsibilities. In addition, I attend ICTU Youth Committee meetings where the aim is to get young people more involved in their respective unions.

Researching educational issues has also been part of my remit as INTO Intern. Most recently, I was involved with the research of our latest INTO Special Education Conference entitled Assaults on Teachers and will be involved in the this year’s education conference on numeracy.

Other events with which I am involved include reporting on talks on educational policy and early years literacy, visiting teacher training colleges and assisting in developing INTO professional development packages.

Head Office is a hub of activity where significant work is undertaken on behalf of teachers. In these challenging times your voice is important and we want to hear it. Get involved and swap the classroom for the office – you will not regret it!

Teresa Walsh, INTO Intern.
Vacancy for Official Permanent Position in INTO Head Office, Dublin

The INTO is the largest teachers’ organisation in Ireland representing the trade union and professional interests of 40,000 members in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The core mission of the INTO is to provide a quality service to members on employment and professional issues.

Profile of successful applicant

The successful applicant will be part of a dynamic team at INTO Head Office responding effectively to the issues and queries raised by members. She/he will be expected to have a knowledge of the affairs of the INTO, to possess good communication and interpersonal skills and to be able to work effectively in a team environment, showing commitment and initiative. An excellent standard of research and writing skills is essential.

The successful candidate will also have an understanding of current issues in primary education, and have a third level qualification in education or industrial relations, as well as having appropriate professional experience. Applicants should also be proficient in the use and application of Information and Communication Technology. Opportunities will be provided for appropriate upskilling and training.

Job description and conditions of service are available on request. Applications, curriculum vitae together with the names and contact details of two referees should be submitted by 5 p.m. on Friday 15 February 2013, to:

The General Secretary
INTO
Vere Foster House
35 Parnell Square
Dublin 1

or email: gen.sec@into.ie

Like to work in INTO Head Office?

Two Fixed-Term Positions as Paid Interns

The INTO invites applications for two positions as paid interns for the school year 2013/2014. Persons appointed will be located in INTO Head Office (35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1).

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

Persons appointed will be required to work normal office hours, Monday to Friday, from 2 September 2013 to 30 August 2014. They will be subject to INTO Head Office conditions and protocols, in terms of hours, holidays, and other relevant staff policies. The persons will continue to be paid their normal DES salary and to accrue pensionable service as teachers, and receive an additional allowance subject to a maximum combined amount.

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

INTO is seeking members who are:

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

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

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

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

All applications must be received not later than 5 pm on Wednesday 27 February 2013.

It is anticipated that a short-listing and interview process will take place. All applicants will be advised of the outcome. INTO is an equal opportunities employer.
The INTO’s commitment to you!

- We will provide you with relevant, up-to-date and easily accessible information via our website – www.into.ie, our *InTouch* magazine, and e-zines.
- Your queries will be dealt with in a courteous, friendly and confidential manner within a specified timeframe.
- You can be confident that accurate and reliable information and advice is available and will be imparted in a fair manner.
- Queries in the immediate and urgent category are given priority at all times.

Information, advice and assistance for members

The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation provides a comprehensive and wide-ranging information and advice service to its members on issues relating to conditions of employment and professional matters. Your first point of call should be to our website – www.into.ie, where we provide you with relevant, up-to-date and easily accessible information and FAQs. INTO also provides information, advice and assistance by phone and email.

Other sources of relevant information are our *InTouch* magazine, our regular e-zines and other media outlets.

Central Executive Committee support

Our service is complimented by our Central Executive Committee (CEC) representatives who are available to discuss any issues that concern you. You will find contact details for your local CEC representative in the front of your INTO diary. CEC members are fulltime teachers and should be contacted outside school times if possible.

Remember to ‘click’ before you ring!

Check our website – www.into.ie

How the QueryLine works

The query line is operational 9.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m. daily*. However, a team member may call you back up to 6.00 p.m.

Calls to the Queryline are logged by our reception staff.

Range of advice provided

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal and Industrial Relations issues</th>
<th>Conditions of Employment issues</th>
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<td>5. Pupil enrolment.</td>
<td>5. Retirement planning seminars.</td>
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<td>7. Family law.</td>
<td>7. School accommodation.</td>
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<td>13. Inspection/Inspectorate.</td>
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<td>15. Section 24(3) of the Education Act/Circular 60/09.</td>
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<td>16. Staff relations.</td>
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<td>17. Teaching Council general</td>
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You will be asked to provide evidence of INTO membership (INTO number, teacher number, school roll number etc). Your query will be logged at reception and is then forwarded to the query team where it is assigned to a team member with the relevant expertise to deal with the specifics of the query.

*Friday service*

Telephone calls are logged in the normal manner each Friday.

However, the main focus on Friday is to deal with urgent and/or emergency issues and to ensure that all calls received that week are concluded in order to avoid carryover into the following week.

Depending on the volume of calls in any given week, call backs in relation to routine queries received on Friday may not be made until the following Monday.

Consultations with members

If your query warrants a one-to-one consultation, this will be arranged as necessary and/or appropriate.

Member complaints

The INTO is committed to maintaining high standards of service to its members. We are publishing these protocols setting out our practice in dealing with you.

If you are dissatisfied with the level of service received from Head Office, please set out your concerns in writing and forward to:

General Secretary,
Vere Foster House, 35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1.

Consultant to the CEO

Our service target is to deal with your telephone query on the day it is received or on the next working day at the latest.

If over the course of three working days attempts to contact you are unsuccessful the query will be closed.

All attempts to contact you will be documented.

You will be advised by text message or voicemail of our attempts to contact you.

Service by email

Your email to info@into.ie will receive an immediate automatic acknowledgement.

Where a substantive response is necessary, it will be issued to you within five working days. More complex issues may require further information and you may be asked to provide a telephone number in order to discuss the matter further with you.

On-going casework or queries requiring more complex financial advice, particularly in the areas of remuneration and/or pension do not fall into this timeframe.
Continuing Professional Development (CPD) packages for schools

As a service for our members, INTO Learning is developing a bank of online CPD packages for in-school use at staff meetings and/or professional development sessions. These packages are on curricular and school-management related topics. The first of these is on ‘Child Protection’ and is now available through www.intolearning.ie

Packages on the following topics are nearing completion:
- Bookmaking (VA and literacy).
- Working with Bilingual Pupils.
- Reading Activities in the Infant Classroom.
- Literature Circles.
Details of the above will be posted on www.intolearning.ie as they become available.

Have Your Say: INTO Learning is inviting schools to contact us with suggested topics for CPD packages. To have your say contact fmorris@into.ie

Pop Up PLC 4: Mathematics in the Senior Classroom: Chatroom

February 2013

This short-term facilitated Professional Learning Community will open on 18 February 2013 and will run for three weeks. It will be a forum or ‘chat room’ for the sharing and discussion of resources and teaching strategies for mathematics from 3rd to 6th class. The facilitator, Brian Mooney, is a practising teacher and an experienced trainer and facilitator (maths) with the curriculum support services. Information on joining the Maths PLC, a secure discussion forum, is available on www.intolearning.ie (Professional Communities).

Check them out

Many worthwhile resources and strategies were shared and discussed on the forums of the PLCs that ran in 2012. Samples of facilitator posts on these discussion forums are now available on the Professional Communities page of the INTO Learning website.

‘Pop Up’ PLCs over the coming months include:
- Múineadh na Gaeilge: Cluichí agus Áiseanna.
- Managing Your Day (School Principals).
- Integrating Literacy.

To register your interest in joining any of the above PLCs contact Linda Johnston, ljohnston@into.ie.

Fiona King awarded the prestigious Education Prize

Fiona King, INTO professional development designer and facilitator, PDST advisor and author of Special Education Needs in Irish Classrooms: A Practical Guide, was awarded the prestigious Professional Development in Education Prize by the International Professional Development Association for her doctoral research Developing and Sustaining Teachers’ Professional Learning: A Case Study of Collaborative Professional Development. The prize is awarded to workplace-based researchers whose work demonstrates innovative and creative thinking and informs and advances continuing professional development policy and/or practice.

Fiona’s research explored the impact of professional development: does teacher professional development make a difference? How do we know? While researchers and policy makers acknowledge that teacher professional development (PD) needs to be assessed and evaluated there is often little clarity as to how this can be achieved. Evaluation of teacher PD has been described as the weak link in the PD chain despite it being associated with improved PD experiences and pupil outcomes.

An exploration of extant literature and models of evaluation revealed gaps in existing evaluation frameworks, resulting in the development of a provisional PD evaluation framework for use in a study which set out to formally evaluate the impact of a PD initiative on teachers’ professional learning in five urban primary disadvantaged schools. Following application within this study the framework was critiqued and revised, resulting in a new PD Impact Evaluation Framework which has subsequently been further tested to add to its robustness and may support teachers, researchers and policy makers to carry out systematic and focused evaluations of teacher PD.

Fiona has also been nominated for the American Educational Research Association Teachers’ Work and Teacher Unions Special Interest Group award for ‘Best Doctoral Thesis’ 2012.
INTO seminars for principals 2013

Following on from last year’s very successful principals’ seminars on selection and appointment procedures for principal teachers and given the huge volume of demand for more such seminars, INTO Learning is hosting further principals’ seminars in 2013. The aims of the seminars are:

- To provide up to date and relevant information to principals on topical school issues.
- To provide a forum for principals to share information.
- To facilitate query and answer sessions with our Legal and Industrial Relations and our Conditions of Employment teams.

The themes for the 2013 seminars include the following (see panels right and below):

- Seminar A: Selection and Appointment Procedures for Principal Teachers.
- Seminar B: Leadership in Challenging Times.

These seminars are provided free of charge. However, a fully refundable booking deposit of €40 will be charged with each application and is refundable on attendance. Those that do not attend and do not cancel within 48 hours will not be refunded. The seminars will be presented by INTO officials and run from 9.30 a.m. – 3.30 p.m. Lunch and refreshments will also be provided.

How to apply
Applications can only be made online and payment can only be made using debit/credit card. Places will be allocated strictly on a first come first served basis. To apply for a place on any of these seminars log onto: www.intolearning.ie/trade-union-training/

For any further queries email: tut@into.ie

Seminar A: Selection and Appointment Procedures for Principal Teachers

INTO Learning is offering three seminars on this topic. The aims are:

- To update principals on the procedures relevant to the appointment of teachers.
- To update principals on recent legislation and Equality Tribunal decisions in relation to appointment procedures.
- To enable principals, in their role as members of selection boards, to manage the appointment of teachers more effectively.
- To outline how the Redeployment Panel operates – Main and Supplementary Panels.

Topics to be covered include the following:

- Selection and appointment procedures.
- The completion of the primary teacher appointment/re-appointment form.
- Teaching Council registration.
- Assessing whether the new teacher is a ‘new entrant’ for pension purposes.
- Assessing whether the teacher is a ‘new appointee’ or a ‘new beneficiary’ for pay purposes etc.

Contract issues: permanent, fixed-term, specific purpose, substitute etc.

Comments from the evaluations from the course participants last year included the following:

"Very informative and well presented",
"Really good informative seminar", "Excellent facility – well-presented and informative seminar", "Very clear with lots of facts and guidelines", "Good interaction with participants throughout seminar" and "Very informative and well presented".

Venues
1. Thursday, 21 February: Radisson Hotel, Sligo.
2. Wednesday, 15 May: Tullamore.
3. Thursday, 30 May: Waterford.
4. Thursday, 21 June: Radisson Hotel, Liffey Valley.
5. Wednesday, 21 July: Clarion Hotel, Limerick.

The DES has authorised the release of teachers to attend these seminars but unfortunately substitute cover is not provided for such release.

Seminar B: Leadership in Challenging Times

INTO Learning is offering five seminars on this topic. The aims are:

- To update principals on changes in sick leave for teachers.
- To enable principals to communicate more effectively with the school community, particularly in respect of difficult issues.
- To discuss the prevention and management of bullying amongst pupils.

Topics to be covered include the following:

- Managing sick leave at school level in accordance with new DES requirements:
  - Outline of the new provisions of teachers in respect of sick leave including a review of the operation of MedMark and the relevant DES circulars.
  - The provision of advice on best practice for principals on engagement with staff with regard to sick leave.
- Managing difficult conversations/effective communication:
  - Areas in which effective communication is important, for example in managing parental complaints or staff relations issues.
  - Key skills in managing difficult conversations.
- Prevention and dealing with bullying amongst pupils:
  - Current guidance on handling bullying amongst pupils, including DES circulars etc.
  - Best practice in dealing with bullying at school level, including interaction with parents.

Venues
Wednesday, 6 March – Clarion Hotel, Liffey Valley.
Wednesday, 13 March – Radisson Hotel, Limerick.
Wednesday, 24 April – Mullingar.
Thursday, 2 May – Galway.
Wednesday, 8 May – Cork.

The DES has authorised the release of teachers to attend these seminars but unfortunately substitute cover is not provided for such release.
Following an opening address by the President, Anne Fay, a number of presentations were made before delegates turned to debate a number of set questions in discussion groups.

NCSE research on challenging behaviour

The first presenter was Mary Byrne, a special advisor with the NCSE, who spoke on the ‘Education of Students with Challenging Behaviour’. She outlined the main recommendations of NCSE research on challenging behaviour arising from severe emotional disturbance or behavioural disorders which included early intervention; whole school approaches and expertise in the management of challenging behaviour. She also told delegates that the demand for additional teaching supports to support children with behavioural disorders had increased by 23% since 2009 and that the cost of implementing NCSE recommendations would be in the region of €12m.

INTO research

Deirbhile Nic Craith, Senior Official, INTO, then outlined the main findings of research conducted by the INTO during 2012 on the prevalence and experience of teachers who had been assaulted in the course of their work. In relation to the prevalence of assaults on principals, it was noted that 20% of principals had experienced physical assault and 54% had experienced verbal assault in the course of their school day. This compared with 18% of teachers who had experienced physical assault and 39% who had experienced verbal assault. The impact of assault, whether verbal or physical, was significant, with teachers noting an increase in stress and anxiety following such an incident. Reasons given for the assaults included cultural/societal issues – where children have little concept of the word ‘no’ and an anti-public service culture had led to an increase in verbal assault; environmental issues – where a small number of dysfunctional families can cause a disproportionate level of upset and fear in a community; and special needs issues where children with, for example, ASD can exhibit very aggressive behaviour.

Deirbhile then noted the comparatively low level of training received by teachers in relation to preventing assaults and physical restraint techniques (5%) and outlined recommendations including: training in conflict resolution; building an inclusive, accepting school climate and a zero tolerance approach to assaults on teachers. In addition, some respondents to the questionnaire suggested a mandatory entitlement to a period of leave for any teacher assaulted at work; the establishment of a dedicated helpline and the development of a culture of mutual respect in schools.

Northern Ireland survey findings

Tony Carlin, INTO Senior Official NI, then made a presentation on ‘Violence against Teachers – the Northern Ireland Context’. He outlined the findings of a survey completed in Northern Ireland in 2010 and the follow up work which had resulted in a working group being established; an agreed definition of workplace violence and the development of agreed policy and guidance for teachers in Northern Ireland. He also noted that further work would be undertaken in this...
area which would include training and development for staff representatives; a commitment to resurvey in 2-3 years and ensuring support for INTO members who are victims of assault or violence.

Guidelines for schools

The President then introduced Deirdre O’Connor, Senior Official, INTO, who considered assaults in the context of safety, health and welfare at work. She outlined the relevant provisions of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005), and also research on assaults carried out by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA). In line with the aims of the conference, she also set out the key components of guidelines for schools on preventing and dealing with assaults. These components include:

- assessing of the situation in the school;
- a co-operative approach to the prevention of assaults;
- dealing with incidents;
- reporting;
- professional development and training; and
- monitoring and follow-up.

Finally, steps to progress towards agreed guidelines were outlined, including contact with the management authorities in schools, and negotiations with the DES to secure a revision of Circular 40/97. The conference then considered questions in discussion groups.

Resources in special education

After the discussion groups, Madeline Hickey, from the Special Education Support Service (SESS) made a presentation to delegates outlining the structure and work of the SESS. She noted that the models of support available to schools included: seminar delivery; SESS-designed courses; school visits; teacher exchanges/visits; online professional development and supports; website development (webinars and podcasts); development and supply of resource materials. The resources available to teachers such as DVDs and library facilities developed by the SESS were also outlined.

Sharing responsibility

The final presenter was Michael Cullinane, Regional Director for the North East Region of the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPs). He spoke on the shared responsibility of the school, teachers, families, community, educational services and HSE services in relation to supporting children with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD). The role of NEPs was outlined with two aspects – case work and support and development work – being looked at in particular. Michael then spoke in more detail about the Incredible Years and the Friends for Life programmes that aimed to support children with BESD. He closed his presentation by noting that children with BESD benefit from individual support/individual planning; integrated, multi-agency response; psycho-educational programmes; well-trained and well-supported teachers; effective, whole-school response.

Discussion groups

In the discussion groups, delegates considered what supports were necessary within schools and from other agencies in order to prevent assaults. The groups highlighted the importance of building good relationships with parents, the development and consistent implementation of the school’s Code of Behaviour and the development of Individual Behaviour Plans as key steps that school staffs could take. Boards of management/DES should provide for training for teachers. The need for additional staffing (both SNA and support teaching staff) to prevent assaults was also identified.

The most important elements of support for teachers who had been assaulted, as identified by the discussion groups were an empathetic response from colleagues, the principal and the board of management, the need for time out for a teacher who has been assaulted, the payment of medical expenses arising by the board, and the reporting of the assault to the board, combined with an appropriate response from them.

INTO Equality Conference 2013

The INTO Equality Conference will take place on 8 and 9 March in the Strand Hotel in Limerick. The themes of the conference are ‘Mental Health and Teaching’ and ‘Religion and Ethos in Primary Schools’. The conference is organised by the INTO Equality Committee and follows on from previous conferences in 2007 and 2010. Delegates were nominated at the branch AGMs in January.

In preparation for the conference the committee have prepared a theme paper on each topic and carried out research which will inform the discussions. In addition, a number of guest speakers will address the delegates. The speakers will include representatives of Carecall, Aware and SeeChange (an organisation which works in the area of mental health), as well as Dr Fionnuala Waldron and Prof John Coolahan on the topic of ethos and religion in schools. For further details see (www.into.ie/ROI/NewsEvents/Conferences/EqualityConference).

We look forward to lively and interesting presentations and discussions.

For additional equality news this month, including an OECD publication on gender stereotyping, and an ESRI/Equality Authority study on the experience of discrimination in Ireland, go to the Equality Section on the INTO website www.into.ie/ROI/Equality

INTO AVC Plan – Annual Report

The INTO has received from the Trustees (Irish Life Trustee Services Limited) the annual report for the year ended 31 March 2012 of the INTO AVC Plan. Cornmarket will provide a synopsis of this report in the annual benefit statement documentation issued to members.

A copy of the annual report is available from INTO (which is sponsor of the scheme). This is a detailed report running to over 40 pages. A copy is available to any member who requires this. If you wish to have a copy of the report, please email gjgllkin@into.ie or telephone (01) 804 7745.
Membership Plus
Bringing you savings throughout 2013

Membership Plus is the INTO member benefits programme with over 800 offers and discounts of up to 50% off at companies across the country. To see where you can save, visit the Membership Plus website by clicking on the Membership Plus link at www.into.ie.

If you have not received your Membership Plus card, please contact Georgina Glackin on 01 8047745.

New Offer from yourtonic.com

Yourtonic.com is an Irish company based in Dublin specialising in complementary health products and information.
Yourtonic.com has chosen quality over quantity and, after consulting with a number of nutritionists and industry experts, they have selected the best of breed vitamins, supplements and herbal remedies, narrowing down a list of 1000’s to 100’s of products.
Visit the Membership Plus website to find out how you can save 10% off full priced items.

Suggest where you would like to save...

At Membership Plus, we welcome your suggestions as to where you would like to save with your Membership Plus card.
To submit your suggestions, login to the Membership Plus website and click on ‘Suggest a Venue’ at the top of the page.

Competition winners

Congratulations to Gemma Hughes, Dublin, who won a gift voucher for three driving lessons with Pinnacle Driving School and to Niall West, Co Limerick, who won an ATX Medalist Ballpoint Pen worth €80 from Ronan Campbell Jewellers.
If you were not one of our lucky winners, then you can still enjoy great savings from both Pinnacle Driving School and Ronan Campbell Jewellers via the Membership Plus website.

Mol an Óige competition winners

Mol an Óige ran a competition in the November issue of InTouch giving members the chance to win hampers, each worth €100.
The winners were: Clara McGowan, Naomi Enright, Karen Gilroy, Niamh Burns and Martha Walsh.
were very alarmed at items on the agenda.ing teachers, had taken huge cuts in pay and

The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation welcomed

Mixed reaction to Budget 2013

The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation welcomed the fact that there would be no increase in class sizes in larger schools, but said that further cuts to teacher numbers in small schools was flawed and misguided. INTO General Secretary, Sheila Nunan said: “Irish class sizes are already the second highest in the EU, marginally behind the UK.”

RTE, 5 December 2012

Retired teachers working in schools

Tommy Marren Show
Midwest Radio, 8 January 2013

Patricia Messenger Show
Cork 103FM, 9 January 2013

Interviews with INTO press officer on the employment of retired teachers in schools.

Quinn demands answers from schools hiring retired teachers

INTO said it was indefensible given the number of qualified teachers available for work”.

Irish Daily Mail, 8 January 2013

Irish pupils among world’s top readers

“It is clear that Irish parents value literacy highly and support the work their children do in school, the State needs to ensure continued support for the DEIS programme, which is delivering results in primary schools,” said INTO General Secretary, Sheila Nunan. She said it was heartening that Irish pupils scored well in reading despite increased poverty levels, high numbers of children whose home language was not English, and large class sizes.

Irish Examiner, 31 December 2012

Union says results reflect hard work of Irish primary teachers

Teachers’ union the INTO described the rankings on primary education as “a good news story for Irish education”. General Secretary, Sheila Nunan, said the test results reflected the hard work of Irish primary teachers, especially in the area of literacy and numeracy. Ms Nunan said the results showed that, while there was no room for complacency, there were significant strengths in Irish primary education.

The Irish Times, 12 December 2012

Making maternity benefit taxable ‘specifically penalises mothers’

Meanwhile, primary teachers’ union the INTO described as “regressive and unfair” the budget decision to cut pregnant teachers’ entitlement to time in lieu for some holidays that fall during maternity leave. Sheila Nunan, INTO General Secretary, said the union would closely examine the implications of the decision on equality grounds and would seek advice.

Irish Examiner, 6 December 2012

PIRLS TIMMS results

Irish class sizes are the second-highest in the EU, marginally behind the UK. On the plus side, a gold star for primary teachers’ entitlement to maternity leave and can take it after annual leave and can take it after maternity leave.

Irish Examiner, 6 December 2012

Budget 2013 supplement

The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation said it would be seeking advice on the issue on equality grounds given that, in most jobs, a woman retains her entitlement to her annual leave and can take it after maternity leave.

Irish Examiner, 6 December 2012

Reading between the lines of the two budget speeches

On the plus side, a gold star for primary teachers’ entitlement to maternity leave. However, she said the re-hiring of retired teachers on a regular basis or for extended periods was indefensible given the number of qualified teachers without jobs.

Irish Independent, 7 January 2013

Irish pupils among world’s top readers

“It is clear that Irish parents value literacy highly and support the work their children do in school, the State needs to ensure continued support for the DEIS programme, which is delivering results in primary schools,” said INTO General Secretary, Sheila Nunan. She said it was heartening that Irish pupils scored well in reading despite increased poverty levels, high numbers of children whose home language was not English, and large class sizes.

Irish Examiner, 31 December 2012

Union says results reflect hard work of Irish primary teachers

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The Irish Times, 12 December 2012

Sunday papers

Teachers’ unions vow to challenge pay cut

Teachers’ unions are preparing a legal challenge to the Education Minister’s decision in September to abolish qualification allowances for new entrants to the profession. The three teacher unions – ASTI, INTO and TUI will argue that as the vast majority of new-entrant teachers are young and female, the cut amounts to discrimination on the grounds of age and gender, and contravenes the Employment Equality Act.

The INTO confirmed it was working on “a number of cases” in co-ordination with ASTI and TUI. The INTO said this still leaves a young, female teacher starting off facing a loss over her career of about €250,000 relative to other colleagues.

The Sunday Times, 30 December 2012

Unions warn against further cuts

The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO) wants the Government to keep its commitment to protect frontline services in education, and does not want to see an increase in class sizes in primary schools. “Class teachers are frontline staff in the education sector, and an increase in class size would break commitments in the Programme for Government,” said INTO General Secretary, Sheila Nunan.

“Irish class sizes are the second-highest in the EU, marginally behind the UK. On average, Irish teachers teach three extra children per class than EU colleagues. The salaries of recently qualified teachers were also unfairly and disproportionately cut in previous budgets. Further cuts will be completely unacceptable.”

Sunday Business Post, 2 December 2012

More details of INTO coverage in the media at www.into.ie/ROI/NewsEvents/MediaCoverage/
Vere Foster Medal winners

This month the pictures of the Vere Foster medal winners are from Froebel College of Education, Marino Institute of Education and the Church of Ireland College of Education. Pictures of Vere Foster medal winners from St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra, Hibernia College and Mary Immaculate College were published in the December issue of InTouch.

Aislinn McCabe received her Vere Foster Medal at the recent Marino Institute of Education graduation ceremony.

Fiona Ryan is pictured receiving her Vere Foster Medal from Anne Fay, INTO President, at the Froebel College graduation ceremony.

Sorcha O’Farrell with Anne Fay, pictured being presented with her Vere Foster Medal at the recent Church of Ireland College of Education graduation ceremony.

Susan Perkins is pictured with her Vere Foster Medal at the recent Marino Institute of Education graduation ceremony.
Student teachers protest against Irish course change

Earlier this year a renewed effort was made to engage and interact with our newest members. How did we get on?

Data was compiled through an anonymous survey to NQTs one to two years from graduation, contacted personally. The results are interesting but also have some advice and guidance for our union.

Apathetic, disillusioned and disconnected are all adjectives to describe the sentiment of many NQTs and non-permanent members of our union who have felt the blunt instrument of Government and European led austerity policies.

Our challenge is to take this and turn it into active engagement.

When asked “Do you consider yourself active in the INTO?” 50% said no, with 45% saying sometimes. I then elicited how the contributors engage or contact the INTO. The top methods were:

- Facebook
- InTouch magazine
- Friends who are active

Combined with the first answer, this tells me that this group keep up with developments via the union’s main methods of communication. They also turn to other union members to stay connected, so we all play a part in this.

Attendance at meetings was chosen by 20%, above average in my opinion.

Some indicated areas of improvement for INTO:

- Increased awareness of roles and structure of INTO, to increase comfort and ease of engaging in meetings and gatherings.
- Be more forceful on the issue of NQT pay cuts.
- More interaction from members as a whole to build strength on NQT issues.
- More online surveys eliciting NQT concerns and opinions, so focus is not only on meetings.
- An online INTO Forum.

Earlier, and more active engagement in colleges of education and first year teaching.

Members can be proud of the drive to recruit and encourage NQTs to be active. However, we do have work to do. 18% felt their views were fully represented by the INTO, and 68% said this was the case sometimes.

Attendance at meetings, where Congress motions are decided, discussed and proposed, could still improve. 91% of this group admitted they also could make a greater effort. It is fair to say that they feel the INTO should vigorously pursue the major losses on NQT pay. The INTO and its members’ efforts are making a positive difference, but our job is far from done. It falls on all of our shoulders, including NQTs, to increase the energy around their issues at Congress 2013.

T.J. Clare, NQT, District 14.
An extremely useful resource to help support and develop your assessment practice is *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools*, (NCCA, 2007). It includes information on a range of practical assessment methods which support learning in the classroom (page 13).

The Assessment for Learning (AfL) resources at www.action.ncca.ie complement the assessment guidelines. The resources include:

- Video footage of classroom lessons showing teachers using the AfL approach to support children’s learning.
- Multi-media clips of teachers sharing self and peer assessment techniques from a range of classes.
- Samples of children’s work showing how AfL can support teacher judgement.

Check out the following assessment methods in *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools*, (NCCA, 2007):

- Self-assessment – (page 14) and self-assessment techniques including rubrics, traffic lights, thumbs, and KWL grids (pages 84-85).
- Questioning – (page 42) and sample questions based on Bloom’s taxonomy (pages 86-88). You could use these sample questions to create an A3 classroom poster for your classroom, to support higher-order questioning.
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests – (page 54) and sample test questions (page 88-90).

The assessment guidelines also include practical information and examples about other assessment methods such as conferencing, portfolio assessment, concept mapping, teacher observation and standardised testing. Check out the sample activity on reporting standardised test results to parents (pages 60-66). A really user-friendly version of the NCCA assessment guidelines is available at www.ncca.ie/primary

### What information should I gather and record in the assessment folder?

The information you gather and record in the assessment folder serves two purposes:

- Reporting on the child’s learning progress and achievement to parents and other relevant people such as the SEN teacher, the principal or the school psychologist. This use of the assessment information is called Assessment of Learning (AoL).
- Identifying the next steps needed to improve the child’s learning. This approach to assessment is called Assessment for Learning (AfL). For example, you might ask ‘What does this sample of the child’s work tell me about what I now need to do to help him/her improve?’

For further information or if you have a specific query in relation to induction and mentoring please email mary.burke@spd.dcu.ie
The internet has facilitated an inexpensive and instantaneous way to express feelings and voice opinions. Anything can be said publicly about anyone, and about any aspect of their life whether private or public, instantaneously and anonymously. However, in doing so the commentator or tweeter does so at their peril.

Defamation law applies to all electronic communications within the State. Communications on social network sites are considered sufficient to constitute publication. Social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter can publish, republish and host the defamatory material. While the courts may accept the social network as not being the actual author of the material, liability may be imposed on the basis that the social network may have been informed by the user of the existence of defamatory material on its website yet have failed to remove it. If the user has expressly requested the social network to remove the defamatory material, the social network is deemed to be on notice of the existence of the defamatory material on the website it hosts and so may be held liable. If social network operators do not have actual knowledge of the content of the comments until the user complains about them but then takes the defamatory material down immediately, the operator may rely on the ‘hosting’ defence under Regulation 18 of the E-Commerce Regulations.

There are certain rules with which social networks need to comply:
- They are only allowed use data for the purposes it is given to them.
- The social network must outline every way in which they are using someone’s data.
- Every user must be aware that whether they have read the privacy policy or not, and many do not, they are on constructive notice of its terms and conditions. Users are generally required by the site to confirm that they have done so. The quick click to ‘accept’ captures the user.

Currently, European legislators are considering adding the right to be forgotten to data privacy laws. This would essentially give every user the right to direct the social network to delete their material.

However the very general principles as outlined above may need to be reviewed in the light of three recent cases, one in the UK, one in Australia and one here.

In the UK, Lord McAlpine’s solicitors are gearing up to not only go after journalists, but normal everyday ‘tweeters’ over the false and malicious accusations made about him online.

In late November in Australia, Google were directed to pay AUS$200,000 to a music promoter for refusing to remove a link to sites that contained defamatory material, in the face of Google’s protest that it was not the ‘publisher’ of the material. The Order reflected the damages suffered post refusal to remove the link, not the period beforehand. A day later the Irish High Court granted an injunction directing three hosts of internet message boards, who had immediately withdrawn offensive material from their sites, to identify and provide IT addresses for those who posted the material.

There is great uncertainty out there, so be wary and be careful that what you put out there does not come back to haunt you!

Andrew O’Rorke, Chairman, Hayes Solicitors and Rachel O’Malley, trainee solicitor, Hayes Solicitors. Email: hayes.solicitors.ie
School patronage

Parents of all children aged 0 to 12 years in 38 areas across Ireland are being asked by the Minister for Education and Skills what patrons they would like to see operating their local primary schools.

Surveys went live on Monday, 14 January and are an expansion of pilot surveys on primary school patronage which were conducted late last year in five towns.

The survey can be accessed online via www.education.ie and parents or guardians of primary school going children, and 0 to five year olds, in the 38 towns and suburbs are being urged to fill it in.

The aim of the survey is to establish the level of demand from parents for diversity of school patronage in each of the towns. At present, some 96% of primary schools are under church patronage, with more than 90% or approximately 3,000 schools under the remit of the Catholic Church.

This survey initiative follows on from the recommendations of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector.

If parents indicate they would like a wider choice of patron, then the Department of Education and Skills (DES) will ask existing patrons to come up with a plan to transfer some schools to other patron bodies.

Full details of the survey, including the list of areas, are available on the DES website at www.education.ie.

This is part of the process arising from the Forum on Patronage on Pluralism in Schools, which reported last year. That report, and the INTO submission on the issue, is available on the INTO website.

Education in a Pluralist Ireland, then and now

As part of the programme of events around Kildare Place Society’s exhibition in Collins Barracks, the National Museum of Ireland will co-host a conference on Saturday, 9 February. The conference, ‘Education in a Pluralist Ireland, then and now’, will address some topical issues and debate throughout the day.

The distinguished panel of speakers will include Prof Johnny Coolahan, Prof Aine Hyland, Susan Parkes, Dr Anne Looney. Barrister Nuala Jackson will speak on legal and constitutional issues that arise in considering pluralism in Ireland.

For further info see www.museum.ie/en/intro/arts-and-history.aspx

TMS take on the Big Fella

The Teachers’ Musical Society, returns to the Tivoli Theatre this March to present Brian Flynn’s acclaimed work, Michael Collins, A Musical Drama. It tells the story of the Big Fella’s life through the Easter Rising, partition and the civil war. It boasts an enchantingly dramatic score and the original production in the Olympia was highly acclaimed. The TMS are the first group in Dublin to take on this challenging piece since the sell-out original production.

The cast is made up largely of INTO members. The group has grown since its foundation some 13 years ago and is now one of Ireland’s leading musical societies.

The production team for Michael Collins, A Musical Drama is made up exclusively of primary teachers. Eoin Cannon, who returns as director, combines a career in teaching with theatre work in London and Dublin. He is joined by musical director Caitiona Ni Threaasigh, a teacher at Divine Word PS, Marley Grange, and choreographer, Orla Savage, who teaches at St Patrick’s BNS, Drumcondra.

The society has been very busy with rehearsals for this very challenging musical. and a smash hit is promised! Collins will be played by Brian Gilligan, a graduate of St Patrick’s College and Kitty Kiernan will be played by music teacher Fiona McManus. Éamon de Valera will be played by society stalwart Seamus Sullivan, Harry Boland by Frank Beadle and Joe Emmet by Seán McMahon.

Michael Collins, A Musical Drama runs at the Tivoli Theatre, Francis Street, Dublin 8, from 4 – 9 March at 8pm nightly. Tickets are priced at €20 for adults and €15 for children (with concessions of €15 and €10 on Monday night) and can be booked on www.tivoli.ie or by phoning 01 454 4472.

Front: Michael Collins (Brian Gilligan) Back: Éamon de Valera (Seamus Sullivan), Harry Boland (Frank Beadle) and Kitty Kiernan (Fiona McManus). Photography by Rebecca Pitt
Teaching Council News

The Teaching Council has reduced the annual renewal fee for teachers from €90 to €65 with effect from 1 January 2013. Registered teachers should also be aware that from now on, a single registration renewal notice will be posted to teachers approximately four weeks in advance of their renewal date. If registration is not renewed by the expiry date, a final notice will be issued by registered post. If registration is not renewed within 30 days of the date of the final notice, the teacher’s name will be automatically removed from the register. The teacher will then have to go through the full accreditation process to complete registration with the Council.

In June 2011, the Council published Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers. Following this, the Teaching Council initiated a consultation process, including publishing a consultation document, about revising minimum entry requirements for teacher training programs. A number of meetings have been held with key stakeholders, including the INTO, on this issue. The Teaching Council has also published an online survey to illicit views on the entry requirement proposals. Please note that the online survey will close at 5 p.m. on Thursday, 7 February 2013. A copy of the consultation document and a link to the survey are available on the Teaching Council website.

Under Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001, teachers employed in recognised schools must be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from public monies. It is the intention of the Minister for Education and Skills to commence Section 30 during the 2012/2013 school year. If you are working in a recognised school, but are not currently registered with the Council, you should apply to the Teaching Council for registration immediately. Further details on the registration process are available on the Teaching Council website.

The Teaching Council is currently developing policy in relation to probation and it is expected that a draft may be issued to the stakeholders, including the INTO, for consultation before Easter 2013. It is anticipated that there will be a transition phase, possibly over a one, two or three year period, between the DES and the Teaching Council in terms of transferring the responsibility and practice/procedures for probation.

The total number of teachers who have applied, been checked and approved eligible for probation at the beginning of January stood at 1,021 teachers. This is in line with the number of probationary teachers at the same time last year. So far, a cut-off date for new applicants in 2013 has not been announced, but was expected as InTouch went to print. NQTs are advised to apply to the Limerick Education Centre, which handles the administrative operation for probation as soon as possible, if they have 50 days, or a possibility of 50 days, from now until the end of the school year, using form OPr, which is available on www.lec.ie

Going shopping? Think union, and choose a Fair Shop!

By choosing a Fair Shop you can be sure you are spending your money in a shop where workers count. Fair Shops recognise their employees’ right to join a trade union and afford them full collective bargaining rights. Increasing assaults on workers’ rights by unscrupulous employers needs to be challenged in the Irish retail sector.

National Council for Special Education News

The NCSE published a circular in January outlining the application process for both resource teaching, and SNA supports for pupils with special educational needs for the 2012/2013 school year.

The circular, which follows on from circulars published each year for the last few years outlining the process, indicated that schools were to submit to the SENO in their area, by 18 January last, a list of pupils who would be leaving the school at the end of the current school year.

In addition to this, the circular outlined the process for applying for resources for the coming school year to local SENOs by 15 March 2013. A copy of the circular is available on the INTO website.

The current National Council for Special Education ended its term of office on 31 December 2012. INTO Assistant General Secretary, Tom O’Sullivan was a member of the Council for the past six years. While a new Council is due to be announced as we go to print, the Minister has announced that Eamon Stack, former Chief Inspector of the DES, will chair that new council. Prior to that, he was principal of a large co-educational post-primary school in Limerick City, which grew from 90 students in his first year, to over a thousand within ten years. During his time as Chief Inspector, Eamon was involved in major structural change, reform and expansion of the Inspectorate, the introduction of Whole School Evaluation, and the publication of inspection reports on schools. He was also instrumental in the establishment of NEPS, the State Examinations Commission, and the NCSE itself. Eamon is also a member of the Board of the National Museum of Ireland, and edits the European Encyclopedia on National Education Systems.
The Mary Immaculate College community was delighted to hear the announcement that one of the College’s students, Patrick Burke, had been selected by a panel of international academics for one of the top prizes in the prestigious Undergraduate Awards competition. Open to students in their final or penultimate year on a degree course, the Undergraduate Awards reward innovation, independent thinking and creativity within coursework across all academic disciplines. This year, the competition attracted 3,890 entrants, from 92 institutions and 64 nationalities.

Patrick Burke graduated with a BEd in Education and Psychology from Mary Immaculate College in 2012 and was the recipient of several awards at his conferring ceremony, including the College Gold Medal for achieving first place on his programme of study and the INTO Vere Foster Medal. Patrick is currently teaching in Scoil Chormaic Community NS in Balbriggan (North Co Dublin). Patrick received his award from President Michael D. Higgins as the Irish winner within the Teacher Education category at the Awards Ceremony. While there were awards made to international winners and Irish winners in separate categories, Patrick was the overall winner in his particular category.

The title of Patrick’s Undergraduate Award-winning essay was, Rewarding results in reading, ‘riting and ‘rithmetic: Literacy and numeracy today and during controversial ‘Payment by Results’ system, which was evident in Ireland during the late 1800s, to warn contemporary educational policy makers that the failures of this crude form of teacher accountability could potentially be repeated and consequently stifle, rather than enhance, future curriculum provision/development. Congratulations, Patrick, on a wonderful achievement.

RE21: Religious Education in a Global-Local World

A conference on religious education will take place on 29–30 August 2013 in University College Cork. The RE21 – Religious Education in a Global-Local World conference starts from two assumptions: (a) that RE has and will continue to have multiple meanings and (b) that local interpretations of RE are increasingly in negotiation with each other as a consequence of globalisation.

The RE21 conference emphasises a child-centred approach, viewing RE (or its absence) as a formative lived experience for pupils. It stresses a bottom-up, research-based approach to the study of RE, rather than the frequently-encountered ‘top down’ approach which starts from prescriptive legal, ideological or religious standpoints. Teachers are invited to attend or to submit a paper for the conference by 28 February 2013. For more information visit http://www.ucc.ie/en/studyofreligions/research/re21/

UNESCO Citywide Read for children

UNESCO City of Literature and Dublin City Libraries have partnered with children’s publishers Little Island on the ‘Citywide Read’ promotion, designed to encourage as many children as possible to read the same books within a given time frame.

This year’s promotion is entitled ‘Dublin’s Reading the Nightmare Club: Do YOU Dare?’ and the books selected are The Nightmare Club series by ‘12 year old Annie Graves’. The books are ‘dead spooky’ and are aimed at 7-10 year olds. Teachers can avail of discounts and free copies with bulk orders at www.littleisland.ie. Author and illustrator visits to schools will be organised culminating in an event on 18 March as part of the St Patrick’s Festival programme. All details on www.dublincityofliterature.ie

All the books in the Nightmare Club series are now available to borrow from Dublin City Public Libraries.

Language teaching and learning

The European Language Label is a European Commission initiative which recognises creative and inventive projects to improve the quality of language teaching and learning. Language projects from any institution are welcome to apply. Projects should be innovative, effective and replicable.

Closing date for applications: Thursday, 28 February 2013. Further information available from www.leargas.ie/ell

Language learner of the year

The Language Learner of the Year award recognises outstanding individual language learners. It is part of the European Language Label initiative. Nominations are invited for the Language Learner of the Year, which highlights the motivation and determination of exceptional language learners, who have tackled the challenges of learning a language and have emerged with significantly improved language skills.

Closing date for applications is also: Thursday, 28 February 2013. See www.leargas.ie/ell
57% of the respondents have personally experienced some type of violence or abuse.
Main types of abuse experienced are use of offensive language, personal comments of an insulting or abusive manner and undermining behaviour.

INTO welcomes the launch, by Minister for Education John O’Dowd, of leaflet Tackling Violence and Abusive Behaviour against Teachers

Speaking at the launch of the guidance leaflet, Gerry Murphy, Northern Secretary said, “INTO welcomes the development of this guidance and the Minister’s decision to officially launch the document.”

He added, “This document has been some time in coming; however it is essential for schools, principals, teachers and governors. It comes following a detailed survey of 6,500 members of the teaching profession which ascertained the level of violence and abuse in our schools”.

Mr Murphy concluded: “The INTO wishes to thank the Minister and his department for funding the survey. We also wish to commend the collaborative approach to the policy development and the formation of this guidance. We, however, must state that there is a clear responsibility on everyone to ensure that our schools are safe places not only for pupils but for those who work in them. Violence and abuse of teachers must be a thing of the past and the perpetrators must be dealt with firmly.”

The report shows...

- 57% of the respondents have personally experienced some type of violence or abuse.
- Main types of abuse experienced are use of offensive language, personal comments of an insulting or abusive manner and undermining behaviour.
- Main perpetrators of abuse are pupils, parents, principals and fellow teachers.
- 50% of respondents have witnessed incidents of violence or abuse in school.
- 65% are aware of their schools’ arrangements for reporting and recording incidents of violence and abuse.
- 30% have never received training in respect of behaviour management.
- According to 32% of respondents, their staff handbooks do not address the issues of violence/abuse against teaching staff.
Vere Foster Medal winners

Vere Foster was the first President of INTO. He used his personal fortune and the profits from his famous copybooks to advance education in Ireland and fund famine relief work.

At the INTO Congress in Belfast in 1956, it was agreed that a gold medal would be presented annually in perpetuity, to a final year student in each of the seven teacher training colleges in Ireland, to commemorate Vere Foster’s great work in education.

The student is selected by his/her principal as the most deserving of the award. Since 1956 INTO has presented a solid gold medal as a suitable memorial tribute to Vere Foster to the student who has achieved the highest performance on teaching practice in St Mary’s University College and Stranmillis University College, Belfast.

Suzanne Maguire

I’m Suzanne Maguire (Russell), 22 years old and have recently graduated from Stranmillis University College, Belfast, with first class honours in the B.Ed in Post Primary School teaching.

Following the completion of my degree I was the appreciative winner of the Vere Foster medal for being the top post primary student in my year, much to my surprise! I had always achieved top marks the whole way through school but would never have expected to attain such an achievement at university level, of which I am truly grateful. Having said that, I would not have accomplished this without the support of the staff at Stranmillis, my parents, husband and peers and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them. I have been fortunate to acquire a full-time teaching job on my first year after graduating.

I am currently teaching mathematics and science in Craigavon Senior High School and am enjoying every minute of it! I am grateful for this opportunity and plan to make the most of it. I believe one of the main aims in education should be the inclusion of all pupils, whether this is academically or not, and I am currently running a netball club within the school and am also taking the choir, along with another teacher. I believe that this gives all pupils the opportunity to be involved in the life of the school, no matter what their academic ability. This also helps me to build relationships with my pupils outside of the classroom, which I find extremely beneficial when it comes to teaching in the classroom.

I would like to give you a little bit of an insight into my time spent during the past four years in teacher training. I arrived on my first day as a slightly nervous, inexperienced student and left as a confident, hardworking teacher. During my first year I was given the opportunity to complete video papers, gain an appreciation and understanding of the NI Curriculum and secure that all important teacher experience on a four week school placement. At the time, I thought we really were being thrown in at the deep end but looking back now I can see how critical it was to get that nerve racking first lesson taught and out of the way at that early stage. After that first week as a student teacher I knew that this was the career path I wanted to pursue and was keen to become as competent a teacher as possible through-out the rest of my time at Stranmillis.

As time went by, relationships were built with lecturers and tutors and, in my opinion, this was of paramount significance. I was in no doubt that I would be offered the support needed if I asked. Being a mathematics and science student, you can imagine how the prospect of a mountain of essays really daunted me, as these would form such a large proportion of my degree classification so I would particularly like to thank Dr Noël Purdy, who gave me the confidence to write essays in an articulate manner and attain excellent marks as a result.

Life as a student teacher was so much more than the lectures, tutorials and assignments. I was given the chance to take part in an ‘alternative placement’ where I went to a nursery school for two weeks and experienced teaching in unfamiliar territory, where the foundations of learning are built. At university the learning environments were vast, ranging from the sand dunes in Donegal to teaching maths in the middle of Belfast city centre. I will always remember the times spent in the classroom learning from more experienced teachers and meeting people on my course who have become lifelong friends.

University experiences are always unique, but I feel that teacher training is something special. I was prepared for teaching in the best way possible; hands on and in the classroom, learning from my mistakes and with the support of university tutors. Learning about learning and developing myself as a reflective practitioner are skills that will stay with me throughout my career. I believe that I was able to ground a solid foundation on which to build my teaching career upon and I will always aim to make a difference in the lives of all my pupils, no matter what their ability, both in and outside the mathematics and science classroom.

Receiving her medal, Suzanne Maguire, B.Ed, Stranmillis University College.
Northern Ireland

Laura Quinn

On 7 December 2012 St Mary’s University College, Belfast, hosted their annual graduate awards ceremony. It was during this evening that I was honoured to be presented with the INTO Vere Foster Medal for the highest mark on teaching practice. This award is dedicated to Vere Foster, who campaigned for the maintenance and improvement of national schools. Receiving this award has shown that my effort and hard work towards becoming the best teacher has not gone unrecognised and that I too have the ability to make a difference in schools.

Teaching practice allowed me to share in the incredible joy teachers experience every day in seeing the difference they make as students gain new insights, become increasingly interested in a subject and learn about themselves. On a daily basis, I had the opportunity to mould the future through impacting the students’ views and understanding, and began to see the importance of fostering creativity, developing character and providing students with the skills they need to reach their potential. Teaching practice taught me so much more than any book or any person could, as it allowed me to experience and overcome each challenge and obstacle for myself.

St Mary’s University College is where I obtained a first class honours degree, Bachelor of Education in Mathematics and Science. Reflecting on my experience, I realise that St Mary’s was much more to me than a place of study. It was there that I developed long-lasting relationships that influenced the type of teacher and person I am today. These relationships went further than just being among my fellow classmates, our lecturers also showed an interest in our academic and personal lives. They treated each student as an individual with different learning styles, interests and experiences. It is these relationships that have influenced the way I teach and will continue to follow me throughout my career.

At present, I have chosen to stay in Northern Ireland, where as a substitute teacher I am continuing to expand the skills, knowledge and experiences I developed at St Mary’s. I hope to obtain a permanent job in the future where I can continue my professional development. For many people, their work is a means to an end, but for me teaching is a true vocation. The interaction with the students during a day of teaching allows me to become much more than an employee but rather a friend, mentor and guide.

Roisin Gallagher

Ciaran McCaffrey, Student Union President accepting the John Cull Medal from Mark Murtagh on behalf of Roisin Gallagher who could not be present.

IMPORTANT Information for Members

Redundancy 2013

The Department of Education (DE) has advised the INTO that the compensation paid to teachers who are the subject of voluntary or compulsory redundancies in this academic year will remain at the level offered in the 2012 redundancy round; i.e. redundancy compensation payments will be made up to a maximum of 90 weeks’ salary based on three times the teacher’s redundancy payment entitlement.

The DE has also advised that this is likely to be the last year in which a maximum of 90 weeks’ compensation will be available.

Documentation will issue to schools this week with further guidance from the employing authorities. Copies of all documentation are also available on the INTO website.

The employers will be required to give the DE estimates of the number of individuals interested in voluntary redundancy by 25 January 2013 and the final date for submitting a request for voluntary redundancy is 15 March 2013.

INTO members who wish to be considered for voluntary or transferred redundancy are advised to contact their principal and employing authority as a matter of urgency. INTO members are reminded that a redundancy ready reckoner and guide to calculating redundancy payments are available on the INTO website www.into.ie. Pension calculators are available on the DE website.

INTO representatives must ensure that there is full consultation with the INTO with regard to any potential staff reductions and that the procedure used to select individuals complies with TNC 2010/1 – Procedure for Handling Teacher Redundancies.

INTO members who have queries on these matters should contact their Northern Committee or CEC representative or the INTO Northern Office on 028 90 381455.
Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to questions on the Croke Park Agreement talks and the Public Service Pay and Pensions Bill

Q1 Why have talks on an extension to the Croke Park Agreement commenced now when the Agreement is due to run until 2014?

The Government, prior to Christmas, indicated that it wanted talks with public service unions on a possible extension to the Croke Park Agreement rather than waiting until the Agreement finished in 2014. The Government said that it needed to secure savings of an additional €1 billion from the public service pay and pensions bill between 2013 and 2015. The Taoiseach also clearly stated that the current guarantees in relation to salary and redundancies enshrined in the Croke Park agreement would remain for as long as the current talks were in process.

Q2 Where did the additional need for €1 billion in savings come from?

The additional €1 billion arises from the fact that there is no growth in the economy and that levels of unemployment remain higher than 14%. In the original recovery plan laid out under the terms of the bailout it was expected that there would be higher growth and employment. The ICTU has consistently argued that the austerity programme would not work and has outlined an alternative view of how economic recovery can happen (see further details at www.ictu.ie).

Q3 Why did the CEC agree to enter talks?

The CEC is charged with managing the interests of the Organisation. The CEC has been considering a longer term strategy to both the Croke Park Agreement itself and any possible successor to the Agreement for the last number of months. Having given careful consideration to the invitation from the Government, and also reviewing potential options with the collapse of the Croke Park Agreement, the CEC decided prior to Christmas to enter talks to see what issues the employer side wished to raise.

Q4 What issues have public service employers raised in the talks?

The public service employers have raised the following:

Productivity and efficiency measures
- Working hours, day and week.
- Overtime/premia/twilight/supervision and substitution, etc.

Flexibility to deploy atypical working arrangements.
- Management flexibility in the use and deployment of hours, rosters etc.
- Extended opening hours of public offices.

Workplace reform
Redeployment
- Simplified and faster redeployment.
- Extended distance for redeployment.
- Exit mechanisms.

Standardisation and modernisation of terms and conditions
- Changes to flextime and work sharing patterns.
- Performance based contracts for management grades.
- Merit and competitive promotion.

Workforce restructuring and performance
- Grade rationalisation and consolidation and streamlining management structures.
- Strengthened performance management processes, including robust measures to manage underperformance.
- Increased staff flexibility in the assignment of work, including duties previously done at more senior levels

Further pay/pensions bill measures
- Pay and pensions measures, including rates of non-core pay.
- Increments.
- Pay reductions “at certain levels”.
- Allowances review.

Q5 What issues have public service unions raised in the talks?

The public service unions have raised the following:
- Management proposals that will make genuine and necessary savings.
- Measures that are fair, particularly for those on low and middle incomes.
- An outcome that can be put to a ballot of union members.
- An adjustment to pension levy by exempting more earnings.
- Measures to ensure the elimination of the two-tier workforce.
- The consolidation of relevant allowances.
- Outsourcing policy and practice.
- Agency workers.
- Redeployment policy and practice.
- Casualisation.
- The moratorium on filling promotion posts.
- Jobs initiatives.
- Waste and duplication elimination measures.
- Reduction in consultancy expenditure.
- Incentivised career break and hours reductions.
- The treatment of State agencies.
- Outstanding third party recommenda-
Q6 What specifically are they looking for from primary teachers and the education sector?

Specific issues in relation to each sector have not, at the time of going to print, been raised. The issues relevant to our members on the broader agenda for the talks include:
- Supervision.
- Increments.
- Work duties.
- Redeployment.
- Pay rates and allowances.
- Pension provisions.

At a sectoral engagement meeting, however, it was outlined by management that each sector would be asked to contribute to the €1 billion saving on a proportionate basis. This means that education, as one of the largest payroll budgets, would be asked in overall terms to contribute and make cuts of at least €350 million in the pay and pensions bill over the next three years.

Q7 What about the cuts that took place under the current Croke Park Agreement?

The terms of the current Croke Park Agreement were designed to protect pay rates and ensure no compulsory redundancies across the Public Service. Independent reports have verified that targeted savings of €3.3 billion in the State payroll and pension costs are being achieved. However, during the course of the Croke Park Agreement, both the previous Government and the current Government have introduced austerity budgets. These have resulted in cutbacks in both staffing and funding of education. All these issues, as well as the unilateral cuts to entry grade salaries for new teachers over the last couple of years are outside the specific terms of the Croke Park Agreement. They have, however, significantly impacted on our members and the school communities they serve.

Q8 How long will talks last?

The timetable laid out at the initial engagement indicated that talks should finish by the end of February at the latest. At the time of going to print, the sectoral engagements, including the education area, have begun. However, it is not possible at this stage to indicate a definitive timescale for the talks.

Q9 Have the cuts to recent graduates been raised in the talks?

At the very first engagement with public service employers, the INTO raised the issue of the unilateral pay cuts imposed on recent teaching graduates over the last two years. This issue, including salaries for future graduates, will be raised by the INTO as part of the overall talks process.

Q10 Will retired teachers be affected?

As already stated, the precise measures by which the government is seeking to save €1 billion in the public service pay and pensions bill are not clear. However, what is clear is that the public service employers intend measures to be spread across both serving and retired public servants.

Q11 Who are the Public Service?

Public servants are defined as those providing services for the state. These include teachers, nurses and other health professionals, members of An Garda Síochána and the defence forces, civil servants, local authority workers, prison officers and firefighters. Workers in semi state sectors, such as the ESB and Bord na Móna, are not considered part of the Public Service.

Q12 How many people work in the Public Service?

Under the Croke Park Agreement the numbers working in the Public Service have reduced from over 320,000 to 292,000 people. This has also resulted in savings of €3.3 billion on an annualised basis to the public service pay bill since the deal was originally agreed.

Q13 What is the Public Services Committee?

The Public Services Committee (PSC) is a committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. It is made up of representatives of the various public service trade unions, representing a wide range of grades and work types. There are a total of 26 unions recognised as representing public servants in Ireland.

Q14 Do all unions have to agree to any agreement which would extend the current Croke Park Agreement?

No. Under protocols which determine industrial relations matters, it is firstly a matter for each trade union to decide whether or not to accept the terms of any proposed agreement. An aggregate vote of all unions adopted the Croke Park Agreement in 2010, although not every individual union voted to accept.

Q15 What happens if the talks break down?

If the current round of talks to try to secure an extension of the current Croke Park Agreement break down, the Taoiseach and government representatives have indicated that they will seek to extract €1 billion from the public service pay and pensions bill by legislation. This was previously done under a measure called The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act (FEMPI). This allowed the government to impose both the original 7% pay cut on all public servants in 2009, and the subsequent imposition of an additional pension levy of 7%. In the event that the government seeks to unilaterally impose pay and pension cuts, the public service unions would have no option but to ballot members for a sustained campaign of industrial action.
The 2012 Cornmarket Cumann na mBunscol awards took place on 30 November in Croke Park. Cornmarket has been the main sponsor of the Cumann na mBunscol National Awards since 2009. These awards merit the units of the organisation that have achieved a significant standard in various categories in the promotion of Ireland’s national games amongst primary schools over the year.

Paul Duggan, Chairman of Cumann na mBunscol remarked on the collaboration; “Cumann na mBunscol are delighted with the continuing sponsorship of Cornmarket. Our aim is the promotion of Gaelic Games in our primary schools and the Cornmarket Awards recognise best practice in such promotion amongst the teaching profession ar fud na tire. Cornmarket fits the brand.

Ivan Ahern, Director of Cornmarket commented; “Cumann na mBunscol do immense work on the ground promoting Gaelic games in primary schools. These awards recognise the individuals who nurture young Irish children and instil the true heart of Gaelic games.”

For more information on the 2014 Cumann na mBunscol Awards and how to nominate your school, please contact secretary.cnmb@gaa.ie

Award winners

**Pat Trainor Hall of Fame**

**Perpetual Trophy**

Pat Coen

**Public Relations**

Winner: Cumann na mBunscol, Co Aontroma

Runner-up: Cumann na mBunscol, Co an Dúin

Joint 3rd: Cumann na mBunscol, Co Thoirbraid Árann

Joint 3rd: Cumann na mBunscol, Co Ard Mhacha

Joint Merit Award: Cumann na mBunscol, Co Fearr Manach

Joint Merit Award: Cumann na mBunscol, Co an Chabháin

**Annual Fixtures Booklet**

Winner: Cumann na mBunscol, Co Baile Átha Cliath

Runner-up: Cumann na mBunscol, Co an Chláir

3rd: Cumann na mBunscol, Co Phort Láirge

**School of the Year (1-4 classroom teachers)**

Winner: Bunscol na mBráithre

**School of the Year (4-8 classroom teachers)**

Winner: St. Malachy’s PS, Co Laois

Runner-up: Kilcoole PS, Co Na Gaillimhe

3rd: Mount St. Michael’s PS, Co Antrim

**School of the Year (8+ classroom teachers)**

Winner: Kilcoole PS, Co Na Gaillimhe

Runner-up: Kilcoole PS, Co Chill Mhantáin

3rd: Cumann na mBunscol, Co Antrim

**Promotion of Gaelic Games and Culture**

Winner: Kilcoole PS, Co Na Gaillimhe

Runner-up: Kilcoole PS, Co Chill Mhantáin

3rd: Cumann na mBunscol, Co Antrim

**Cristóir, Dún Bletise, Co Luimnigh**

**Award winners**

**Cristóir, Dún Bletise, Co Luimnigh**

**Joint Merit Award**

Winner: Cumann na mBunscol, Co an Chabháin

Winner: Bunscol na mBráithre

Winner: St. Malachy’s PS, Co Laois

Runner-up: Ballagh NS, Co Tipp.

3rd: Dualla NS, Co Tipp.

**School of the Year (4-8 classroom teachers)**

Winner: Sunday’s Well BNS, Co Cork

Winner: Scoil Mhuire, Co Donegal

**School of the Year (8+ classroom teachers)**

Winner: St. Brigid’s PS, Co Armagh

Winner: Ballymena, Co Antrim

3rd: Cumann na mBunscol, Co Na Gaillimhe

**Born to run**

It may seem like an obvious fact, but the first sport a child partakes in is running. If the skills of kicking, catching or going on a solo run are in short supply, the child can still run. Open the classroom doors at break time in any school up and down the country and watch the girls and boys take flight. It looks almost instinctive. On the strength of such evidence, every June the Santry Primary School Athletics take place in London will inspire children to partake in athletics in all the schools in our capital city.

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**School of the Year (8+ classroom teachers)**

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Every year the numbers grow and schools have to be prompt with their entries as places are limited. The great success of the Olympic Games in London will inspire children to partake in sports and the Santry games might be the first step on the road to the five rings. So you have plenty of time to prepare. June beckons, get ready, visit our website www.cnmb.ie and see our dvd of the games from last June, you might see someone you know. See you there!

Dates for this year are 27, 28, 29 and 30 May and 3 and 6 June.

Entries open on 1 February to 28 February so don’t delay and enter your school today on www.cnmb.ie

Cumann na mBunscol Ath Cliath launched its new website www.cnmb.ie in the Teachers’ Club on 19 November.

Uachtaran of Cumann na mBunscol Ath Cliath, Tadhg Kenny, thanked the committee, under the guidance of David Gough, for bringing this project to fruition. He also praised the work of Gerry Murphy for his work on the old website. Indeed that website served the Cumann very well over many years and was awarded first place a number of years ago at the yearly awards of Cumann na mBunscol Naisiúnta.

The new website is a wonderful tool of communication for schools and the Uachtaran expressed the desire that all schools would gain maximum benefit from it. Cumann na mBunscol is greatly encouraged by its use so far and it has greatly enhanced the registration process and has kept teachers informed on the progress of schools in the various leagues.

Its ease of access will lead to a very efficient communication tool for schools and teachers and it will complement the workings of Cumann na mBunscol Naisiúnta.

InTouch January/February 2013
The Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI) has been established to provide information, analysis and economic policy alternatives. In their January 2013 Quarterly Economic Observer (QEO), the NERI outlines expectations for the Republic of Ireland’s economy for the next three years. Projections are pessimistic, highlighting an ongoing economic stagnation as a result of continued contractions to domestic demand, sustained uncertainty at a European level and a related slow recovery of the international economy.

Over the next three years NERI project:
- annual GDP growth of less than 1% per annum for the next two years and 1.8% in 2015;
- a further contraction of the domestic economy following Budget 2013; and
- a further increase in unemployment in 2013 and 2014.

Given this, the prospect of higher budgetary deficits, larger numbers unemployed, further austerity measures and the contracting domestic economy leads them to question the Government’s capacity to reach its fiscal targets in 2015 and to limit the increase in the national debt without significant

Chart 2.1 Trends in the real value of domestic demand (Republic of Ireland) – seasonally adjusted quarterly data
Source: CSO (2012b): Quarterly National Accounts

Chart 4.1 Ireland’s gross income distribution – households
Note: The differently shaded bars refer to household gross income quintile groups.
Source: NERI microeconomic model using CSO SILC data.

Chart 4.2 Ireland’s disposable income distribution – households
Note: The differently shaded bars refer to household gross income quintile groups – as in chart 4.1.
Source: NERI microeconomic model using CSO SILC data.

Chart 4.3 Ireland’s Gross Income Distribution – individuals
Notes: Children aged less than 17 years have been excluded from the analysis. The data corresponds to a total of 3.36 million adults. For reasons of presentation, the vertical axis has been capped at 100,000 individuals although in a number of the €1,000 categories the numbers exceed that total. These are: €0 (297,000 individuals), €1,000–€2,000 (144,000), €10,000–€11,000 (160,000), €11,000–€12,000 (115,000), €12,000–€13,000 (130,000), €13,000–€14,000 (125,000) and €14,000–€15,000 (103,000).
Source: NERI microeconomic model using CSO SILC data.
changes in policy approach as well as improvement in international conditions.

**Household gross income**

Chart 4.1 shows the number of households with different income levels, grouped in €1,000 income bands. The height of the bars represents the number of households in each of these groups. In 2009 the median income (representing the income of the middle household in the income distribution) was almost €42,000. In the same year the mean income was just over €56,500.

As the chart shows, the income distribution is highly skewed, with more than 60% of households having an income below the mean average.

Among the key points on the distribution of gross income across households are:

- 33% of households have a gross income of less than €30,000.
- 56% of households have a gross income of less than €50,000.
- 62% of households have a gross income below the average (mean) household income.
- The top 30% of households have a gross income of more than €70,000 per annum.
- The top 20% of households have a gross income of more than €80,000 per annum.
- 14% of households have a gross income above €100,000 per annum.
- 4% of households have gross incomes above €200,000 per annum.

**Household disposable income**

The distribution of household disposable income is outlined in Chart 4.2 – it takes account of income taxes and social insurance contributions paid by households and therefore represents the income they have to live on (dispose of) each year.

Like Chart 4.1, the graph shows the number of households with different income levels, grouped in €1,000 income bands, with the height of the bars representing the number of households in each of these groups. In 2009 the mean disposable household income was €45,950 per annum and the median disposable household income was €38,255; equivalent to €881 per week and €733 per week respectively.

**Individual income**

Graph 4.3 shows the number of individuals with different income levels, grouped in €1,000 income bands. The height of the bars represents the number of individuals in each of these groups. In the case of income groups where there are more than 100,000 individuals the bars are capped at 100,000 with details included in the notes to the chart. These groups correspond to individuals with no incomes and those dependent on rates of social welfare benefits and pensions.

From 1 January 2011 the Government abolished the health levy and the income levy and replaced it with the Universal Social Charge.

However many teachers may have overpaid health levy contributions during the years 2009 – 2010 and are therefore entitled to a refund of their overpayment. These refunds are tax free. Overpayments may have arisen in distinct and separate circumstances.

**Category one**

If a teacher earned less than €26,000 (according to their P60 for the relevant year) in any of those calendar (i.e. tax) years but earned over €500 in some of the weeks that they worked:

Likely beneficiaries in this category would be substitute teachers, teachers who began teaching in any of the years 2009 – 2010, teachers returning from career break, job sharing or other leave that kept them off salary or on reduced salary for part of any of the years 2009 – 2010.

Did you work any incomplete calendar year and earn less than €26,000 (see your P60) in any year during the period 2009 – 2010?

As you most likely paid the health levy as part of your PRSI deductions then you are almost certain to be due a refund.

According to the Department of Social Protection they had paid out around €10,000,000 to approximately 26,000 claimants by 1 February 2012; an average of €385 per claimant.

**Category two**

Widows, widowers, medical card holders and lone parents

Teachers who are widowed and were in receipt of the social welfare survivors’ (widows’ or widowers’) pension, or teachers who are medical card holders or certain lone parents were exempt from the health levy but may have had health levy deducted in error from their salary. If that is the case, then they too are due refunds of health levy and can claim refunds for each of the years 2009/2010 that apply to them. In those cases the health levy refunds will be up to 4% of all salary for the relevant period.

**Teachers in category one**

… should write to the PRSI Refunds Section, Department of Social Protection, Oisin House, 212/213 Pearse Street, Dublin 2, enclosing their PPS number and a copy of their P60 to initiate their refund claim.

There is currently a backlog of claims being processed so act soon to expedite any refund due. Refunds of up to €1,040 tax free are available depending on circumstances, (e.g. in 2010 a teacher who earned €26,000 and who was charged health levy at 4% would have overpaid health levy by €1,040). Smaller amounts would apply to earlier years as the rates were lower in 2008 and part of 2009.

**Teachers in category two**

… should also write to the PRSI Refunds Section enclosing their PPS number, P60 showing amount of PRSI/health levy paid and details of their grounds for exemption i.e. details of their social welfare survivors’ pension, or medical card holder or lone parent status etc.

Visit www.welfare.ie for further information.

Seamus Long, former CEC Representative, District 13.
A new website www.helpmykidlearn.ie for parents and guardians was launched in 2012. It was developed as part of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) national strategy ‘Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life’.

www.helpmykidlearn.ie gives many creative ideas for activities that parents can do with their children to improve their child’s speaking, reading, writing and maths skills. The website highlights the way children learn as part of their everyday lives, especially the things they can learn at home and when they are out and about with their parents. The website can be used by anyone caring for children. The term ‘parent’ is used on the website to keep it simple but it includes guardians, family members (grandparents, aunties and uncles) and childminders of children aged 0 – 12 years.

**What’s on the website?**

www.helpmykidlearn.ie mixes the old with the new – from card games and hopscotch that help practice maths, to e-books that can be read out to the child and apps you can download to a smartphone. Information is broken down into five age groups: zero – two years, three – four years, five – seven years, eight – nine years and ten – 12 years. Activities are organised into five main areas: talk, play, read, write and count. The website includes audio and video content to support parents who have literacy difficulties themselves. There are also many links to other websites. From the homepage, a parent enters the child’s age and they are then brought directly to the page that contains information and activities for that child’s age group.

**Why was the website developed?**

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) developed Help My Kid Learn as part of the DES National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011 – 2020. The overall aim is to build awareness of, and resource the important role that parents and guardians can easily play in supporting literacy and numeracy learning. NALA worked with 40 stakeholders to develop the website, including the INTO, organisations from pre-school and primary education, libraries and literacy specialists. The website www.helpmykidlearn.ie aims to support and provide a single reference point for parents and guardians so they can better understand their important role in their children’s literacy and numeracy development. Many ideas for the website were received from the different stakeholder groups and they are now helping to let parents and guardians know about the website.

The DES sent a mailing to primary schools in December 2012 including promotional material for www.helpmykidlearn.ie. Further posters, leaflets and bookmarks are available by contacting NALA.

NALA hope you will make time to visit www.helpmykidlearn.ie and recommend the website to others.

**Other resources**

Website: www.nala.ie  
NALA’s distance learning website: www.writeon.ie  
NALA’s YouTube channel:  
http://www.youtube.com/user/nationaladultliteracy  
Follow NALA on facebook at:  
http://www.facebook.com/nalaireland

Contact MMURRAY@NALA.IE if you would like promotional material or if you would like to give NALA feedback on the website.
The story of the Froebel College is that of many gallant women and some men of vision. It is the story of a small college, with a strong vision of how education might best serve the child.

The Golden Jubilee of the College was celebrated in 1993. However, its origins go back to a small training centre in the Dominican Convent, Falls Road. The annals for 1934 record:

“In July a Froebel summer course was given by Miss Hilda Gull of Liverpool University, to several of our sisters and to teachers in different convents in the city. All enjoyed the course and found the lectures very helpful.”

Soon after the course a decision was taken by the Dominican Sisters to provide teacher training for their sisters and other people interested in teaching in their junior schools through the National Froebel Foundation in London (NFF). Following the summer school a small training centre was opened in a classroom in St Dominic’s High School, Fall Road, Belfast.

Froebel accreditation was possible by correspondence and this appears to be the route taken initially by the Dominican Trustees though there is a record of a sister going to London in the 1930s to sit her examinations.

One may ask what attracted the Dominican trustees to the Froebel philosophy apart from a pragmatic route to a teaching qualification? What they appear to have recognised was Froebel’s authentic view of the child as the chief agent in his/her own learning and the importance of developing the child’s innate creativity. This reflected the Dominican motto Veritas, seeker after truth, authenticity and respect for the child as a creator. A chapter on education in their constitutions described the teacher’s function as:

“To stimulate the child’s God-given intelligence... therefore ...a coadjutor, and relatively subordinate.”

Move to Sion Hill

The Froebel training classes took place in Falls Road until 1943. World War Two brought great social changes to the United Kingdom, chiefly through the recommendations of the Beveridge Report. As part of the welfare state secondary education was to be accessible to all. One of the consequences of the move was an increasing demand for places in St Dominic’s High School, Falls Road, where the small Froebel unit was housed. In 1943 the tiny centre moved to Sion Hill, Blackrock, County Dublin.

The Sion Hill community had experience of teacher education. Already on the campus was St Catherine’s College for Home Economics, and a Montessori College with international recognition. As the principal of the Froebel College was later to explain to the NFF Secretary, there was “quite a collegiate atmosphere”. There were different schools of thought in Sion Hill at that time as to the best approach.
for training teachers: pre-arranged materials or learning through play.

Location of the College
In the early days the College was scattered in many different locations. About 1950 it got a more permanent abode in 47 Mount Merrion Avenue, where a lovely waterlily pond was placed so that the students could study pond life. At the end of the 1950s the College moved to a brand new building.

Sister Ann FitzGerald, one of the first four students, gives a lively pen picture of their surroundings: “A small rectangular room with no view, two narrow tables, four or five chairs, a teacher’s desk, blackboard and chalk.”

However, the list of professors was formidable, their discussions were lively and they were allowed to work quite a lot on their own. As she remarks, “how trusting we all were, parents included” as they began their three year course. Ann notes that, apart from the freedom accorded them, there was nothing particularly new or different in the education approach. However, the Trustees now decided that if they were to gain accreditation at A Certificate level they would need to send someone to study in the Froebel Institute in London. Their choice was a young graduate, Sister Simeon Tarpey. On her return, things changed and a full Froebelian programme was put in place.

Accreditation sought
Correspondence between Sion Hill and the NFF, London, from 1944 indicates intent to pursue the A Certificate on the one hand and reluctance to take on more obligations in Ireland, especially a Catholic institution on the other. However, Sister Simeon, an excellent networker, had made many contacts during her time in London and it was agreed that a full examination of the Centre would take place in June 1950. A very talented group of students was presented and was successful though the NFF report was highly critical, almost harsh, but encouraging.

Many practical recommendations were made: more emphasis on child study, stronger links between theory and practice, students to fully understand how concrete materials aided children’s understanding of number, art work to be more child-centred.

The College was encouraged to run summer courses, inviting top speakers on progressive education and to place students in mainstream primary schools (as distinct from private junior schools). The following summer a two week course was held in Sion Hill with several speakers from the NFF presenting papers and holding workshops. Members of the Inspectorate from Marlborough Street attended and continued to maintain an interest in what was going on in Sion Hill. Students were placed in primary schools (in particular the newly opened schools in Ballyfermot) though as yet the College had not been recognised.

The 1950s saw Froebelian practice fully implemented and Sister Simeon now used her energies in achieving recognition by the Department of Education, following up every letter, every visit, ignoring rebuffs. On a snowy Friday, 7 February 1959, she and the Trustees attended a meeting in Marlborough Street to discuss the issues. The matters raised were standards in Irish, mathematics, needlework and matters of finance. Agreement was reached on the first two items and in the case of needlework, the gentlemen asked if the sisters could “do a run and fell seam”!

Finance
It was clear that the College would have to be self-funding and this seemed possible at the time.

Recognition granted
In August 1959 a letter was received granting recognition. This was a huge milestone in the history of the College. Now able to train teachers for primary schools (a three year full-time course), numbers increased, new courses were developed. Among the courses was a unique one year course for the training of graduates and a two year part-time inservice course carrying an increment. It can be said that these courses played a part in preparing teachers for the implementation of the New Primary School Curriculum which came on stream in 1971. To assist in the growth and understanding of the Froebelian approach, Miss Mary Haskell of the NFF spent a number of weeks working with students in Ballyfermot primary schools; staff development continued with workshops

An Associate College of Trinity College
By the end of the 60s the NFF announced it was withdrawing from accreditation but agreed to remain open until the Froebel College had found a new education partner. In 1976 an exciting announcement was made: “The Board of Trinity College is pleased to announce that together with those responsible for the government of the training colleges, it has approved a scheme of partnership which will enable students of St Mary’s (Marino) and Sion Hill (Froebel), to embark upon a programme leading to our B.ED degree. The relationship between Trinity and the training colleges will be essentially the same as that at present prevailing between TCD and CICE, who it should be added have welcomed the new arrangements.”

Maynooth
This partnership with Trinity College and the Associate Colleges continued for over 30 years until small stand-alone colleges of education came under threat. Efforts to bring the associate colleges more closely together failed in the early ‘noughties’

On 21 April 2010, the Trustees announced that Froebel College, with all its staff and programmes, would move to National University of Ireland (NUI), Maynooth in September 2013. The Board of Governors, the Trustees and staff are currently preparing for this transition.

Froebel College will be the first teacher education college in Ireland to fully integrate onto a university campus. There will be a Froebel Primary and Early Childhood Education Centre as part of the Department of Education in NUI Maynooth. This will be a part of a new purpose-built flagship education building to be complet ed in 2014. NUI Maynooth will then cater for all spheres of teacher education from early childhood, through primary and secondary to adult and community education. In many ways it is a good day for the College but a sad loss to Sion Hill.

Maura Duggan OP, Former Principal of Froebel College of Education
Great Teachers: Born or Taught?

Thinking about your practice...

When Deborah Ball visited Ireland at the end of November 2012, she argued that the education of teachers should be focused on practice. “What’s new in that?” you might ask. “Hasn’t teaching practice always been part of teacher preparation?” But when Deborah Ball talks about practice in initial teacher education and continuing professional development, she has something a little different in mind...

Drawing from her research on teachers’ mathematical knowledge and how beginning teachers learn to teach, Deborah contrasts teaching with other professions and trades such as airline pilots, hairdressers, electricians, midwives and surgeons, to explain the difference. She says: these areas of work have done something teaching hasn’t – they’ve specified the capabilities that someone feedback - until they become skilled practitioners. The learning is carefully sequenced, and first practised in safe ways; pilots, for example, practise in simulators before they fly planes. Gradually, more and more of what the novices do resembles real practice, in real settings, but it still happens under supervision of say, a co-pilot. Finally, novices in other fields undergo performance assessments

‘People don’t fly planes because they like airplanes and want to try out to see if they can make them fly... That’s not how people become pilots.’

qualified in the trade or profession must master before being allowed to practise independently.

The training for all these specialists is focused on skills that experts in the field deem essential for responsible practice.

Furthermore, these specialists learn through repeated systematic practice - under supervision, with

ability to teach is something you’re born with and that anything you need to learn can be picked up on the job during the first few years.

Yet, as teachers when we create learning experiences for children in our classes, we often use methods associated with other jobs and professions. We continually specify the learning (using content objectives), we provide opportunities for children to practise, rehearse and fine-tune their learning in different ways (e.g., writing the numbers 1 to 5 in sand and in the air, making and counting different groups of 5 and adding groups to a total of 5 in Junior Infants); we regularly invite children to show their learning (e.g., a performance assessment to tell at a glance the number of objects in a group, up to 5); and we give honest feedback on achievement based on the learning intentions (e.g., orally, and in written form) not just for children but for their parents too.

For teachers, Deborah argues that receiving expert feedback on aspects of teacher practice is key.

To support the development of skilful teaching, she has developed www.teachingworks.org which is designed to identify and build the resources necessary for responsible teaching practice.
Education and NCCA at: www.ncca.ie/deborahball. Here you’ll see some video footage of maths teaching, some by Deborah herself. She uses this footage to probe our thinking about features of good teaching and learning in maths.

Deborah mentions the importance of using good assessment strategies and sharing information with parents — you’ll find teacher resources for Assessment for Learning at http://action.ncca.ie/primary and updated resources on reporting to parents at: www.ncca.ie/primaryreporting.

If you have P/T meetings coming up in the spring term, you might like to share some ideas with parents on how they can help their children and short (2-3 minutes) video with maths. You’ll find tip sheets clips of parents and children in junior infants to 2nd class at: www.ncca.ie/primaryparents.

Be sure to return to the primary developments webpage too www.ncca.ie/primary which will include information on further development of the Maths Curriculum, beginning in Spring 2013.

**Aistear... and primary teachers**

**Here are some answers to questions about Aistear which were raised by delegates at the INTO Education Conference in Galway.**

**What is Aistear?**
Aistear is a curriculum framework for children from birth to six years. It describes the types of learning that are important for children in these early years.

**How can Aistear help me as an infant teacher?**
One of the biggest differences between Aistear and the Infant Curriculum is play. Aistear shows the importance of play for children’s early learning and development and how this methodology can be used in infant classrooms. The Framework has a sample daily plan (User guide, pages 17–18) and a list of low-cost and free resources for play (Guidelines, pages 103–106). Aistear also has examples of how you might use assessment methods to gather evidence of children’s learning and lots of practical ideas for working with parents.

**Where can I find Aistear?**
Aistear is available at www.ncca.ie/earlylearning. Contact your local Education Centre if your school has not yet collected two free print copies. You can also purchase additional copies from Government Publications (01 647 6834 or publications@opw.ie) for €5.00 each.

**What is the Aistear Toolkit?**
The Aistear Toolkit is an online collection of resources mostly created for and by infant teachers and early childhood practitioners. Here, you’ll find videos, presentations, podcasts, and information sheets to help you get started with Aistear. Many of these resources focus on play and show how some teachers plan for, organise and use play in their classrooms. You’ll find these by visiting www.ncca.ie/aistear toolkit and clicking on ‘Teaching through play.’

**Aistear is mentioned a lot in the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. How important is it for primary teachers?**
Aistear will help shape the primary developments, beginning with the new language curriculum for primary schools which will highlight the importance of developing children’s communication skills, nurturing positive dispositions (e.g., interest in reading), learning through play and working with parents.

**Where can I learn more about Aistear?**
Contact your local Education Centre if you’re interested in attending an Aistear workshop developed through partnership with the Association of Teacher Education Centres (ATECI) and NCCA.

Authors: Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick (Deputy CEO, NCCA), Arlene Forster (Director Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA).
As teachers, we all know that you can’t give a lesson unless students are settled, attentive and ready to learn. Both as a teacher in St Declan’s School, Ballsbridge, for the last 13 years and as a behaviour management consultant going in and out of schools and organisations, two things strike me about behaviour management.

Firstly, when talking to colleagues, I am constantly amazed by the lack, or more often absence, of training in the area of behaviour management. And I am not referring merely to experienced teachers who trained 5, 10, 15, 20 years ago. On the contrary, just last week, I met a recently qualified teacher in Dublin who confirmed this saying that, in her training, she had received one two hour lecture on behaviour management. A whole two hours! And secondly, over the years in St Declan’s School I often come across a new student who has come from a national primary school of one kind or another, I look at their behaviour and I wonder how, without training, their previous teachers were able to meet their other students’ fundamental right to learn? Time and time again I have encountered stressed teachers being held hostage by a few disruptive students to the detriment of the class lesson.

Coupled with these observations is the swell of SNA cutbacks and reduced access to supports such as resource and learning support. So, in the midst of this recession agenda, principals strive to meet both the Epsen Paper’s remit of inclusion in mainstream education and the Disability Bill’s call to arms of every child’s right to education in a mandate towards education for all. For years the curriculum load has increased. I am not sure how the Department of Education and Skills expects all this to magically happen given the paradox of reduced supports versus increased demands? And for those challenging children who are lucky enough to get an assessment, the NEPs, occupational therapy and/or speech and language therapy reports often arrive into schools with a slew of ‘recommendations’ accompanied by a folder stuffed with photocopied resources to be covered. No wonder teachers are stressed to the gills and tearing their hair out.

Without training, teachers need to move from ground zero to trained, competent and confident professionals in the area of behaviour management, in order to meet the demands of the primary school curriculum. The powers that be have made moves in this direction. Organisations such as NEPS and the SESS have produced well thought out and useful guidelines and resources on behaviour management – available online, and, of course, the SPHE curriculum itself. More recently, the NCSE’s announcement to skill up one teacher per school in behaviour management offers stressed teachers a ray of hope. And if teachers are willing to take matters into their own hands, there is a new Masters in Trinity entitled Positive Behaviour Management.

These developments are definitely a step in the right direction. But will this be enough? When we consider the area of behaviour management, both the internet and books are full of all the what to do. What’s missing is more of the how, how to do of behaviour management, – how to deliver practical strategies that work and support students on the road to self discipline – as the lessons of the day proceed. My take on behaviour management is simple. It’s like any other teaching task. You have to look at students’ needs, in this case behavioural, think about it and then to make a plan. Just to note, in terms of the primary school curriculum and

«(By the way, you need a blue card to go to play at yard time.)»
uncovered

record keeping, most, if not all, lessons and strategies on behaviour management can be written up through the English and Mathematics curriculum as well as through SPHE. It’s all there, I’ve checked. In fact, I have even been assessed on it in a WSE last year! In my experience, what teachers need to do is to develop a thinking mindset for behaviour management – to have a plan but more importantly, to be able to work ‘on the hoof’ so to speak when encountering challenging disruptive behaviour during lessons.

As a behaviour management consultant, I remember observing in a primary school in Canada. It was a class of 11/12 year olds and my first classroom to visit. I had met with teachers early in the day and they shuddered when I said that I was going to Room 5. I had no information on the children except that it was identified as a “very challenging class”. When I asked how the first lesson, English, had gone she rolled her eyes to heaven and said “chairs flying across the room.” I took a deep breath and began observing, as the ‘expert’. Just to note it was my first time coming in to a class as a behaviour management consultant ever – no pressure then!

Within minutes a boy began to rock on his chair dangerously and look to me at the back of the room. When he continued I went quietly to the boy and said: “Hi I’m Miss Clarke and I am visiting today.” He told me his name was Fred – delighted with the attention. Then I said: “Hi Fred, nice to meet you. Can you stand up for a minute?” and he did and I went on with “So Fred, it seems that sitting on a chair is a bit tricky for you at the moment so I will mind your chair for now and come back to you in a few minutes” and I whipped the chair away to the back of the classroom as a look of horror fell across his face. I returned to my observation chair feeling triumphant thinking – that’s him sorted! For the record Fred didn’t move a muscle for the rest of the lesson.

Within five minutes six other students began to swing in their chairs! It was my turn to be horrified. I had a mutiny on my hands and I was supposed to be the ‘expert’ in the room. So I wracked my brains (in the same way teachers have to rethink for example, a reading lesson when the children are not getting it) and I made my plan. I returned Fred’s chair and I picked up two sets of playing cards, one red, one blue, from the teacher’s desk. Then I went around the room and placed a card on each student’s desk – making no comment. The children looked at the cards briefly and then looked at me as if I was mad. I wasn’t sure myself at this point. At the end of the lesson, and before the follow on worksheet, I spoke to the class in this way. “Morning children. As you can see I have put a card on your desk. It really doesn’t matter what number the card is but it really matters what colour the card is. If I am happy with how you are sitting you have a blue card. If you got a red card you need to think about how you are sitting while you are doing your calculations so I can change it to a blue card. By the way, you need a blue card to go to play at yard time. Oh yes, and your card is your ticket to the yard so if you lose your card, you will have to stay in for break. If you still have a red card we can take some time during yard time to practice sitting. Let’s see how we go.”

As they began their sums the cards were 40% red and 60% blue but most of the students began to sit properly – the mutiny had been averted. Accordingly, I floated through the class changing red cards to blue cards. Eventually there was only one student left with a red card. At yard time I collected the ticket cards at the door as the remaining student glared at me defiantly. I went to her and said “So at your age you obviously know how to sit on a chair. I need you to show me that you can sit on a chair properly for two minutes and then you can go so whenever you are ready.” Three minutes passed in defining silence so I continued, “Well it’s your yard time, my break is later. You can decide to spend it here with me not sitting properly or you can choose to sit on a chair properly for two minutes and then go play with your friends. It’s up to you how you want to spend your break.” There was a deep sigh. Then she complied and went off out to yard.

In this example the student’s challenging behaviours were managed in a quiet and discreet way in order to minimise disruption to the class lesson. When I evaluated my approach in this situation I realised that I had called upon a number of Dr Bill Roger’s strategies in order to amend these students’ behaviours. The news of this incident spread amongst the staff and, with no further input from me on this particular strategy, the teachers at this school adapted this idea in a number of ways. One teacher developed an individual behaviour management plan for a particularly challenging student. Two teachers repeated this behaviour management strategy with playing cards and used it for sitting, for noise level and even for handwriting, with great success.

One teacher used green and red unifix cubes instead of cards. This teacher developed the strategy to include a self esteem boost for students by adding green blocks together forming a tower on the desk for those students who were particularly well behaved. All of these adaptations stemmed from the teachers engaging in a process of thinking about how to change/improve/use this strategy productively in their own classrooms. And all from a humble deck of cards, well two actually!

So when we consider behaviour management, what can be concluded from the concerns and issues outlined here? It seems after all, that there is indeed light at the end of the tunnel. As teachers continue to explore current resources, waiting for training to become available, my advice is to be brave and take a look at a deck of cards!

Readers, if you try out this strategy and find a way that works for you feel free to send your comments to askadie@hotmail.ie.

Adie Clarke originally trained as an AMI Montessori teacher. She went on to Trinity to attain a Bachelor of Education and a Masters in Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist. She has been teaching at St Declan’s School, Ballsbridge, for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties for 13 years. In recent years Adie has specialised as a Behaviour Management Consultant, working with schools, parents and various other organisations both here and in Canada.

Contact Adie at askadie@hotmail.com
The tenth Safer Internet Day will be held on 5 February 2013 and promises to be one of the most important internet safety awareness-raising initiatives held to date. Now, more than ever, a safe online environment for young people is essential while enabling them to get all the benefits from the digital world.

Webwise, the Irish internet safety awareness raising centre, will be coordinating this year’s campaign which centres on the theme ‘connect with respect’. While the main focus of a lot of the work on the campaign this year is on young teens, there are still plenty of activities to interest primary students and teachers.

**The Webwise Primary Programme**

The first ever internet safety teaching resource for Irish primary teachers, was launched on Safer Internet Day 2012. To date, hundreds of these booklets have been sent out to primary schools and many young pupils have benefited from the core internet safety messages contained therein.

The booklet supports teachers in the instruction of safe and responsible internet use as part of their SPHE curricular provision. Developed by Webwise and Stay Safe (Child Abuse Prevention Programme), it is designed to further address aspects of both the personal safety and media education objectives of the SPHE curriculum.

The first part of the booklet focuses on skills needed for surfing the web such as safe searching, downloading images and online verification. Skills required to safely communicate online or by text message and issues relating to sharing personal information, cyberbullying and dealing with spam are all examined in the second part of the booklet.

**Class activity**

Why not start your own internet safety class for this Safer Internet Day? Email internetsafety@pdst.ie to get your copy of the [Webwise Primary Programme](#) if you do not have it already.

A new internet safety module of the Garda Primary Schools’ Programme was also launched last February and it has quickly become a vital part of the Garda Stiochána involvement in schools. Delivered by community gardaí, the ‘Respectful Online Communication’ talks are for fifth class students and cover a range of topics including cyberbullying.

On completion of the module, pupils will be able to identify what type of online activity is illegal and list rules about meeting people in person they first met online. They will also be able to outline plans for coping with online harassment and bullying.

The programme was launched last year on Safer Internet Day by Garda Commissioner Martin Callinan on the same day the Webwise Primary Programme was launched.

It addresses personal safety issues that arise through communicating using new media and recognises the challenges that children and young people face in modern society, particularly when using new technologies. It also aims to foster a sense of care and respect for others online or when using mobile phones and to equip children with the skills to deal effectively with cyberbullying.

The success of Safer Internet Day 2013 relies on everyone getting involved – and that includes teachers at all levels. Please get involved this year to ensure that young people feel supported in their online activities and can continue to ‘connect with respect’.

Compiled by PDST Technology in Education.

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**Spring and summer ICT courses**

The new spring schedule for ICT courses commencing in January and February from PDST Technology in Education (formerly NCTE) has now been published. Most courses focus on the use of ICT to support literacy and/or numeracy development. Contact your local education centre to book a place. For details, see [www.ncte.ie/courseschedule](#)

Now is also the time to think about applying for a whole school summer course funded by PDST Technology in Education, to be held in your own school for you and your colleagues. Contact your local education centre for more information about how to access whole school training. Please note that early deadlines apply to whole school summer courses.

The list of scheduled summer courses open to all primary teachers will soon be published, with updates available on [www.ncte.ie/training](#). These will include both online and face to face courses. Why not subscribe to the PDST Technology in Education email newsletter to keep in touch, via the website [www.ncte.ie](#)
using electronic books

Electronic books offer a fun, interactive, multimedia rich approach to sharing stories with children. Although teaching reading has traditionally focused on using conventional printed books, there is a growing shift towards interactive reading approaches, some of which may incorporate digital media. Accompanied by a variety of interactive features such as animation, sound effects, hyperlinked vocabulary, hidden hotspots and gradual revelation of text – e-books have the potential to further involve young learners in the reading process. While some studies highlight the impact of using electronic storybooks for independent learning purposes (e.g. Moody, 2010), this article explores ideas on how teachers can create and use electronic books with a whole class using the shared reading approach. E-books have the potential to be motivating, challenging and a colourful visual resource in the primary school classroom – use them to increase children’s interest, involvement and understanding of stories.

Why use electronic books in the primary school classroom?

Traditional simplistic notions of literacy as involving only the reading (decoding and comprehending) and writing (encoding and communicating) of print based texts are no longer adequate (Moody, 2010). There is a growing sense that reading teaching can be more interactive, supported by multimedia modes that provide visual and sound representations ( Grimshaw, 2007, Moody, 2010). In order to take advantage of the interactive features of electronic books and their ability to establish a context or promote a mood, the teacher can engage young students in shared reading of the story with an entire class (Labbo & Kuhn, 2000). A projector can be used to enlarge the image onto a screen while the teacher reads the story aloud. This digitized book can provide the teacher with dynamic visuals to represent parts of the story, highlighting text or vocabulary while the story is initially being read aloud by the teacher or narrator (Lefever-Davis & Pearman, 2005). By pointing using a laser pen, the teacher can track each word/sentence and encourage children to join in where possible, while gradually revealing the text. Unlike a conventional shared reading experience with a big book, the teacher’s arm is not blocking illustrations or additional text. Optional hotspots can be activated which elaborate on the illustrations, characters, setting or vocabulary. For example, when the teacher clicks on a character, the figure may start to talk or clicking on a glowing word might give the children an explanation of the word. More advanced learners might discuss which story elements the reader can infer from electronic features and which are stated in the text itself. This sharing of an electronic book with an entire class has the potential to foster children’s understanding of the story events, increase their vocabulary knowledge, phonological awareness and story recall abilities (Chera & Wood, 2003). Subsequent re-readings can occur with individual students in the class library, using the class PC to display the story or a hard copy of the e-book itself.

How to use and incorporate electronic features into a shared reading lesson

The same interactive elements of e-books that support children’s literacy (e.g. animation or sound effects) may also potentially become distractions and as such you may decide not to engage with these advanced features. As you initially evaluate e-books, look for quality illustrations and storyline, appropriate for the chosen class level; easy-to-read fonts; easy-to-use navigation; good quality sound; accompanying extension activities and games or the online version of a class favourite story. Whether you use the internet, Microsoft PowerPoint or interactive whiteboard (with note maker, magnifier to enlarge text, recorder and spotlight), pick and choose the electronic features that most suit your class and context. In the absence of high-speed internet or smart boards, an electronic book could either be pre-downloaded or composed by the teacher and/or pupils in Microsoft PowerPoint. The table (right) gives optional ideas on how to incorporate electronic features into a Shared Reading lesson.

Using technology in reading lessons

Technology has the potential to enhance interactive whole class reading teaching. It could be argued that e-books provide a lesser reading experience for children than physical books as many readers prefer ‘the real book’ to a computer screen. Despite an international move towards interactive reading methods that incorporate aspects of technology (Shamir and Korat, 2008), to date the use of e-books in Irish primary school classrooms is just emerging. However, if e-books are an additional, rather than an alternative means of providing a fun, interactive reading experience in the primary school classroom, then more possibilities exist for embracing their potential. Their lively and attractive features, including dynamic visuals, voice and sound are a powerful means of supporting children’s literacy development. What better way to enjoy reading with young primary school learners, than through sharing e-books?
### to engage young readers

#### Example electronic book resources
- **www.starfall.com**: A variety of well-illustrated online stories, using a phonics approach to reading.
- **www.magickeys.com/books/**: Example children’s storybooks online.
- **storybird.com**: Create your own story using short, art-inspired stories to share, read, and print. By reversing the process of visual storytelling, start with the image/theme and write the story.
- **www.readinga-z.com/**: An online reading scheme.

References available in the InTouch section of the INTO website.

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### Pre-Shared Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Pre-Shared Reading</th>
<th>While Shared Reading</th>
<th>Post-Shared Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electronic version of Fiction Book</strong></td>
<td><strong>e.g. ‘The Hungry Caterpillar’ by Eric Carle</strong> <a href="http://www.scribd.com/doc/3855238/The-Very-Hungry-Caterpillar-book">http://www.scribd.com/doc/3855238/The-Very-Hungry-Caterpillar-book</a></td>
<td><strong>Demonstration</strong>&lt;br&gt;The teacher reads the story aloud.&lt;br&gt;The pace should be lively with few stops.&lt;br&gt;Point to each line as you read to reinforce left-to-right orientation, using a laser pen.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Participation</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ask the children to join in when they can and to predict how the story will develop.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Practice</strong>&lt;br&gt;Read parts of the story and take turns reading. Allow the children to dominate.</td>
<td><strong>Reread children’s favourite parts.</strong>&lt;br&gt;Reread direct speech with expression.&lt;br&gt;Highlight key words and children can invent suitable alternatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gradual Revelation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduce key vocabulary, one by one</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reveal the text line by line/page by page.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Recall the different settings in the story.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design/Use of colour</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduce and describe the setting for the story.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Use different backgrounds when moving from scene to scene.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Create a new setting for the story.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audio/C.D. ROM</strong></td>
<td><strong>Listen to the beginning of the story and predict the storyline.</strong></td>
<td><strong>As a whole class, listen to the story and read along.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Individual children can listen to reread the story during extension time.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sound Effects</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduce each character with a different sound effect e.g. using Microsoft PowerPoint</strong></td>
<td><strong>Where appropriate, introduce sound effects throughout the story e.g. a bell to remind students of a key word.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Make your own audio recording of the children reading using your mobile phone.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Games</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete an online jigsaw of the front cover of the story – then guess the title.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Some online stories have accompanying games e.g. reorder the story; bingo, word searches, information gaps.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Retell the story in sequence using sound effects to represent main characters.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graphic Animation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Some online stories have graphic animation.</strong>&lt;br&gt;Introduce and describe main characters by clicking on the animated icon.</td>
<td><strong>When the teacher clicks on a character, it starts to talk.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Describe the character, based on the animated icon.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hotspots</strong></td>
<td><strong>Some online stories have hidden hotspots which can be activated to introduce the setting or character.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Elaborate on the illustrations, setting or characters.</strong></td>
<td><strong>To recall parts of the story, text can be searched automatically.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hyperlinks</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduce key vocabulary or target language by clicking on hyperlinks.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stop throughout the story and highlight/explain highlighted words.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Recall key vocabulary by clicking on highlighted words.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extension Idea</strong></td>
<td><strong>Whole school e-book buddy reading project e.g. 6th class students compose their own stories using Microsoft PowerPoint or <a href="http://www.storybirds.com">www.storybirds.com</a> (adding audio, animation, sound effects and background design), targeting ICT and literacy skills. Present/read to a younger class.</strong></td>
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Dr Fiodhna Gardiner-Hyland is an Education Methodology Lecturer at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. Email: fiodhna.gardiner@mic.ul.ie
EBS/INTO Handwriting Competition

We are delighted to announce a new theme for this year: **PLAYTIME**!

Entering the competition is simple and fun so encourage your class to Join Up!

Get your entries in by Friday 22nd February 2013
Join Up!

The INTO and EBS are delighted to launch the Annual INTO/EBS Handwriting Competition. The competition is open to all schools and entries will be judged on style, flair, neatness and layout of the handwriting.

Competition Rules for Teachers and Pupils
1. The theme is Playtime.
2. Please complete the application form and attach it to the back of each entry.
3. Schools with an enrolment of 201 pupils or more should submit the 6 best entries from each category. Schools with an enrolment of 200 pupils or less should submit the 3 best entries from each category.
4. No pictures or illustrations will be accepted.
5. Please do not mount the handwriting entries.
6. Foreign language permitted.
7. Adhere to paper sizes, use templates or similar copybook page for Junior & Senior infants categories and use only one side of the sheet of paper (see staff representative pack for templates).
8. Adhere to the word limit in each category.
9. Entries cannot be returned to the schools.
10. Entries must reach the local coordinator by Friday 22nd February 2013. Late entries will not be judged.
11. Please affix correct postage.

Category Guidelines
Category A – Junior Infants
Up to 20 words, use pencil only. Use a photocopy of your choice of template or page from similar copybook.
Category B – Senior Infants
Up to 20 words, use pencil only. Use a photocopy of your choice of template or page from similar copybook.
Category C – 1st & 2nd Classes
Up to 100 words, use pencil only, single A4 sheet or foolscap paper.
Category D – 3rd & 4th Classes
Up to 150 words, use pen or pencil, single A4 sheet or foolscap paper.
Category E – 5th & 6th Classes
Up to 200 words, use pen only, single A4 sheet or foolscap paper.
Category F – Special Recognition
For achievement in handwriting for children with a Physical Disability which impinges on handwriting ability.

Category G – Special Recognition
For achievement in handwriting for children with a Learning Disability which impinges on handwriting ability.

The following applies to
Categories B & G:
- Up to 50 words, use pen or pencil, single A4 sheet or foolscap paper.
- Teachers must include a short citation of no more than 50 words stating the reason for this nomination.
- Teachers must also confirm that the pupil's parents/guardian have been informed that their child is being entered in this category and consent has been given. The signed consent form must accompany the entry.
- Please state the child's age on the application form.

Entries that do not adhere to all the specified criteria will not be considered for judging.

Children's Prizes
In categories A to E, there are wonderful prizes like Art Sets, One-4-All Gift Vouchers and Board Games for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places. Three prizes of equal value will be awarded in categories F & G. Personalised framed certificates and medals will be awarded to the national winners.

School Prizes
There is a national draw for a Prim Ed / Prometheus voucher worth €2,000 for all schools that enter the competition. Each school will also be entered into county draws for €100 book vouchers. The National Prizegiving ceremony will take place on Saturday 27th April in Dublin.

Entries which do not adhere to the specified criteria will not be considered for judging.

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If you have any queries please contact Georgina Glackin
INHO Head Office at (01) 804 7485 or log on to
www.inho.ie
From Activities to Aistear

The non formal nature of education in the infant classes

As a teacher who qualified in the 1970s, I am old enough to remember infant education classes in college. When I first qualified I was introduced to ‘activities’ as a learning methodology by my principal Maureen Colfor in Ard Mhuire, Belgard, Tallaght. These activities were what we would nowadays call station teaching with a different activity happening at five or six different tables. In those days there were over 40 children in an infant class.

These activities were the precursor to the latest and very worthwhile development by the NCCA entitled Aistear. Hundreds of teachers and indeed playschools have begun another national revolution in curriculum development in Ireland over the past four years. In 2009 the NCCA launched Aistear. http://vimeo.com/ncca/review/28758135/4b6ec1157c.

Aistear framework is Ireland’s way of recognising the non formal nature of education in infant classes bringing a further evolution of the work of Rousseau (www.ilt.columbia.edu/pedagogies/rousseau/Contents2.html), Montessori (http://mariamontessori.com/mm/?page_id=829), and indeed Piaget, who said in the 1950s that “play was the work of children”. As one enters into the Aistear sessions in Scoil Mhuire first thing on any morning one cannot but be impressed by the hive of industry and activity and total engagement that constitutes the session. A learning support teacher provides support for a class teacher who has prepared the different areas of the learning environment. There children explore and think. They communicate with themselves, with their peers and with an adult who seeks to develop their language at that teachable moment in the context of the child’s particular activity. Through manipulation arrangement and organisation the elements of mathematical development start to emerge. They develop their sense of identity and their sense of belonging in this world.

The consequences of such meaningful engagement are rows with parents when they need to stay at home because they are sick. Children want and need to be in their place of ‘work’. In this context their wellbeing is enhanced so that the aims of the programme are fulfilled.

The materials on the NCCA website and the workshops being provided by the education centres on shoestring budgets around the country have the potential to give teachers the confidence to forge ahead with the implementation of these activities. If class teachers display confidence in implementing the activities then the children will settle in to them and that will secure the buy in from parents. We ought to bear in mind that what is being reaffirmed through the implementation of Aistear is built on the shoulders of educational giants like Rousseau, Montessori, Vygotsky and Piaget. The practical and innovative materials now being provided by NCCA are not new or flash in the pan. We now have national institutional recognition of the value of non formal methodologies in the education of young children. With confidence in the solid basis for this approach, education trainers and inspectors must adapt their evaluation criteria for measuring teacher performance away from the ‘taught lesson’ to give credit and recognition for the creation of the Aistear learning environment. Examples that I have personally witnessed that come from a limitless potential are illustrated here.

There is the writing area where teacher identifies a theme or topic such as The Gruffalo and children are encouraged to draw and write on the theme or topic. Facing the ‘blank page’
they select from their crayons, felt tip pens or chunky pencils or a combination of all three to make their marks on the page to represent what they think. James Joyce would marvel at the abstraction and complexity they can attribute to their markings. The levels of alternative thinking and creativity should be carefully listened to and respected by any visitor to these settings.

Moving to the construction area where the, Lego or Duplo or Mobilo or Sticklebricks or wooden blocks (the list could go on) construct what adult imaginations can only dream about. “This, Mr O’Reilly, is going to be the strongest, mostest, biggest, supership in the galaxy and it will bring me and my friends to Mars,” I was told one morning as I watched three children assemble sticklebricks. With such vision in junior infants one can well imagine outer space holidays in our lifetimes.

It is truly fascinating how children can spend endless time putting their hands through sand and water – filling, emptying, pouring, spading and feeling, investigating objects with their senses, taking turns, sharing the two shovels between five. “It’s my turn after the next time after the next time,” I was told authoritatively while a child waited and watched for his turn with the shovel. I used the opportunity to praise the virtues of sharing and patience. Words failed my ability to compliment the child’s command of sequencing! As well as actions there is all that language: pouring, poured, going to pour; more than, less than, heavier, lighter, wet, dry, smooth, and rough, drip, splash, trickle, flow, full, empty, half full, float and sink. The rich tapestry of language that the adult can use while being a passive participant at the sand and water trays. The investigation, communication, exploring and thinking that fosters the wellbeing around these trays make them an essential station in any Aistear workspace.

And then there is the role play area. The stars of Hollywood can look out when it comes to matching the characters in the Scoil Mhuire play area. That allows them to engage in planning negotiating and developing conversations. Each child’s confidence improves relative to what it was. The most evidence for this can be found in the child who is almost paralysed in early September and by December is dressing up and engaging with vigour and fun in whatever role they have chosen. In the context of role a child can be cruel or kind and decide the fate of their victim for good or ill and move on just as in the movies. Real world interventions can be made by class teacher for example explaining about the feelings if we are too cruel and the more positive feeling associated with being kind and gentle.

Writing, construction, sand and water, and role play are but four of the areas in which the non-formal approach to learning is being implemented in Scoil Mhuire. It requires experience dedication and commitment on the part of teachers. This on its own will not achieve successful implementation. It takes the support of learning support personnel who are timetabled to spend the session with the class teacher. It also requires further support from volunteers willing to give of their time when the state is not providing the professional supports. The constant encouragement of principal is a contributory factor. These alone would not succeed without the institutional support being provided by the NCCA. The further translation of school self evaluation methods to foster this development will copper fasten it in the Irish system. Beir bua Aistear.

Bryan O’Reilly is CEC rep. for District 7 and Principal of Scoil Mhuire Junior Primary School, Ballymany, Newbridge, Co Kildare. This article could not have been written without the excellent work of the junior infant teachers and the learning support team in Scoil Mhuire.
January/February

Cúrsaí Teagaisc

Background information

Rocks are naturally occurring solids made up of one or more minerals. All these are found in the earth’s crust.

Igneous rock
They form when molten rock called magma cools. When this happens externally, the magma (now called lava), hardens into basalt, pumice or obsidian (extrusive rocks). When the magma cools slowly under the surface it changes into granite (intrusive rock).

Sedimentary rocks
Most are made from sediments deposited by water and compacted into layers called strata e.g. sandstone. Limestone is formed from the squashed remains of living things such as shellfish and micro-organisms. It formed under shallow, warm seas that covered most of the country 350 million years ago. Limestone is the most common rock in Ireland followed by sandstone.

Metamorphic rocks
These are formed from the above by heat and pressure. Limestone can change into marble and shale into slate.

Indoors

Stimulus statement: I brush my teeth with the remains of a creature that lived at the time of the dinosaurs! (chalk, a pure limestone made from tiny creatures is used in toothpaste).

Chain of reasoning:
Where do you get your calcium from? (milk) Where does the milk get its calcium from? (cow) Where does the cow get its calcium from? (grain) Where does the grain get its calcium from? (limestone rock) So? The calcium in our bones was once part of the earth’s crust. Indeed all the minerals in our bodies were once in the rocks that form the earth’s crust. (See www.colwellconsulting.com/rocks/rcmr.htm).

All schools received a pack of six common rocks from TCD (See www.tcd.ie/geology/outreach/).

Sample enquiry questions to ask about these rocks:
- Name the rock? How hard is it? Scratch with fingernail = hardness of two. Scratch with coin = hardness of three. Scratch with sandpaper = hardness of eight.
- Use a small magnifying glass to answer: is it made from smaller bits? Is it shiny? Does it soak up water? Does it feel heavy for its size? Is it igneous, sedimentary or metamorphic? What is it used for?

Classroom observation:
What's made from rock?
Glass (quartz sand); classroom 'chalk' (gypsum); plaster (dye); mortar and concrete are made from cement (limestone and clay); pottery (clay); pencil (graphite).

Demonstrate how sedimentary rock is made by tilting a two litre bottle (with the top part removed) at a 45° angle and filling it with layers of flour, pasta, beans, sugar, coffee etc.

Make fossils. Three kinds: Body: actual teeth, bones etc.; Trace: signs of a creature e.g. footprints; Imprint: cast and mould. A mould fossil is a hollow shape in a rock which resembles the creature that has dissolved. A cast fossil occurs when this hollow fills up with minerals that harden into a three dimensional shape of the creature.

Method:
Mix Plaster of Paris in a plastic tub with water. Get some plasterine and press a shell firmly into it. Remove the shell. This is a mould fossil. Now daub the impression lightly with Vaseline. Make a collar out of a strip of paper. Place it around the plasterine. Secure with paper clip. Pour in Plaster of Paris and allow it to harden. Remove to display cast fossil.

Outdoors

Identify the rocks in the school grounds.
Visit a local graveyard to identify headstone rocks and lichens.
Visit the Botanic Gardens to view the rock map of Ireland. Look for fossils in the recreated Burren landscape.
Ask a local quarry to supply the school with a large boulder of the rock found there.

Zoom in on rocks

Active learning indoors and outdoors

Eanáir/Feabhra – Fócas ar Charraigeacha

Paddy Madden continues his series of SESE tips

Rock display

Basalt

Igneous

Sedimentary

Metamorphic

Erratic rock

Author & pupils from Scoil Aine, Raheny

Ammonite fossil

Old red sandstone

Rock strata
Useful websites
- www.geoschol.com: Downloadable books, geological map of Ireland, activity sheets.
- www.makemegenius.com: Excellent for interactive whiteboard on 3 different types.
- www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource: Volcanoes
- www.bbc.co.uk/schools/geebitesize: Freeze-thaw weathering.
- www.rocksforkids.com: Sayings about rocks.

Useful books
- Written in Stone (1995) by Pádhraig S Kennan (Geological Survey of Ireland)
- Rocks, Minerals and Fossils (2001) by Barbara Taylor

Packs

Rocks through the ages
- Porcellanite; Stone Walls; Megalithic tombs
- Copper and Tin; Stone Circles
- Stone Forts; Ogham Stones
- Stone Churches; Towers; High Crosses
- Stone Castles; Monasteries; Walled Towns
- Stone Tower Houses
- Big Houses; Cottages
- Hunters/Gatherers (Mesolithic) First Farmers (Neolithic)
- Bronze Age People Early Christian People
- Iron Age People Normans
- Medieval People Landlords and Tenants

Rocks through the ages
- Flint
- Granite/Eibhear: A granular, igneous rock. Carraig a chruathaidh mar a chuirtear nuair a bhfuair. Carraig a dhhridiadóireas a bhí agus a bhítear.
- Limestone/Aolchloch: A sedimentary rock which formed from organic remains such as shells and corals were compressed. Carraig a dhhridiadóireas a bhítear.
- Jurassic coast, Lyme Regis
- Burren landscape

Paddy Madden lectures on SESE in Marino Institute of Education. He is the author of two books on school gardening. Go Wild at School and The School Garden - What to do and when to do it. Available from paddy.madden@mie.ie. Podcast on teaching about spring: Programme 129 on seandelan.com/podcasts/ Buíochas do Marie Whelton, MIE, don aistriúchán.
Anita O’Dea

It was with great shock and sadness that St Mary’s School community in Booterstown, heard of the sudden death of Anita O’Dea on 4 November 2011.

Anita graduated from St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra in 1985. She came to St Mary’s 24 years ago where she became a valued deputy principal, a respected and supportive colleague. Anita was a good friend to many. Countless parents entrusted their children to her so that their skills, abilities and interests would be fostered. She mentored many young teachers and parents alike by sharing her expertise and work ethic.

Anita always remained a student of life. She was a person driven by the importance of family. She had a huge belief in the intergenerational impact of the wider family as countless trips to her home in Labasheeda demonstrated.

Anita saw the way of life that she chose for herself, as a teacher, as an extension of those family caring values. She loved art, sport, nature and gardening with the children. That love will continue to be fostered in her memory.

We have been blessed to have known Anita, her husband Mark and children Fiachra, Aoife and Aine. It seems inconceivable that Anita is no longer a part of our lives.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam uasal.

Kevin Farrell

Kevin Farrell was known to many of you from his regular presence at INTO conferences over a number of years.

Kevin was a primary teacher for many years and went on to establish his own educational publishing business, Learning Horizons. He was well known in teaching circles and was known for his warmth and enthusiasm.

Kevin, who had just turned 44 years old when he died in 2011, was born in Queens, New York, and his family returned to Ireland when he was seven years old. Kevin attended St Michael’s Boys School and St Mel’s College where he made many lifelong friends. He studied in St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra, qualifying as a primary teacher in 1988. He taught for several years in various Dublin schools, most notably, Belgard NS, St Dominic’s NS, Ballycragh NS (all three in Tallaght), Newcastle NS and St Louise’s NS, Ballyfermot.

After teaching for 12 years Kevin developed his own sales and publishing business which catered for the educational needs for both the primary and secondary school sectors. He operated his business up until a few weeks before his death. Kevin, along with his friend, Bran Cumiskey, devised and brought to fruition ‘The Smile to the World Project’ in 2002. It was a response to suffering in the world, brought about as a result of the September 9/11 atrocities. The project culminated in the design and development of a giant goodwill banner comprising of the artwork of thousands of school children both north and south of the border, which was displayed in the United Nations Building in New York shortly after the first anniversary of the events of 2001.

He is sadly missed by his wife Martha, also a primary teacher, with whom he shared 17 years of happy married life and his sons Leo and Sergei.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam uasal.

Brid Bn Uí Ghallchóir

Ar an 11ú Lúnasa 2011, fuair Bhríd Bn Úí Ghallchóir bás i ndiaidh tréimhse fada tinnis. D’fhág imeacht Bhrid brón agus bríseadh croí i measc muinteoirí, pástí agus an pobal i gcotíimne ar an Chlochán Liath.

Rugadh Bríd mar Bhríd Ní Bhaoil i dTír Chonaill, áit a b’éabhradh aithne uirthi mar Bríd Pa Sonny.


Brid was a multi-talented teacher and her classroom always resounded with the sounds of music, drama, poetry and, of course, Gaeilge. She had a particular grá for all aspects of her native language and culture.

Bríd truly cared for the children she taught and she enjoyed their individual personalities and could always vividly recount many interesting stories she experienced during her teaching career.

Just as Bríd loved children the children she taught loved Bríd. She made everyone feel that they were special to her. She had a great love for the children in the three special classes in Dungloe NS whom she treated with great respect, patience and dignity.

Anyone who encountered Brid in their lives was listened to and made feel very welcome. Bríd acted in local drama groups, compered fashion shows for charity, prepared children for competitions in both languages and she was also very involved in church activities in the parish.

Brid is greatly missed by all who knew her. Bhí sí fial, flaithiúil, ceannasa agus cóga, lán spórt agus brí.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam uasal.

Óna caíreil ulig i Scoil Chróinne, An Chlochán Liath.
Pause, think, act . . .

A good theory overexpanded

Wouldn’t it be great if you had a remote control with a fast forward, rewind, play and pause button that you could use for all life’s situations? For example, if you were meeting with an irate parent, the conversation was getting a little bit heated and you said something you shouldn’t have said, what would you give to have been able to pause yourself, then think of the consequences of your next action. Pause Button Therapy (PBT) is a self-help book designed to teach you the skills to do this. Using the very simple analogy of a remote control, the book aims to train people to pause themselves before completing an action, fast forward to consider the consequences of the action, rewind and think of an alternative, perhaps better action, then press play. The book claims that it has helped people all over the world from depression, anger issues, addiction and other issues. There is one chapter in the book dedicated to education, where the author speaks about a project that was run in a school with problems with challenging behaviours. Using PBT, pupils were given special remote control wristbands to use when they felt like doing something inappropriate. Sufficient to say, the author reported that the project worked a treat and behaviours in the school improved greatly. The theory of PBT is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and is well researched. The book might be useful in an educational setting where management is a major issue but the theory is so simple that it probably doesn’t require the 300 or so pages to explain it.


Reviewed by SIMON LEWIS, Principal, Carlow Educate Together NS, and co-editor of anseo.net

Fun option for reluctant readers

This graphic novel is one of four in the Murder Can Be Fatal mystery series by Irish author Alan Nolan. The other titles are Death by Chocolate, Six Million Ways to Die and Destination Homicide.

The main character is Dubliner Marion ‘Mick’ Mulligan who is a failed science fiction writer abducted from planet Earth by aliens. He is left marooned on the lawless planet Haven. Haven is where life forms who are down on their luck, in trouble or on the run end up. A chance win on the lottery helps Mulligan and his friends Crk-Tish-Crrrkkk, Zeebo and RUNT to escape Haven.

This fast-paced caper tells the tale of their adventures along the way including a jailbreak, a battle with robot-revolutionaries and a false murder charge. Fantastic illustrations and slapstick humour throughout make this novel a fun easy read which would be ideal for reluctant readers, especially boys in the older classes. It would also make a great stimulus for creative writing, visual art and drama. ISBN 978-1-84717-257-0.


Reviewed by CAROLINE McCARTHY, Scoil Mhuire, Corofin, Co Clare

Learning to think in the classroom

Wow, what I want is, Facts. “Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts.” So opens Dickens’ novel Hard Times, where the headmaster, Thomas Gradgrind, declares his credo on education – while the little vessels wait in neat rows to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they are full to the brim.

Over 150 years after Dickens satirised educators who equate facts with knowledge, Derek Cabrera and Laura Colosi have published Thinking at Every Desk, a very timely addition to the teeming ocean that is educational research. Their fundamental premise is the primacy of thinking over rote learning. Facts, they insist, are organic and open to constant change. Nothing is certain nowadays and how we deal with the unending flux of knowledge is far more vital than acquiring a bank of data which is almost immediately obsolete. Even the venerable Encyclopaedia Britannica has bowed to the inevitable after 244 years, and is going out of print.

Children and students of all ages need to be taught the skills of analytical thinking and Cabrera and Colosi insist that this is the key to future success for Western Society. They are quite alarmed at the number of third level students who depend on rote learning to succeed in college. This is understandable, as rote learning was the very skill that earned them their place in college. However, according to the authors, this dependence on rote learning is becoming a systemic weakness in American colleges.

Knowledge, they assert, is not simply ‘Information’. Creative thinking is the crucial factor that enables students of all ages to transfer knowledge from one discipline to another. Cabrera and Colosi further develop their thesis by examining four structures that underlie the process of creating knowledge – Distinctions, Systems, Relationships, and Perspectives.

Educators in Ireland, who are now being challenged to produce little pitchers with easily calibrated measures of literacy and numeracy, will welcome this scholarly book which develops quite comprehensive-ly a matrix for developing ‘thinking’ students.


Reviewed by DIARMUID KAVANAGH, St Joseph’s NS, Templarainey, Arklow, Co Wicklow
Scileanna mata a fhorbairt trí Ghaeilge

Bíonn foghlaim teangacha níos éifeachtaí nuair a chuirtear dúshlán faoi dhaltaí an teanga a úsáid chun críche spríonaíochtaí a fháil, scileanna agus eolais a ghnóthú in ábhar eile. San alt seo déantar cur síos ar dhá acmhainn a bhfuil sé mar aithíseach le scileanna loighciúla agus matamaiticiúla – leithéidí réasúnachtaí agus tuiscint ar uimhreas – na bpáistí a chur chun cinn trí mhéan na Gaeilge.

Dúradáin mheabhracha

Is bealach spraiúil iad Dúradáin Mheabhracha chun an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim agus a neartú ag baint úsáide as scil thábhachtach: catagóiriú. Cabhraíonn catagóiriú le daoine focail a fhoghlaim, a eagrú agus cuimhneamh orthu. Chomh maith le sin tá réasúnaíocht – sé sin nithe a rangú agus a chur i gcatagóirí loighciúla – ar cheann de na scileanna is tábhachtaithe sa Luath-Mhatamaitic.

Tá 48 gcárta dúradáin agus treoracha Gaeilge agus Béarla i ngach bosca. Ag barr gach cárta tá ainm catagóire ann, agus ag bun gach cárta tá pictiúr de rud éigin as catagóir eile. Tá 12 catagóir/choincheap sa chúlchú: uimhir, séasúr, ainmí, feithiúil, uirlis ceoil, spórt, srl.

Caithfidh imreoirí a dhéanamh ar shlí níos casta ná mar is gnách: caithfidh siad machnamh a dhéanamh ar cén catagóir lena mbaineann na léaráidí sula meaitseáil féin an seanadóireachta. Is féidir le haghaidh trí cheisteanna: “Cad atá mar gceanna faoi dhearg, bhui agus uaine?” nó “Cad atá coiteann idir bríste agus stocaí?” Tugtar a thuilleadh samplaí sna treoracha.

Déantar cur síos ar dhá acmhainn a bhfuil sé mar aidhm acu scileanna loighciúla agus matamaiticiúla – leithéidí réasúnaíochtaí agus tuiscint ar uimhreas – na bpáistí a chur chun cinn trí mhéan na Gaeilge.

Ar fáil


Réidh, Socair, Déan – Mata

Láimhleabhar praiticiúil do mhúinteoirí, don snáithe ‘Uimhreas’ sa Mhatamaitic is ea Réidh, Socair, Déan. Baineann sé go híaráite le teagasc agus foghlaim na hUimhreachtaí sa chéad dá bhliain scoile. Tá gníomhachtaí agus clár teagaisc le gach réimse a thacaíonn le páistí coiteann uimhir a chur in ord.

3. Cuntas agus aithint (comhaireamh)
4. Tuisceint uimhriú
5. Tá líne forbartha ar fáil

Cuirtear béim ar theanga na matamaitice agus tháitíse agus a raibh cluiche a chur in ord in aghaidh trí ceisteanna in nuachtanna. Is féidir le haghaidh trí cheisteanna: “Cad atá mar gceanna faoi dhearg, bhui agus uaine?” nó “Cad atá coiteann idir bríste agus stocaí?” Tugtar a thuilleadh samplaí sna treoracha.

Ar fáil

Cur chuige rathúil is ea Réidh, Socair, Déan a chuidíonn an curach láidre go luathmatamaitic a chur i bhfeidhm go héifeachtach. Is leagan Gaeilge é de Ready, Set, Go – Maths le Eunice Pitt a foilsíodh trí chomhpháirtíochtanna. Tá sé ar fáil ó www.udar.ie ar €25.
Research Project

Research into Mindfulness and Stress Reduction in Primary Teaching.

A research project into the practice of mindfulness and its implication on stress reduction among primary school teachers in Ireland will be conducted in Spring 2013. According to a recent study primary school teachers in Ireland, 98%, and principals, 93%, are happy in their jobs. The same study also indicates occupational stress among both teachers and principals as 45% and 70% respectively (Darmody and Smyth, 2010).

The proposed research is an innovative study to explore the practice of mindfulness in relation to such stress. Teachers are being sought to participate in this study. It is part of doctoral studies being carried out by Ann Caulfield through the University of Lincoln. Participation will involve a short one-to-one interview which will be undertaken between February and April 2013. Anything discussed within such interviews will be confidential.

Ann is the co-founder of Mindfulness Matters which aims to be a teacher’s resource for personal and professional self care and an opportunity for mindfulness in the classroom. If you are a teacher who practices mindfulness and interested in participating in the study, Ann will be delighted to hear from you. You can email her on motivationalwaves@gmail.com or check out further details on www.mindfullnessmatters.ie

Froebel Celebration

A celebration of Froebel’s 70 years in Sion Hill will be held in the Burlington Hotel on Saturday 20 April. Please contact bspickford@froebel.ie for further information and purchase of tickets.

INTO/STSG

Separated Teachers’ Support Group

Next meeting: Saturday, 9 March 2013.
Venue: Club na Muinteoirí, Parnell Square, Dublin 1. Time: 11.00 a.m.
Separated, divorced, widowed, lone parents from INTO, ASTI, TUI and IFUT welcome. Annual subscription €20. Further information from: Chairperson, Trudy Carroll Miller at 042/9383670; 00447931609315 or Secretary, Renee Flynn at 090 6634618; 087/6448402.

Education in a Pluralist Ireland

Education in a Pluralist Ireland, then and now

The National Museum of Ireland in collaboration with the Educational Studies Association of Ireland will hold a conference on Saturday, 9 February - 9.00a.m. – 3.30 p.m. Venue: Palatine Room, National Museum, Collins Barracks. Speakers will include: Prof John Coolahan, Prof Aine Hyland, Susan Parkes, Dr Anne Looney. Book at: www.museum.ie/en/list/education-conference.aspx

InTouch January/February 2013
New education resource from Amnesty

Amnesty International Ireland has published a new education resource that uses the stories of five human rights defenders to teach children about human rights. *Human Rights Stories* shows children how the courts and determination of a single person can protect the human rights of other people.

Primary teachers came up with the idea behind the publication, identifying storytelling as a familiar way to introduce human rights in the classroom. Fidelma Carroll is a teacher at St Catherine’s NS in Rush, Co Dublin, one of 14 schools that first used the resource in a pilot programme.

“The children couldn’t believe that a person could be put in prison for no good reason,” she said. “The stories sparked a discussion on children’s rights in other countries. It was especially useful for them to learn about children their own age.” Pupils in St Catherine’s and many other schools have since written messages of support to prisoners of conscience.

Teachers also emphasised how practical they found it to use. “The lessons are laid out in a very comprehensive manner,” said Nicola Corcoran, of Merlin Woods PS, Galway. “The lesson content is all there, and the fact that it has definite curricular links makes it very user friendly.”

“The materials would certainly strengthen the development of the child’s understanding of right and wrong. It should inspire children to continue to respect the rights of others.”

Order a free copy of *Human Rights Stories* by emailing hre@amnesty.ie or phoning 01 863 8300.

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**Primary PE**

The Irish Primary PE Association (IPPEA) represents and supports the needs of primary teachers involved in physical education. It promotes physical education and healthy lifestyles in primary schools. Activities include:

- An annual conference.
- Communities of practice workshops for teachers for the purpose of promoting PE at primary level. These are held in partnership with the PDST.
- Information for members on the IPPEA website on latest issues and developments in PE – www.irishprimarype.com
- Liaison with other organisations involved in the promotion of PE, Physical Activity and Sport.

**Annual Conference**

Theme: ‘Let’s get moving’. Dates: 1 March – IPPEA AGM 7pm. 2 March 2013 – 9am- 5pm. Venue: St Patrick’s College Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Prices including lunch: IPPEA Membership and Conference €45, College Drumcondra, Dublin 9, Prices including lunch: IPPEA AGM.

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Healthy food for all

A Good Practice Guide for Breakfast Clubs

Healthy Food for All (HFfA) is an all-island initiative seeking to combat food poverty by promoting access, availability and affordability of healthy food for low-income groups. HFfA has developed A Good Practice Guide for Breakfast Clubs, which provides practical advice on setting up and running breakfast clubs in schools and community settings. The Guide is available to download from www.healthyfoodforall.com. Hard copies are also available – just email breakfastclub@healthyfoodforall.com to order a free copy.

The Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Report found that 13% of Irish schoolchildren never eat breakfast on a weekday with a marked increase seen in those from lower social classes, girls and older children. Children going to school hungry cannot fully participate in class which can have a detrimental impact on their personal, cognitive, social and educational development.

Children may not have breakfast at home due to poor appetite in early morning, working parents who need to drop children, and lack of food in the home. Breakfast clubs are a great opportunity to ensure that children who may not have breakfast before attending school do so. Breakfast clubs also have a positive impact on school attendance and punctuality and are cited as the fourth most effective intervention of the School Completion Programme.

Breakfast clubs are more than just a means of providing food to children. They are an opportunity to engage with children and parents on an informal basis and can be an important support service for many families.

A Good Practice Guide for Breakfast Clubs provides a step-by-step guide on setting up and running a breakfast club, including case studies of existing clubs to show how they work in different settings.