Promotion ban ballot on industrial action

Reinstate promoted posts • Improve teachers’ career prospects • End intolerable work burden
The CEC has decided to ballot all members on industrial action in response to the continued ban on promotion in schools and increasing workload for teachers. The decision was not taken lightly and follows detailed discussion over a number of meetings.

The issue is straightforward. In order to make progress on workload reduction and the end of the moratorium on filling posts of responsibility we are asking members to support a union directive on non-cooperation with school self-evaluation.

Ballot meetings are being organised and we ask all members to attend and vote YES in support of this action.

The ban on promotion is severely limiting the capacity of an increasing number of schools to function effectively. Thousands of posts have been lost since the ban was introduced in 2009 which has greatly increased the workload of all teachers in schools.

Last year in Budget 2016 we sought and got reductions in class sizes and some movement on increased release time for teaching principals. We did not achieve progress on lifting the moratorium.

In the meantime the DES has indicated its intention to increase requirements for schools in the self-evaluation of teaching and learning, to introduce self-evaluation of leadership and management in schools while at the same time preparations are being made for a new language curriculum in primary schools.

Without a lifting of the moratorium and real engagement with the DES on workload reduction this is an impossible task and it is for that reason the CEC is looking for your support at this time.

The INTO is also conducting an updated survey of schools to assess the local and regional impact of the moratorium on promotion, and will use the results in its campaign to end the ban.

On behalf of the CEC I urge all members to go to their ballot meeting when it called later this month and vote YES.
12 Industrial action – Promotion ban
INTO to ballot members on industrial action in response to the continued ban on promotion in schools.

14 News updates
- Opportunity for teachers probated in restricted setting to achieve full registration
- Payment uplift for certain post-2011 entrants
- Further delay with Garda Vetting Act
- Deadline for SNA support and resource hours
- Rule 68 abolished.

16 Welcome changes to job-sharing scheme
Circular 75/2015 improves flexibility for job-sharers.

17 Want to work in Head Office?
Two fixed-term positions as paid interns available for 2016/17. Current interns write about their experience.

18 Teaching Council Elections 2016
Plus four pages of information on INTO endorsed candidates.

15 New mortgage advisory service for INTO members
Check this out if you are buying a home or want to change mortgage provider
- Review of principals’/deputy principals’ fora
- Review sub committee set up

23 INTO Political Fund grants
- LGBT Bill passed
- New language curriculum

25 INTO Learning programme
- Facilitators wanted for online courses
- New 1916 resource for members
- Free online summer course for staff reps

26 An Post/INTO Handwriting Competition 2016
Grace period for retirement extended
- Retirement seminar
- INTO benefits
- Advancing schools’ autonomy

Heading to Uganda
Maria Casey starts her VSO placement
- Our World Irish Aid Awards 2016

In the media
Recent media coverage

Retirements
Photographs from retirement functions around the country

Payroll information
- Cosán – Framework on CPD
- IATSE conference scheduled

INTO AVC Plan – Annual Report
Healthy eating
Check out Incredible Edibles project

DEIS reviewed
INTO and the Centre for Educational Disadvantage hold joint conference on poverty and social inclusion in education
- UN Convention on Children’s Rights
  Monitoring Ireland’s progress

Health insurance
INTO Health Insurance Comparison Service

Get on top of your money in 2016
Small changes can amount to big savings.
Advice from Consumerhelp

1916 – Engaging pupils
PDST initiatives on Scoilnet

1916 – Working as an historian
An online resource for INTO members

Primary PE Teacher Award
IPPEA announce new award open to teachers delivering PE in primary schools

Máirt machnamhach
Tanya Hudson on mental health through family activities

1916 Irish resources
Tips from COGG.

Parents as partners
Marion Healy reflects on partnership with the local community

Using Lego WeDo in a DEIS school
Erica Hogan writes about using Lego as a HSLC initiative

Book reviews
Brian and the Giant • The Butterfly Shell • Max and Me

Tap down 42nd Street
TMS present American musical 42nd Street

Interested in technology
CESI announce their 2016 conference

Cumann na mBunscol news
Football League season kicks off

Born to run
Primary teachers promote inclusion in sport

Food waste reduction
Corduff pupils take the challenge!

Win a night in City North Hotel
See page 58 for more details

Noticeboard
Upcoming events

Comhar Linn draw and crossword

Scoilnet panel
1916 app launched

Competition
Win a night in City North Hotel
See page 58 for more details
Dear Editor,
My current trip to Ethiopia as a volunteer teacher was facilitated to a great extent by the generosity of INTO’s solidarity fund. I volunteered in a large town called Soddo, about 6 hours drive south of the capital Addis Ababa. Vincentian Lay Missionaries (VLM) who are based in Dublin organised my placement there in conjunction with the Daughters of Charity. The sisters run a Kindergarten teacher training institute as well as a Montessori school which accommodates about 100 three to six year old children. My role was to help improve the basic English of the 47 female teacher trainees and also impart some ideas on arts/crafts and physical education.

The trainees, most of whom come from poor backgrounds are sponsored by Catholic charities/organisations or individual donors and spend one year learning Montessori teaching methods and live on campus. After graduating, they return to their native regions in Ethiopia where they will set up their own small schools or join existing schools. It’s wonderful to see how motivated and willing to learn the students are and shows how grateful they are of their opportunity for further education.

Hopefully my small contribution as a volunteer will help them along the way. I want to express my sincere thanks to the INTO for allowing me the opportunity to volunteer in a country where about half of the estimated 92 million people are under 15 so resources are very limited.

Yours sincerely
Michael Dunford, Waterford City Branch

If you are considering volunteering in 2016, and wish to apply to the INTO Solidarity Fund, please contact Georgina Glackin at (01) 8047450 or gglackin@into.ie
INTO project team on new entrant pay

Inaugural meeting discusses combating inequality

The INTO project team on new entrant pay held its first meeting on Friday 4 December 2015 in INTO Head Office.

Emma Dineen, INTO President, welcomed members of the project team and thanked them for agreeing to undertake this work on behalf of the union.

Sheila Nunan, General Secretary, provided an overview to the meeting of developments in public service pay since 2008 with a particular focus on new entrant teacher issues.

Noel Ward, Deputy General Secretary, outlined the challenges in the work and the remit of the project team. He identified key questions such as the application of ‘equalisation’ and whether this should be sought through the scale or via allowances, the importance of actuarial quantifying of differentials, and clarifying if ‘career earnings’ is the appropriate earnings comparative measure.

All members of the project team made contributions demonstrating the impact of pay inequalities on their personal and professional lives, and highlighting the significant anger at the blatant violation of the equal pay principle.

There was a discussion on how to progress INTO policy, including options such as political lobbying, challenges under equality legislation, prioritising the issue at pay talks and industrial action. The discussion also included a consideration of a timescale for progress, the political landscape and the range of public service groups affected.

The project team meets again later this month. As one agenda item for the February meeting, the INTO has asked an actuary to make a presentation on the salary differentials at various career stages and their implications for career earnings.

Meanwhile, the INTO Executive has again tabled a motion for Annual Congress on the pay equality issue.

Shortage of substitute teachers

The INTO has in recent weeks highlighted the chronic shortage of substitute teachers. This is due to a reduced output of graduates from the colleges in 2015, reduced salary scales for NQTs, recruitment abroad and the failure to put in place panels of supply teachers.

Circular 31/11 covers the recruitment of substitute teachers. This circular is very clear that recruiting a retired teacher is entirely appropriate where efforts to employ a teacher without regular work are unsuccessful.

In order to be paid retired teachers have to be registered with the Teaching Council. Many retired colleagues let their registration lapse as up to now there were significant numbers of recently qualified graduates available. At the time of going to press the general secretary was raising the possibility of a fast track re-registration process for retired teachers as one response to the supply crisis.

Updates will be posted on www.into.ie.
INTO ballot: industrial action

Reinstate promoted posts • Improve teachers’ career prospects •

Later this month the INTO will ballot members on industrial action next month in response to the continued ban on promotion in schools and increasing workload of members.

The decision to ballot was finalised at a meeting of the CEC last month.

The ballot will ask teachers to participate in industrial action in the form of a directive to be issued by the CEC on non-cooperation with school self-evaluation.

All members are asked to support the action by voting yes at locally arranged ballot meetings.

The INTO has been seeking an end to the ban on promotions in primary schools and the reinstatement of promoted posts lost in the last eight years. To date the DES has not responded positively to these demands which has led to the calling of the ballot.

The ban was introduced in 2009 and has led to the loss of thousands of promotions in primary schools. This has severely hit the career prospects of unpromoted teachers and has increased the work burden on those in promoted posts.

The general secretary Sheila Nunan described the eight year ban on promotion in primary schools as “intolerable”. She said it was having a severe impact on the promotional prospects and earnings of teachers and was compromising the running of schools.

“In modern schools leadership must be shared,” said Ms Nunan. “There is more administration and bureaucracy than ever. Meeting increased demand from parents, pupils and the DES cannot be done without the necessary resources such as a leadership team of promoted teachers.”

The INTO has noted plans by the DES to increase the workload of teachers in the self-evaluation of teaching and learning and to introduce self-evaluation of leadership and management in schools.

Ms Nunan said the ban on promotion is severely limiting the capacity of an increasing number of schools to engage with the process of school self-evaluation at present. She also said the introduction of new language curriculum into primary schools would mean it will not be possible for schools to extend their involvement in school

Impact of the moratorium

In 1995, 35% of primary teachers were promoted, while in 2005, 49% were promoted. In 2009, the Government decided to implement a recruitment and promotion moratorium across the civil and public sector.

With effect from 27 March 2009 schools could no longer make any appointments to assistant principal and special duties posts, nor could they replace post holders on leave of absence.

Circular 22/09, which implemented the changes, stated that: “It is a matter for the school authority to re-organise and prioritise the appropriate duties for post of responsibility holders in the context of implementing this moratorium.”

Table 1 shows the impact of the moratorium for the 2013/2014 school year, the last available statistics from the DES.

The percentage of teachers holding a promoted post has fallen to just under 40%.

Since 2009, INTO Congresses have noted the effect of the moratorium on promoted posts and demanded that it be lifted.
on promotion ban

End intolerable work burden

self-evaluation at this time.

She called on the DES to respond positively to the INTO's demand for a lifting of the moratorium on posts of responsibility in schools and co-operate in alleviating workload in schools.

Recently completed research by the union shows significantly increased workload stress in primary teaching. This research identifies as stressors demands by inspectors, increased paperwork requirements and the continued moratorium on promotion in primary schools.

The INTO is also conducting an updated survey of schools to assess the local and regional impact of the moratorium on promotion, and will use the results in its campaign to end the ban (see below).

Survey on promotion ban in primary schools

A survey to measure the effect of the moratorium on promoted posts was posted to all INTO staff representatives last month. Thank you to those who returned the survey promptly. Staff reps who haven’t yet completed the survey are asked to do so and return it to INTO Head Office in the pre-paid envelope supplied.

The survey is part of union’s work to counteract the moratorium on posts of responsibility.

If you have any queries, or if you did not receive a survey please contact Georgina Glackin at (01) 8047745 or email gglackin@into.ie

Ballot arrangements

- Each branch will conduct a ballot of members in the branch as per a Register of members provided by Head Office;
- Members must attend in person to collect and cast their ballot during the specified time-frame;
- Ballot papers cannot be handed out before the poll is open;
- At the closing of the poll, the ballot will be counted in public and the result declared.
- As each branch is conducting its own ballot it is not possible for members in one branch area to cast their votes at a meeting of a neighbouring branch.
- In circumstances where more than one branch is using the same venue on the same night separate ballot boxes must be provided and the votes of each branch counted separately.

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Is a ballot necessary? Can the CEC not simply issue a directive?

Yes, a ballot is necessary under the terms of the Industrial Relations Act for any type of industrial action. Once a majority has been secured then the CEC can issue a directive.

I am on leave without pay, can I vote?

INTO Rule 76(8) states that: “Teachers on leave without pay including extended sick leave and extended maternity leave, as well as teachers on career breaks do not have the right to vote at meetings or in elections or ballots where their absence from school totals, or is scheduled to total, a period in excess of one school year.”
Opportunity for teachers probated in a restricted setting to achieve full registration

Following INTO engagement with the Teaching Council, teachers who have been probated in a restricted setting and do not have any other outstanding conditions and who fulfil certain criteria will be eligible to apply for full registration. The criteria require: that the teacher is or has been teaching a full nationally recognised curriculum modified in line with the guidelines as set out by the NCCA, to a minimum of six students on a full-time basis for the entire day, and is fully responsible for the learning of the students and has responsibilities comparable to those of a mainstream class teacher.

The Teaching Council has announced that in order to facilitate the orderly introduction of the policy, the commencement will occur on 1 September 2016. Anyone who has been probated in a restricted setting or commenced probation up to and including the 2015/2016 school year will be eligible to apply providing they meet the criteria.

Payment uplift for certain post-2011 entrants to teaching in Ireland

The INTO has secured gains for a number of members covered by one aspect of the INTO challenge to pay inequalities affecting new entrants.

The INTO tabled at the Teachers’ Conciliation Council the salary entitlement of new (2011+) entrants to teaching who had previous experience in analogous posts in another EU State before 2011. This was raised in light of the EU Freedom of Movement of Workers Directive.

New entrants to teaching in Ireland from 1 January 2011 started on salary and allowances 10% below those of previous entrants (improvements to this were secured in the HRA 2013 – see below). Where a teacher had worked in an analogous position in the Irish public service prior to 1 January 2011, s/he was not placed on the reduced scale.

Following a European ruling a similar provision will apply in respect of teachers. The teachers affected are those who commenced teaching in Ireland after 1 January 2011 but who had taught previously in the public service in another EU State before that date. In the case of primary teachers, such service would normally have been given in the UK.

The formal issue to be determined in each case is whether a person worked in another EU country prior to January 2011, where such service in Ireland would have resulted in an entitlement to be placed on pre-2011 pay scales. The issues which now arise for such teachers relate to: (i) entitlement to be placed on a higher point of the merged pay scales, and (ii) backdating of salary adjustment, with payment of arrears, to date of commencement of employment in this State.

The DES has advised the INTO that it will issue a formal notice on this matter, in order to allow teachers concerned to be identified and to have the upward adjustment to payment applied.
NEW MORTGAGE ADVISORY SERVICE FOR INTO MEMBERS

Buying a home or changing mortgage provider?

EDUC Mortgages is delighted to partner with the INTO to offer members expert mortgage advice and exclusive offers. Buying a home is a daunting task and dealing with the maze of offers from all the banks can be intimidating. EDUC Mortgages will advise members on all aspects of mortgages.

So if you are a first time buyer, moving home, considering building a new home or if you currently have a negative equity mortgage we can help you get a new mortgage.

Offers
EDUC’s exclusive offers for INTO members include:
- Free consultation
- €300 towards legal fees
- Free first year’s life/mortgage Protection Insurance
- Free valuation
- Same interest rate as you receive from the lenders directly

EDUC Mortgages has access to the following providers:
- KBC Bank
- Permanent TSB
- Ulster Bank
- Haven Mortgages (Broker arm of AIB and EBS)

EDUC are one of fewer than 30 mortgage brokers with access to Ulster Bank. For one phone call, one application form, you have access to the leading mortgage providers.

Already have a mortgage?
Do you currently have a mortgage? Now is the time to re-examine your interest rate switch and potentially save thousands on mortgage repayments.
- Based on the analysis of over half a million mortgages, up to 21 per cent of mortgages could save money by switching.
  If you had a €300,000 mortgage over 30 years at an interest rate of 4.25% and you switched to an interest rate of 3.25% you could save over €166 per month. It will cost you nothing to change. Contact EDUC Mortgages today to see how much you can save.

EDUC is planning a question/answer service for INTO members. Please email questions@educmortgages.ie.

Attend one of the mortgage advice seminars for INTO members
Mortgage information seminars will be held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday 10 February in the Clarion Hotel, Liffey Valley, Dublin and at 4 p.m. on Wednesday 2 March in the Silver Springs Hotel, Cork.

If you wish to attend a seminar, please email Georgina Glackin at gglackin@into.ie quoting your INTO membership number or teacher number and school roll number. Please specify which seminar you would like to register for.

SEÁN COUCH, QFA, Director, EDUC Mortgages.

The INTO is not a Qualified Financial Advisor (QFA). Therefore, any materials in relation to mortgage brokerage services do not constitute or comprise INTO advice and are provided for general information purposes only. The company EDUC Mortgages operates independently of INTO through QFAs regulated by the Central Bank. Terms and conditions apply in respect of all financial services and the arrangement of any mortgage brokering services rests between the individual member and the service provider.

Review of principals’/deputy principals’ fora

At its meeting in December 2015, the PDC recommended a review of the operation of the INTO principals’ and deputy principals’ fora.

The fora were established in 1994 to ensure that principal teachers’ views and concerns had a clear focus within the Organisation.

A decade later fora were formally established under Rule 66 of the INTO Rules and Constitution.

At the most recent training event held for fora officers, (April 2015) participants were asked to identify the issues arising for the fora under three headings – the purpose of the fora, the challenges arising and priorities identified. The PDC considered the responses and identified the need for a comprehensive review of the fora.

At its meeting in January 2016, the CEC agreed to establish a review sub-committee, which will comprise representatives from the CEC, PDC, district secretaries and forum officers. The sub-committee will be chaired by the INTO president. The CEC and PDC have nominated their representatives, and district secretaries and forum officers will be asked to express interest in taking part.
Improved flexibility for job-sharers

Welcome changes to job-sharing scheme

The DES issued Circular 75/2015 on job-sharing in primary schools in December 2015. This circular superseded all previous circulars in relation to job-sharing arrangements for teachers in recognised primary and post-primary schools.

The INTO welcomes the changes to the operation of the scheme, particularly in respect of the improved flexibility for members. Interschool job-shares between teachers will still be permissible, as will job-sharing between colleagues in the same school.

However, a new provision means that where a teacher applies to job-share (in the absence of a partner) the employer can recruit a fixed term part-time teacher to work the balance of the available hours. This is good news for teachers who wish to job-share but have struggled to find a partner.

It will also be possible in exceptional circumstances to apply to commence a job-share during the school year until 31 August, with a board’s approval.

The main changes outlined in the new circular are listed below:

1 Options for job-sharing: As heretofore a primary teacher may apply to share a whole time post. However, under the new circular a teacher can also apply to reduce their hours to 50% of those of a whole-time teacher. Therefore, there will be two options for a job-sharing arrangement for henceforth:

   a) Sharing a whole time post: Two whole time teachers in the same school apply to job-share or in the case of interschool job-sharing (primary schools only) where two whole time teachers in two different schools apply to job-share.

   b) A teacher applies to job-share and the employer is willing to recruit a teacher for the balance of the available hours on a specified purpose (fixed term) contract which will terminate at the end of the school year.

2 Applying to job-share during the course of the school year: The minimum period for which a job-sharing arrangement may occur is one school year. However, the new regulations allow an employer to authorise a job-sharing arrangement during the school year. Paragraph 4.2 applies: In exceptional circumstances an employer may authorise a job-sharing arrangement to commence during the course of the school year and terminate not earlier than the end of that same school year.

3 Eligibility: Paragraph 5.1 – a teacher may apply to job-share where he/she

   a) is registered with the Teaching Council and

   b) will have satisfactorily completed at the end of the school year in which they are applying 12 months of continuous service with the current employer and

   c) holds a post for the following school year greater than 50% of a whole time teacher. (i.e. 14 hours 10 minutes per week in the case of a primary teacher or 11 hours per week teaching in the case of a post primary teacher).

Principal and home school liaison co-ordinators are not eligible to apply for job-sharing.

(Previously in order to be eligible to apply for job-sharing a teacher had to have had 2 years’ service in a permanent capacity. They would, also, have had to have completed probation in order to be eligible to job share).

4 Change in the date of application: Prior to the issuing of this circular the closing date for applications to job-share was 1 March. Under the new circular the closing date has been changed to 1 February. The employer must issue a written notice of approval or refusal by 1 March at the latest.

5 Provision to withdraw your application to job share: Paragraph 6.7 – Taking account of the extent of arrangements to be put in place by the employer to cater for a job-sharing post, the applicant should not be permitted to withdraw his/her application after 14 April, or from once the replacement teacher’s contract has been signed, whichever happens first. This should be included in the notice from the school to the teacher.

6 Provision to withdraw from a job-sharing arrangement in exceptional circumstances: Paragraph 6.8 – In exceptional circumstances if the applicant can be accommodated within the approved staffing allocation and subject to contractual arrangements, an application for withdrawal from a job-sharing scheme and/or an earlier return to full-time employment may be considered by the employer. However, such an application may not be considered beyond 1 November.

7 Clarity in relation to other employment while job-sharing: Paragraph 9.1 – Job-sharing teachers may not

   a) engage in any substitute teaching;

   b) act as a special needs assistant in the school in which s/he is employed or any other school; or

   c) undertake home tuition hours.

9.2 It is not permissible for a job-sharing teacher to engage in outside employment without the consent of the employer. It shall be a matter for the employer to determine whether or not any such employment is in conflict with their ability to carry out their duties as an employee of the school. If such a conflict is deemed to exist, the approval of the employer shall be withheld.
Exciting opportunity to work in INTO Head Office

Two fixed-term positions as paid interns – school year 2016/17

The INTO invites applications for two positions as paid interns for the school year 2016/2017. Persons appointed will be located in INTO Head Office (35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1).

These positions will be filled by secondment from teaching, subject to securing board approval. Persons appointed will be required to work normal office hours, Monday to Friday, for the school year 2016-2017. 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 will receive an additional allowance subject to a maximum combined amount.

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

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

The responsibilities will include working directly with sections within the INTO as assigned, assisting with members’ queries and cases, 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 and any involvement in the INTO and how you believe you could contribute to/benefit from working with our Head Office team;
• names and contact details of two referees (with note of how each person knows you).

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

All applications must be received not later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday, 24 February 2016.

It is anticipated that a short-listing and interview process will take place with interviews scheduled for Monday, 7 March 2016. All applicants will be advised of the outcome.
Teaching Council elections 2016

The term of office of the current Teaching Council comes to an end in March 2016 and the process of electing teacher members to the Teaching Council will soon get underway. Any teacher registered on 30 September 2015 is entitled to vote. Voting will take place online between 22 February and noon on 9 March. Information regarding the voting process is available on www.teachingcouncil.ie. The closing date for receipt of nominations for those seeking election was 29 January.

INTO endorsed candidates

The INTO has endorsed 16 candidates to run in the Teaching Council elections. These candidates have addressed district meetings throughout their electoral constituencies, sought nominations, given their views on the Council and outlined how they intend to make a difference for INTO members if elected. Over the next four pages the endorsed candidates introduce themselves to you, their electorate. The INTO urges all members to cast their vote in favour of the INTO endorsed candidates to ensure a strong and united voice for primary teachers on the Teaching Council.

Poster

A poster outlining details of the INTO candidates running in the Teaching Council Election is being distributed to every school with this issue of InTouch. It would be appreciated if you would display this poster prominently in your school.
Teaching Council elections 2016

CONNAUGHT-ULSTER – 2 SEATS (1 MALE, 1 FEMALE)

Karen Devine

My career in teaching began 28 years ago. I have been a teaching principal for the past 11 years, five of which I spent on secondment to the various support services, working with schools in the north east. I currently work as an associate with PDST and also as a facilitator with NIPT. This work brings me into contact with many teachers/principals/NQTs on a regular basis and means that I am in the privileged position of hearing their opinions first hand.

As an active INTO member I represent District V on the INTO Education Committee and I am chairperson of the Cavan Branch of the INTO Principals’ and Deputy Principals’ Fora.

Amongst other issues, I believe that alternatives to Droichead and probation need to be explored. If elected, I assure you that I will be a strong voice for you, representing your views on this and other relevant concerns to the Teaching Council.

Terry Lynch

As a teacher in Cavan for 13 years I have worked on cross border projects to enhance special needs education and served as INTO branch chairperson. I have completed a Masters in Education from Harvard where I focused on literacy and education policy and I have toured many schools in Finland. These experiences have given me a perspective of the effects of policy making on teaching.

The Irish education system is at a crossroads with initiatives being introduced that are redefining the relationship between teachers, students, principals and parents. While I see many advantages, I share the concerns of many teachers about unreasonable additional workloads. My experience in further education places me in a good position to analyse and question the research used to justify these new initiatives.

With your support and your vote I will use my voice on the Teaching Council to shape policy that supports and celebrates teachers as professionals.

Bríd Ní Raghaillagh

Tógadh mé le Gaeilge in Iarthar na Gaillimhe agus tá mé ag plé le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge le píosa fada.

I currently teach in Loughrea, Co Galway. I have over 20 years’ experience as a teacher in both mainstream and resource/LS.

Having organised CPD courses for teachers as secretary of ILSA, I know that CPD must be flexible, varied and led by the profession. I have an LLB and a Masters in Public Law. I consider Fitness to Teach to be one of the biggest changes facing the profession and I want to use my legal knowledge to protect the rights of teachers and ensure that the procedures are fair and that only serious cases will be considered.

I want the Council to act on the many concerns held in relation to Droichead and in particular the sign-off by principals and realise that we are tired of under-resourced initiatives.

Eamonn Shaughnessy

Staff representative, delegate to district and chairperson elect of Castlebar Branch, I’m a long time INTO activist.

Graduate of Mary Immaculate College (1992) and Leeds Metropolitan University, M.Sc. in Physical Education (2011) with experience in special education, multi-class and single stream classrooms. I’ve been teaching in St Peter’s NS, Snugboro, Castlebar, Co Mayo since 1997. I’m also an IT tutor for the PDST. My aims include:

1. Bridging the communication gulf between teachers and the Teaching Council.
2. Simplifying the re-registration process for teachers whose membership has lapsed.
3. Addressing where possible, issues surrounding permanency of employment.
4. Developing a roadmap towards post graduate recognition of professional development engaged in by teachers.

I believe I have the vibrancy and enthusiasm to be effective in achieving these aims. I sincerely ask for your number 1 or highest preference vote as your INTO candidate for the Connaught-Ulster constituency. Go raibh maith agaibh!
Teaching Council elections 2016

MUNSTER – 3 SEATS (1 MALE, 1 FEMALE AND THE NEXT HIGHEST VOTE MALE/FEMALE)

Derbhile de Paor

An experienced teacher and school leader, a graduate of MIC, I hold a HDEA from UCC and an M.Ed in Mentoring from UL. As a member of the outgoing Council I served on both the Education and Disciplinary committees and have gained valuable experience, understanding and interest in teacher education. I have also served on the Council review panel for the professional masters of education. At present I am engaged in doctoral research on CPD for teachers with the aim of ensuring the professional voice of teachers is heard and influences Council policy.

I am running for election to the Council for a second term because there is a need for experienced voices on the Council with the ability to connect the vision provided by the Council to the reality of practicing teachers so that policy on teacher education and the growing professional reputation and image of teachers develops from the ground up.

Seán McMahon

A teaching principal in West Clare, member CEC since 2007, previously elected to the Principals’ and Deputy Principals’ National Committee, served as branch secretary/chairperson I was honoured to be elected INTO president 2014/15.

Teaching Council (TC) responsibilities such as registration, induction/probation including ‘Droichead’ together with ‘Fitness to Practice’ and ‘Cosán’ are daunting initiatives that are impacting on teachers. I am most concerned that these policies may be implemented unilaterally without teachers’ agreement. I vehemently oppose this. The TC must listen to the views of teachers. If elected, I will bring this voice to the TC table – strongly, forcibly, persuasively and honestly.

Tá sé thar a bheith tábhachtach go nglacfaidh gach múinteoir páirt sa toghcháin seo agus go gdaireadh an mhuinteoir go soiléir ag na cruinnithe den Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta. Tuigim go mór na fadhbanna ar fad atá as dr gcóras na mhuineoirí a bhfuil i gceist ag mo thost.”

The views of teachers in staffrooms in Munster are absolutely not represented at Teaching Council. There is an undoubted disconnect between teachers and the Council.

I have proposed a motion for Congress 2016 calling on every INTO branch to create a ‘Teaching Council Liaison Officer’ with whom those elected can share information, thus ensuring updates are given to teachers in schools on a regular basis.

My record since the last elections in 2012 has been to oppose the unworkable and ‘out of touch’ parts of the new initiatives introduced by the Teaching Council. Through my INTO activity, I have worked tirelessly on many issues including the plight of NQTs (salary and job creation), maternity sickness, principal’s workload and JobBridge.

Teaching Council initiatives are continuously shaping our profession, making this THE most important election of our careers. If elected I will be a firm, strong voice representing teachers, not initiatives.

Seamus O’Connor

Through the forum of the Teaching Council:
• to re-affirm the special role of teachers in the social, cultural and economic development of Ireland;
• to support teachers in their professional lives;
• to improve communication and support a two way dialogue with Múinteoirí na Mumhan;
• guth láidir ar son na Gaeilge.

Through the experience I have gained as príomh–oide of An Mhodhscoil – The Model School, Limerick and previously as a teacher in a DEIS school, I have the insight to understand and articulate the many challenges and issues our profession is experiencing.

I will also bring the leadership skills I have applied in both teaching and sport to the service of teachers.

Iar-Cathaoirleach ar;
• Coiste Príomhoidí Luimní
• Mo Chumann Aithiúil de CLG

I also have an M. ED (Mgmt) specialising in Quality Education

Diarmuid Ó Murchú

My objectives are:
Through the forum of the Teaching Council:
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Teaching Council Elections

MUNSTER – 3 SEATS (1 MALE, 1 FEMALE AND THE NEXT HIGHEST VOTE MALE/FEMALE)

Tracie Tobin

I am teaching principal of St Michael's Infant School in Limerick City and former cathaoirleach of Limerick City INTO Branch. I am chairperson of the INTO Equality Committee where I represent the teachers of Limerick and Kerry. I hold an M.Ed in Special Educational Needs and am a maths recovery associate with the PDST.

I am standing for election to the Teaching Council because I want to promote, protect and defend the professional and employment interests of teachers.

I believe the Council must properly regulate entry to the profession. This will guarantee the highest calibre of entrants and maximise employment opportunities for teachers.

The Council will have responsibility for ‘fitness to practise’ matters. I will work tirelessly using my INTO experience to ensure fair procedures and due process for teachers.

The Council will also set standards for the professional development of teachers. In this and all other matters I will be a strong teacher’s voice on the Council.

Dublin – 2 Seats (1 Male, 1 Female)

Gregor Kerr

I don’t trust the Teaching Council or its agenda. If you don’t trust it either and want teachers’ voices heard strongly at Teaching Council level, vote for me. The Teaching Council is ignoring teachers on issues like Droichead, Cosán, JobBridge, Fitness to Practice etc. … If you want to see INTO policy fought for at the Teaching Council table, vote for me.

I have been actively involved in the INTO for over 25 years. I have a strong record of standing up for teachers, contributing to INTO policy and helping to organise campaigns locally and nationally. I will bring those strengths – Ideas and Action – to the role of teacher representative on the Teaching Council.

Members elected to the Teaching Council should establish real consultations with those who have elected them. I will do this through regular communication with all INTO branches in Dublin and through my GregorKerrTeachingCouncil facebook page.

Máire Lineen

I teach in Scoil Mhuire Senior, a DEIS Band 1 school in Blanchardstown, INTO District 15. I am an active INTO member, and Blanchardstown Branch Organiser since 2012. Like many of you, I am not happy with the Teaching Council.

I think it is:

* seriously disconnected from teachers;
* increasing our workload without visible gains for pupils;
* allowing unqualified people to register;
* ignoring principals’ and teachers’ input re. Droichead;
* trying to force mandatory CPD on teachers (Cosán);
* frightening teachers about complaints (Fitness to Practice);
* facilitating JobBridge for probation against its own guidelines.

I seek proper consultation, transparency and a strong collective voice for teachers on the Teaching Council. If elected, I promise I will be an advocate for teachers on all of the above.

I promise real communication between the Teaching Council and INTO members.

Contact: ‘Maire Lineen, Teaching Council 2016 Elections’ on Facebook.

Oilibhéar Ó Braonáin

A graduate of St Pat’s with an M.Ed. from UCD, I teach in OLBNS, Ballinteer, and am a member of Dublin South County Branch Committee. I have been an INTO member and teacher for 20 years with a broad range of experience in both mainstream and special education.

I am acutely conscious of the pressures faced by mainstream teachers and wish to give a strong representative voice to this constituency on the Teaching Council. I am opposed to any moves to link CPD with teacher registration and/or salary increments and believe that the Droichead pilot requires further scrutiny and debate by the membership before moves are made towards its broader extension as the accepted model for probation and induction.

Impím ar mhúinteoirí Bhaile Átha Cliath deis a thabhairt dom seasamh ar a son agus a dtuairimí a chur chun cinn go tréan ar an gComhairle Mhúinteoiríreachtta.
Teaching Council elections 2016

LEINSTER – 2 SEATS (1 MALE, 1 FEMALE)

Catherine Doolan

I have taught in both mainstream and special education for 28 years, and I am teaching principal in Lumcloon NS, Co Offaly, since 2009. A graduate of Carysfort College, I also hold an M. Ed. in Literacy from NUIG. I am currently researching the growing demands for accountability on primary teachers from outside agencies, including the Teaching Council, as part of a doctoral programme in St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra. For many years, I have delivered CPD to teachers in Literacy, ICT and SPHE. I have been actively involved in the INTO throughout my career.

I am passionate that Irish primary teachers’ long tradition of being professionally responsible be protected, not diminished, by Teaching Council policies. I promise, if elected, to represent the voice of teachers on how they consider Council policy may impact on their daily practice, their professionalism and their ability to meet the needs of teaching and learning in the 21st century.

Colm Harte

A former class teacher in St Michael’s BNS in Longford town I was teaching principal in Fermoyle NS, Lanesboro, and am now administrative principal in Scoil Treasa, Killoe, Longford.

I have been INTO staff representative and cathaoirleach of INTO Longford Branch, District 7 and Longford Principals’ Forum.

I am on the management committee of Carrick-on-Shannon Education Centre and was the 2013 winner of the Pat Trainor Award from Cumann na mBunscol Náisiúnta.

I believe there is a need to change the top-down approach of the Teaching Council and connect with the teacher in schools. I am committed to bringing about changes to Droichead that reflect teachers’ views and meet the needs of the profession. I will work to incentivise engagement in CPD through the restoration of posts with career pathways.

I will be a vigorous guardian of teachers’ rights at all times. I will be a strong, practical, pragmatic and fearless voice on behalf of all teachers.

Stephen Marken

I seek your vote in the forthcoming Teaching Council elections. I have made the decision to run for election because I, like most teachers, have very little faith in the current Teaching Council.

I want the opportunity to work together with like minded teachers to reform the Teaching Council from within. The Teaching Council has done nothing to promote the profession, on the contrary they have added to the pressure. Droichead, Cosán and Fitness to Teach have all been met with complete disgust by our members. I share their disgust.

I am a proud trade unionist and I would bring this background to the Teaching Council.

I believe that the Teaching Council has become too powerful and has become a stick to beat us with.

I look forward to bringing my dedication and energy to the Teaching Council and working to be a strong Voice for Teachers.

Niamh McGrath

I want to be a strong voice with fresh ideas on the Teaching Council. If elected:

• I will ensure that the Teaching Council is accountable to teachers on the decisions it makes.
• I will oppose the imposition of unrealistic policies on schools and teachers.

I will be particularly vigilant on the issues of:

• the Droichead model of probation;
• the Cosán framework for continuing professional development;
• Fitness to Teach hearings.

The Council also needs to make recommendations on the adequate supply of teachers.

I work as a mainstream teacher in Callan, Co Kilkenny. In addition, I have gained a broad range of experience through interning as an official in INTO Head Office, serving Kilkenny City INTO as chairperson and branch secretary and earning a Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Management from NUI Maynooth.

I am well placed to represent you and am determined to make the Teaching Council work for us.
Legal protection for LGBT teachers

Last December Dáil Éireann passed the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2013 which will make it illegal for religious run schools to discriminate against LGBT teachers on the grounds of their sexuality.

The Bill amends Section 37(1) of the Employment Equality Act.

The passing of the legislation was welcomed by the INTO LGBT teachers group as a positive step towards inclusivity in schools. The group, which campaigned for more than a decade on this issue, welcomed the passing of the legislation and said the changes would strengthen employment protection for LGBT teachers working in publicly funded denominational schools in the Republic of Ireland.

New language curriculum

The new language curriculum for junior infants to second class is now on line at http://curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Language. An information video is also available. The hard copy version will be available in the coming months.

The NCCA developed the language curriculum in response to teachers’ views of the current curriculum in English and Irish. It reflects the most up to date research on young children’s language learning, the philosophy of Aistear, the early years’ curriculum framework and the literacy and numeracy strategy.

The INTO demanded a phased introduction of the revised language curriculum including awareness raising and whole school professional development.

Principal teachers have been invited to an information seminar on the revised language curriculum and a second seminar is planned for spring.

Whole school professional development facilitated by school closures is planned for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

See Circular 61/2015 for more details.

INTO political fund grants

Important notice for General Election candidates

Grants – subject to limits specified in law - may be payable from the INTO Political Fund towards expenses incurred by a member who is a candidate seeking election to the Dáil or Seanad.

It is a requirement under Rule 111 that an application from an INTO member for a grant must be made by the applicant in writing prior to the election. While the amount and payment of any such grant is entirely at the discretion of the CEC, any member who is a candidate in the forthcoming elections and who wishes to apply for a grant from the INTO Political Fund must do so in writing in advance of the relevant election. This may be done by writing to the General Treasurer at INTO Head Office, 35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1 or through email to the General Treasurer (by emailing ggglackin@into.ie).

Pictured with Emma Dineen, INTO President, on her recent visit to Farran NS, Cork, were (back row left to right): Eamonn Creedon, Aoiife Hlector, Sarah Kiely, Gerard O’Donoghue, James Kelleher, Stephen Lehane, Michelle Dunlea. Front row left to right: Áine Burns, Maria McCarthy, Aoiife Forde, Emma Dineen, Marie O’Connell, Colette Murphy.
The key principles underlying the INTO Professional Development Unit (INTO PDU) and its programmes are:

- Accessibility to programmes for teachers in every part of the country
- Quality in the design and delivery guaranteed by monitoring and evaluation
- Accountability and cost effectiveness
- Every year the INTO Professional Development Unit runs summer courses for members on a wide range of topics. A key feature of all INTO Learning activities is the involvement of practicing teachers. These courses are designed and delivered by teachers for teachers.

This year INTO PDU is looking to expand the number of online facilitators available to work on these courses during the summer.

Training will be made available and a fee is payable for the work. We are looking for members who are willing and able to undertake this work in either July or in August.

The INTO Professional Development/Learning Unit is currently compiling a bank of names of teachers who may be interested in facilitating online courses for INTO.

If you are interested in this work please complete the Expression of Interest Form 2016 on the front of the INTO website and return to Professional Development/Learning Unit, 35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1 or email form to learninghelpdesk@into.ie

The role of INTO staff representative is an extremely important role in our union. Staff reps are the link for the INTO in each and every one of our schools and the INTO face for each and every one of our members.

Staff reps are the main recruiter of new INTO members. They are the communicator of much of our news and current issues, particularly when it comes to campaign materials and ballots or directives. They are often the first point of contact and support for any member experiencing difficulty in school. Without staff reps the INTO would not function as effectively as it does.

In October, the INTO launched a dedicated online support course for staff reps. This course provides staff reps with the basic information they need to carry out their role, clarifies often held misunderstandings and emphasises where they can source any information they may require. This short course consists of five modules:

- Role and responsibilities of staff rep.
- INTO structures and communication.
- Understanding teacher terms and conditions.
- Workplace relationships and procedures for when difficulties arise.

- Supporting NQTs through probation. The course is free and all staff reps identifiable on the INTO Membership System have been sent an email containing an enrolment key to access the course.

If you are a staff rep but did not receive this email please contact tut@into.ie.

All staff reps who complete this course before 31 March will be entitled to a free INTO online summer course – details of this offer are posted on the course.

Additional supports include local branch organised staff rep meetings/training sessions. Please contact your branch secretary for further details.

1916: Working as an historian is an online resource which the INTO has developed for members to facilitate the engagement of school children with the Easter Rising. By using primary sources and providing opportunities for the pupils to work as historians we are equipping them with a set of transferable skills that can be used in other historical enquiries.

The first module ‘Context’ explores what it meant to be Irish to different groups of people in the years leading up to the Rising. The subject of everyday life follows, providing a context for exploring life at the time, affording the students the opportunity to compare and contrast their own experiences with the people living in Ireland in 1916.

The second module ‘Before the Rising’ focuses on events and personalities relating to the days leading up to the Rising, including the signatories of the Proclamation.

‘During the Rising’ looks at the Rising itself, paying particular attention to the Proclamation, on account of ‘Proclamation Day’ in schools. Other resources are provided to explore the week as it unfolded and the sites of the Rising in Dublin.

Almost all of the resources are for use in the classroom, but there are a few which are specifically aimed at teachers, for example, 1916 Rising and Your Locality, where some ideas around linking your area with this national event are suggested.

We hope that you find this resource a useful tool to explore the 1916 Rising and that your students will enjoy the active learning involved. By providing them with the experience of ‘working as an historian’ using the materials, we also hope that they have acquired a set of skills that can be applied to other topics in history with which they engage in the future.

The resource pack is available to download at moodle.intolearning.ie and costs €25.

Enquiries to learninghelpdesk@into.ie

Free online summer course for INTO staff reps

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An Post/INTO Handwriting Competition back for 2016

Does your class have prize winning handwriting skills?
The An Post/INTO Handwriting competition is back in schools this year following its great success in 2015, when over 65,000 school children took part. Teachers took up the mantle of good handwriting – because we all know the relevance of clear and legible handwriting, from early learning to exams, in working life and as a communication tool. We’re asking you to take part again in 2016!
The theme for this year is Children and Families in the 1916 Easter Rising, marking the role of the GPO in the 1916 Easter Rising and the impact of that week’s events on ordinary people.

How to enter
Taking part is easy! To download and print writing templates go to www.anpostschoolbag.ie/competition. Teachers can also watch out for competition packs which will be posted to staff representatives during the first week of February. Once completed, staff representatives can simply post selected entries back to us in the prepaid envelope provided. Enter on time and be in with a chance to win lots of fantastic prizes. Please note that the deadline for entries is Friday, 4 March 2016.

Categories
The categories in this year’s competition are:
- Category 1: junior and senior infants.
- Category 2: 1st and 2nd class.
- Category 3: 3rd and 4th class.
- Category 4: 5th and 6th class.
- Special category.

Prizes
With overall national winners and runners up being selected across the country there are lots of fantastic prizes to be won.
- Pupil, teacher, principal and school prizes for winners and runners up.
- Class VIP pass to the new GPO Witness History Exhibition for category 2, 3, 4 and special category winners.
- Local postperson visit to classrooms for category 1 winners.

Entries will be accepted in both cursive script and in print form. To keep things fun in the classroom you can download certificates of participation from anpostschoolbag.ie/competition to use in your own school or class.

Get pupils’ best handwriting in action and get your entries in before the deadline on Friday, 4 March 2016. Good luck!

Adjudication criteria
Judging of entries will be based on pupils’ ability to write legibly and fluently in a sustained piece of writing. Your pupils have the best chance to win by following these criteria:
- Neatness – uniform letter size, uniform distance between words.
- Legibility.
- Showing flow and movement (fluidity) in handwriting.
- Completion of piece.
- Punctuation.
- Personal style and flair.
- The content of the writing is unimportant but must be within the given theme.
- Any language that can be written in either a cursive script or in print will be accepted as entry to the competition.
Grace period extended

The INTO reiterates that under the terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement the ‘grace period’ for retirement has been extended to 1 April 2019 for primary teachers.

All teachers considering retirement in 2016 should take note of this.

The previous deadline to avail of the ‘grace period’ of 30 June 2016 therefore no longer applies.

The INTO is aware that some members have not been advised of the extension to 1 April 2019. Teachers depending on the DES website and contact with some DES officials are not being informed of the extension to April 2019.

Advancing schools’ autonomy

In December the DES published a consultation paper and a research paper on Advancing Autonomy in the Irish School System.

The context for preparing the papers is the proposal in the Programme for Government 2011-2016 to explore possibilities for granting additional autonomy to schools.

The documents are available on www.education.ie.

Schools in Ireland have a certain amount of autonomy at present. According to the DES, schools have a high level of autonomy in relation to pedagogy (within parameters of guidelines) and appointments.

Schools have a moderate level of autonomy in relation to staff management and assessment, minor works and small scale capital works. Schools have lesser autonomy in relation to curriculum content and major capital works.

The consultation and research papers address autonomy under the following headings:

- School governance, management and ethos.
- Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.
- Budgets and funding.

At the time of going to press the INTO is compiling a response to document. This will address areas where it is desirable for schools to have autonomy, areas of education that are best dealt with centrally, and the support and resources required by schools in order to carry out functions in the best educational interests of their pupils.

Benefits

Membership Plus brings you fantastic savings across the country …

Use your INTO Membership Plus Card to gain access to a great range of special offers and discounts for you and your family to enjoy.

If you are a new INTO member, ensure you activate your card as soon as you receive it to view the full range of offers, be kept up to date with new offers throughout the year, enter fantastic competitions and much more.

To activate your card, simply go to www.membershipplus.ie/teachers.

Save even more with Membership Plus Gift Cards …

You can enjoy discounts with Argos, Homebase, Arnotts, Debenhams, Marks & Spencer, Milano and many other big brands by purchasing a pre-paid discounted gift card in advance.

Simply visit the Membership Plus website and search for the gift card you want to purchase. You will then be taken to our supplier’s website where you can purchase the gift card online. Your discount will be applied at the time of purchasing/topping up your gift card which will then be sent to your home address ready to use in store. You can even use these on top of other offers and promotions!
Into member heads for Uganda with VSO

In April 2016, INTO member and Global Solidarity activist Maria Casey will start her VSO placement in Uganda for three months. Maria is 29 and is from Co Kerry. Over the past seven summers she has volunteered as a primary school teacher trainer for student teachers in Cambodia, Rwanda, Uganda and India. Having done her Bachelor of Education at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick in 2006, Maria was awarded a Master of Education in Development Education again at Mary I in 2009.

The longstanding VSO project she will join has been in operation since September 2013 and will conclude this coming December. Its purpose is very significant in nature and aims to generate an improvement in the overall quality of primary education in the Karamoja region of North East Uganda by introducing modern evaluation processes and procedures. Two districts are involved, Moroto and Kitodo. Twenty schools (ten from each district) are taking part, with an enrolment of over 13,000 pupils. By December 2016, it is planned that there will be both an improved school inspection system and support process for teachers. There will also be improved planning, along with self-evaluation of performance by the more than 350 teachers involved, but importantly, there will be a significant increase in community participation in school planning, development and the promotion of girls education.

“VSO volunteers taught us how to prepare learning schemes and how to make lesson plans. We are now able to create lesson plans that are localised for our students.” - Kurong Zedrick, Tapac Primary School, Moroto.

2016 Our World Irish Aid Awards

The 2016 Our World Irish Aid Awards were launched recently at Vicarstown NS, Co Cork. The Awards invite pupils across Ireland to create projects, in any medium, through which they learn about the lives of children in developing countries and the work of Irish Aid, the Government’s programme for overseas development. The projects should highlight challenges facing children in developing countries and progress being to fight poverty.

The One World, One Future theme of the 2016 awards asks that pupils imagine how their world might look in 2030 and to learn about the newly agreed UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development which seek to address the root causes of poverty worldwide.

Entries will be assessed on creativity, understanding of the theme and their impact. Projects that illustrate strengths across these three areas will receive an Our World Irish Aid Awards’ plaque at regional awards ceremonies in May, and top entries will win a place at the final awards ceremony in June, where the winner will be presented with an Our World Irish Aid Awards’ trophy.

The deadline for entries is Friday, 11 March 2016. Details on how to take part are on ourworldirishaidawards.ie.

Over 1,000 primary schools took part in the Our World Irish Aid Awards in 2015.

This year, for the first time, will see the inaugural Our World Irish Aid Awards Teacher of the Year Award. This teacher will receive an award, and will be invited to act as an ambassador for the Awards for the 2016-2017 programme.

Irish Aid is the Government’s overseas assistance programme. It is managed by the Development Cooperation Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

For further information see www.irishaid.ie
In the media

In print

Teacher shortage hits our schools in overseas jobs boom
INTO general secretary, Sheila Nunan, said salary cuts introduced for teacher graduates after 2011 must be reversed to ensure teaching remained an attractive profession in Ireland.
\textit{Irish Independent}, 13 Jan 2016

Teachers to ballot on strike action over ban on promotions
The INTO is to ballot its 33,000 members on industrial action in response to the ban on promotions and increasing workloads in primary schools. Next month’s ballot will ask teachers to stop all involvement with the Department of Education’s on-going programme of school self-evaluation, which forms part of the inspection process.
\textit{Irish Independent}, 12 Jan 2016

Obituary – Sister Eileen Randles, education campaigner
She had a shortlist of those whom she asked to pray for her. The first on the list was the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO). It must have been the first time in history that a trade union was asked to pray for a dying nun!
\textit{Irish Independent}, 27 Dec 2015

Sending your child to the school of choice via a baptism cert
In a survey by the INTO two years ago, teachers were asked whether they “willingly taught religion”. Only 49.17% responded in the affirmative.
\textit{Irish Examiner}, 19 Dec 2015

Education in 2015: the year in quotes
“With the economy improving, it is right that primary teachers begin to see their incomes restored. This agreement is an overdue restoration of some of the income teachers lost.” Sheila Nunan of INTO after the union backed the Lansdowne Road pay deal in July
\textit{The Irish Times}, 15 Dec 2015

Education in 2015: good year, bad year
Class sizes: the budget saw the first improvements in primary school classes in almost a generation. We still, however, have the largest class sizes in Europe for this age group after the UK. If nothing else, it showed the power of the INTO to secure extra funding ahead of other rivals in the education sector.
\textit{The Irish Times}, 15 Dec 2015

The Irish Independent roster
The day-to-day operation of a newsroom is underpinned by the diary, and its list of ‘markings’: the known events for which a reporter and/or a photographer is assigned. A reporter called Knightly was down for the teachers’ Congress in Cork, which we would know today as the INTO annual conference. Among the motions for discussion was one condemning “the Irish Government and the British Treasury for the callous indifference shown to the conditions of the Irish teachers”.
\textit{Irish Independent}, 10 Dec 2015

Minister to repeal rule about religion in primary education
The education minister is to remove an “archaic” rule which states religion is the most important aspect of education in primary schools. The INTO previously called on the government to abolish the rule stating it was “not fair” on either teachers or parents.
\textit{Irish Examiner}, 9 Dec 2015

Irish teachers well paid, but work longer hours in larger classes
Irish teachers are well paid by international standards, but work longer hours and with larger classes, according to a major study. Analysis by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has found that teachers here are paid more than in such countries as France, the UK and Italy. But they lag behind countries with the highest teaching salaries, including Belgium, Germany and Luxembourg. Teachers’ unions, however, say the data does not capture the pension levy imposed on public-sector workers in 2009 or pay cuts imposed under the Haddington Road agreement. Sheila Nunan, general secretary of the INTO, said: “While teachers in Ireland appear to earn above average salaries, their salary costs are off-set in Ireland by larger classes and longer working hours than in other EU countries.”
\textit{The Irish Times}, 24 Nov 2015

Case Studies
The INTO Press Office is always looking to contact teachers who might be willing to highlight issues in the media in the form of a case study. This could relate to any number of issues including employment, home ownership or salary or school issues such as class size, funding or resources. If you are willing to talk to a journalist please email pmullan@into.ie in confidence.

On the airwaves

Teacher shortage
The INTO is warning of a teacher shortage, and says it may have to tell parents to keep their children at home because there are not enough teachers to fill positions. – Sheila Nunan, General Secretary, Irish National Teachers’ Organisation.
\textit{RTE Radio 1 – News at One}, 13 Jan 2016

Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclam agus Measúnachta curaclam nu a teanga bunsoile
D’hoilsiugh an Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclam agus Measúnachta Curaclam nu a teanga bunsoile inné, céard atá i gceist agus ghiucharadh atá ag múintíoirí leis? – Deibhidh Nic Craith, Stiúrthóir Oideachais Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann.
\textit{Adhmhaidin – Raidió na Gaeltachta}, 16 Dec 2015

INTO to ballot its members on Industrial Action
The INTO is to ballot primary school teachers on industrial action next month. It follows a dispute over the ban on promotion in schools. – Interview with Emma Dineen, President INTO.
\textit{Cork Today – C103}, 13 Jan 2016

The Irish National Teachers’ Organisation is to ballot its members on industrial action later this month. The union says the continued ban on promotion in schools and increasing workload for teachers has become intolerable. – Interview with Sheila Nunan, General Secretary, INTO.
\textit{The Breakfast Show – NewsTalk}, 12 Jan 2016
Retirements

Pictures from branch and district functions to honour retiring members

Bantry
Back row l to r: Olive Creed, Branch Secretary; Joe O’Driscoll; John Driscoll, CEC rep; Nicholas McCarthy; Siobhan O’Regan, Branch Chairperson. Front row l to r: Katie O’Leary; Mairead Murphy; Emma Dineen, INTO President; Mary O’Shea; and Geraldine Deasy.

Mitchelstown
Pictured at a Mitchelstown Branch retirement function are: Tom Quinlan, Secretary; Maureen Hogan; Eileen Bracken; Mary Magner, CEC; Mary Verling; Mary O’Connell and Kayren Hayes-Brennan, Chairperson.

Limerick City
Left to right: Emma Dineen, INTO President; Bernie Kennedy, Lisnagry NS; Donal O’Brien, Scoil Iosagáin; Bernie O’Rourke, Croom NS; and Annette Ryan, Monaleen NS. Photo by Dave Gaynor.

West Waterford
Pictured at the West Waterford Branch retirement presentation to James Bennett are: Seated l to r James Bennett, Ann Bennett and Catriona Bennett. Standing Neil Moore, Secretary; James Casey, Chairperson; and Brendan Horan, CEC representative. Photo: Sean Byrne Photography.

Castleblaney
Sheila Donnelly, principal of the Junior School, Castleblayney and secretary of Castleblayney Branch, is pictured at her retirement function with her husband Seán; Catherine Flanagan, CEC rep; Rosena Jordan, INTO Vice President; Bernie Corbett, Branch Chairperson; Joan Hanratty, Branch Secretary; Mary Duffy, Branch Organiser; and Mary Gallan Brady, District Secretary.
PAYROLL INFORMATION

During December and January there were changes to teachers’ pay cheques to take account of the Pension Related Deduction (PRD) changes (in particular those agreed in the Lansdowne Road Agreement) and the cut in the percentage deduction at each of the lower USC threshold bands under Budget 2016.

Payment date: 17 December 2015
The FEMPI Act 2015 provided for the repayment of a small amount of pension levy (€62.50) deducted in 2013. To effect the repayment, the exemption threshold for PRD for 2015 was increased from €15,000 to €17,500. This produces the required reduction in PRD in 2015. The original provision was to apply from July 2013 but was not implemented until January 2014. This meant there was an overpayment of PRD in 2013. Since 2013, public service unions have pursued this. The once-off payment of the overdue €62.50 was made to teacher in the pay cheque of the 17 December 2015.

Payment date: 14 January 2016
Teachers generally will have seen an uplift in net pay due to an increase in the exemption threshold for PRD (to €26,083 for 2016) and a reduction in the percentage deduction of Universal Social Charge (USC) being applied for the first 12 days of 2016. The net increase per payment varies depending on tax liability and other factors, but typically ranges from around €30 to approximately €50 per cheque.

There was also a pay scale increase of 1% for teachers earning between €24,001 and €31,000, as provided for under LRA.

Payment date: 28 January 2016
Teachers should have seen a further slight increase in their net pay – based on the changes to PRD and USC referenced above — being applied for the full Payroll Period.

Full details of these changes were posted on the INTO website in December.

Further pay signposts

1 September 2016
€796 added to each point of the Teachers’ Scale – first half of the agreed restoration of the S&S payment.

1 April 2017
First half of the agreed restoration of the HRA ‘higher earners’ paycut.

1 September 2017
€1,000 flat rate increase on salary scale commences.

1 September 2017
€796 added to each point of the Teachers’ Scale – second half of the agreed restoration of the S & S payment.

1 January 2018
Second half of the restoration of the HRA pay-cut for those on salaries (including allowances) of €65,000+.

Cosán - Framework on CPD

Following consultation with members regarding Cosán, the Teaching Council’s draft framework on teacher professional development, the INTO made a submission outlining the Organisation’s views on the draft. The INTO’s main points included the following:

• INTO acknowledges that engaging in professional development is an integral part of being a teacher.
• Professional development should be understood broadly as including discussions on professional issues at school level, attendance at courses, engaging in further study, for example.
• The State should provide the necessary structure, supports and resources to facilitate teacher professional development.
• Professional development in response to system needs should be during school time at no cost to the teacher.
• INTO professional development should be recognised as valid and valuable professional development.
• It would be counterproductive to mandate a minimum requirement of professional development.

The full submission is available on the INTO website...

‘Voices From The Classroom: Inclusion, Special Education or Inclusive Special Education?’

IATSE Conference 2016 – 27 & 28 May 2016, Dublin City University, Institute of Education, St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9

Ten years on since the conference ‘Defining the Inclusive School’, IATSE seeks to create a dialogue on ‘inclusive special education.’ Special education is still concerned with the academic, social and personal development of the learner with special educational needs throughout their school life. So, how has the emphasis on ‘inclusion’ influenced attitudes, practices and aspirations in schools in the past 10 years? Is there ‘voice’ in inclusive special education? How have special schools been affected by these changes and how do they fit into this changing educational landscape?

Call for papers
IATSE would like to invite abstracts for submission from principals, teachers, researchers and other practitioners and their learners focusing on the following themes. Details were given in an INTO enewsletter and on www.into.ie

Date for submission: 5 p.m., Friday 5 February 2016.
Further details on: www.irishassociationofteachersinspecialeducation.com
The INTO has received from the Trustees (Irish Life Trustee Services Limited) the annual report for the year ended 31 March 2015 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 report is available from the INTO (which is the 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 gglackin@into.ie or telephone (01) 804 7745.

 INTO member shines on world stage

Ciara Durkan is part of successful Irish cross country team. Late last year the Irish women’s team of Fionnuala McCormack, Lizzie Lee, Caroline Crowley, Michelle Finn Kerry O’Flaherty and Ciara Durkan won a bronze medal in Hyeres in France. Ciara was the fourth and final scorer for the Irish team.

Ciara is a primary school teacher in St Patrick’s SNS, Co Dublin. INTO president Emma Dineen congratulated her saying all her colleagues in the teaching profession recognised her superb achievement on the international stage, “She is a real role model in the world of sport for her young pupils who can see directly that hard work and determination pays off,” said Ms Dineen.

Healthy eating for primary pupils

Online registration for Incredible Edibles project is now open

Agri Aware, the independent Irish agri-food educational body, delivers high impact educational and public awareness initiatives and projects for pupils and the general public.

Agri Aware’s Incredible Edibles healthy eating project for primary schools has been running for seven years. The project aims to educate pupils about growing fruit and vegetables and to increase their knowledge of food origin and quality. It also highlights the important role that fresh produce plays in a healthy balanced diet and the importance of consuming at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

Agri Aware’s Incredible Edibles healthy eating initiative encourages primary schools across Ireland to get busy in the garden and/or classroom and supplies them with grow packs, with seeds, to grow a variety of healthy foods, such as potatoes, carrots, lettuce, strawberries and turnips.

Downloadable curriculum-linked activity sheets, growing guides, recipes and.logbooks allow students to take these important messages with them for life and to their homes and wider communities. Agri Aware’s Incredible Edible’s garden at the award-winning Family Farm, developed by Agri Aware and Dublin Zoo, allows primary level pupils to monitor their growing progress in line with the school year, with interactive content available weekly through the Incredible Edible’s website.

Agri Aware is currently registering schools for the 2015/2016 Incredible Edibles project.

Online registration is now open at: incredibleedibles.ie/project/

See www.incredibleedibles.ie for more details or contact Dr Elizabeth Finnegan via email at office@agriaware.ie or by telephone at 01 460 1103.

This project is supported by Bord Bia, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Health and Ireland’s fresh produce industry.
Review of DEIS: Poverty and Social Inclusion in Education

INTO/Centre for Educational Disadvantage joint conference – St Patrick’s College, Dublin

A one-day conference on ‘Review of DEIS: Poverty and Social Inclusion in Education’, was held in St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra on Saturday 5 December 2015. This was a joint conference organised by the INTO and the Educational Disadvantage Centre, St Patrick’s College. A total of 260 delegates braved the elements to attend the conference.

The conference was officially opened by the INTO president, Emma Dineen, who then invited Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality and Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, to address the conference. Daire Keogh, President of St Patrick’s College, and Sheila Nunan, INTO General Secretary, also spoke at the opening session.

The keynote address was given by Carol Coulter, on the topic of ‘Social exclusion and child protection’. She gave a very good insight based on her experience of children who enter the court system. This was followed by a presentation by Pat Courtney, principal teacher in St Vincent’s Infant Boys’ School, North William Street, Dublin 1, on his experience as a teacher who has spent all his career in DEIS schools.

Delegates in discussion groups examined issues such as what had worked well in DEIS schools; what criteria should be used to determine the success of DEIS; what are the particular challenges for disadvantaged pupils in rural areas and what criteria should be used to determine whether schools should be part of DEIS?

A series of workshops followed:

- Teaching and supporting students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Mary Keane, National Behavioural Support Service).
- Multidisciplinary teams in and around schools (Fiona Kearney, Familibase, Ballyfermot).
- A national strategy for hunger prevention in schools (Sinead Keenan, Healthy Food for All).
- Ensuring inclusion: The challenges for Traveller and Roma children in education (Hilary Harmon, Pavee Point).
- Implementing evidence based approaches into mainstream systems to improve child outcomes (Noel Kelly, Northside Partnership).
- A community-based approach to addressing educational disadvantage (Josephine Bleach, NCIRL).

Final panel session

The final session was a panel discussion, chaired by Dr Paul Downes of the Educational Disadvantage Centre. This included feedback from the discussion groups and workshops. The panel members included: Anne Colgan, Centre for Effective Studies; Pat Courtney, principal teacher; Eibhlin Byrne, TUSLA; Caitriona O’Brien, DES; Bernie McNally, DCYA; Deirbhile Nic Craith, INTO.

Conclusion

On the whole, the feedback from delegates was very positive, with many noting their approval for a conference that highlighted the issues in DEIS schools.

Information and keynote presentations are available on the INTO website in the ‘Conferences’ section.

UN Convention on Children’s Rights

The INTO is one of over 100 agencies that make up the Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA). One of its tasks is to monitor Ireland’s progress in relation to its commitments as a signatory of the UN Convention on Children’s Rights (UNHCR). On ratifying the Convention, Governments agree to be assessed periodically on their progress in implementing the rights in the Convention. States submit regular progress reports and agree to an oral examination by members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Ireland’s most recent examination was on Thursday 14 January. The examination was carried out by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, a group of 18 independent experts elected by members of the UN who meet three times a year in Geneva.

The Children’s Rights Alliance led a civil society delegation of over 20 representatives. The CRA argues that the most pressing issues that have to be addressed are family homelessness and child poverty. However, continued investment is also needed in the areas of education; child welfare and protection; primary care health services; therapy services and mental health services.

See www.childrensrights.ie for further information.
INTO Health Insurance Comparison Service  
Tailored arrangements for INTO members only

The next few months are the busiest time of year for private health insurance. Close to one million consumers will renew their cover between January and the end of April. With over 400 plans on the market, shopping around has become very challenging. However, it is crucial you make the effort as the potential savings are huge when you take into account the special offers available.

Myths about switching provider  
A recent 'Switch and Gain' survey indicated 40% of people haven't switched their health insurance provider for more than five years. If you do switch insurers:
- You will not break in your cover.
- Any Lifetime Community Rating loading will not be affected by switching.
- You will not have to reserve waiting periods.
- It is not time consuming. The INTO health insurance comparison service provided by Cornmarket is paperless and is completed over the phone.

What should you watch out for?  
All insurers now have a range of plans available to meet all budgets. Past trends have seen insurers apply rate increases on existing plans whilst at the same time launching new, cheaper alternatives. This means you are likely to pay more than you need to for your cover, if you don’t shop around.

You also need to be mindful when making savings. Savings can be made on comparable plans but people can also make savings by downgrading cover. This is an area where you really need advice. Downgrading cover to make savings can result in higher excesses, the removal of certain hospitals, taking restricted high tech cover etc. Also, if you downgrade and at a future point return to a more comprehensive plan, a two year upgrade rule for existing illnesses could apply.

The INTO health insurance comparison service provided by Cornmarket will ensure you are getting the cover you need at the best price possible.

What preferential rates are available for INTO members?  
On behalf of its members, the INTO has again engaged in a process with all health insurers to negotiate preferential terms for its members. The outcome of this process is as follows:
- GloHealth have launched Best Smart Teachers specifically tailored for INTO members, with a 10% discount. It includes GloDoc, an app that allows members to access a GP consultation over the phone and to email the prescription to the local pharmacy. It also includes a scan and claim service: photograph your bill, send it to GloHealth and have the money in the bank within three to five working days. GloHealth have also offered a 5% discount on a range of other policies through Cornmarket.
- Aviva Health will be offering a 10% discount on a range of plans through Cornmarket. This includes the Befit 1, which includes Babylon (an online GP app) and scan and claim. The 10% discount on Teacher Complete is also continuing.
- Laya Healthcare will be giving a 10% discount on a range of their plans.
- VHI Healthcare will continue to give discounts on their teacher plans.
- All health insurers have again agreed to waive the initial 26 week waiting period for new members.
- Decare Dental is making their corporate plans available to all INTO members.

The free health insurance comparison service will explain the different plans and discounts available to INTO members. A team of experts will shop around for you to find the most suitable plan based on your needs and budget. Last year 96% of INTO members surveyed stated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service and the average saving made was €527.34*.

Now more than ever, it pays to shop around.

*Savings based on a sample of 100 INTO members who availed of the free health insurance comparison service from Cornmarket. Correct as at 12/06/15. Aviva Health Insurance Ireland Limited is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. GloHealth Financial Services Ltd trading as GloHealth is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. Lay Healthcare Limited, trading as Laya Healthcare, is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. Vhi Healthcare Limited trading as Vhi Healthcare is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. Cornmarket Group Financial Services Ltd. is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.
Get on top of your money in 2016

After the Christmas festivities you may want to get in control of your spending or start putting a little away for future expenses. Setting out a budget plan for the year ahead can really help you stay focused. The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission have put together some simple steps to help you get started.

1. When working out your budget look at the money you have coming in and going out across a period of time such as a year, month or week. Taking a little time to look at how and when you spend your money and where you can possibly make changes will put you in a good position to better manage it. If you choose to do your budget over a year you should include your salary, and if you have a partner their salary, social welfare allowances and any other income you might have.

   Work out your outgoings, such as your mortgage/rent payments, heating, house/life and car insurance, water charges, electricity, phone, transport, grocery costs and broadband etc. Use the spending diary on www.consumerhelp.ie to help you work out the cost of everyday outgoings such as buying lunch or a coffee. You will then clearly see what you spend your money on each day. Track your spending for a time and keep receipts of your spend, entering the costs into your weekly spending diary.

   To help kickstart your budget plan take a look at the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission’s consumer website www.consumerhelp.ie for information and tools, including a budget planner.

2. Include any extra-ordinary expenses such as extracurricular activities and occasional costs such as birthdays, holidays or memberships. If you find it difficult to remember what some of your expenses are look back at your bank statements, credit card statements, bills and receipts to help remind you.

3. Don’t forget to include any loan repayments that you have under outgoings; it is important to write down how much you still owe on loans; the time it will take to repay them in full and the cost of paying back the loan in terms of interest and additional charges.

4. Examine what you have coming in compared to what’s going out. This will help you see if you are spending more than what you are earning. Take a look at each expense to see if you can cut down or cut it out altogether.

   If you find it hard to make savings, check out the money saving tips across a wide variety of regular household expenditures including, gas, electricity and groceries on www.consumerhelp.ie.

5. After you have looked at your budget, if you have money left over there are a number of things you can do with the extra money you have. If you have loans, it is a good idea to get rid of these first before you start saving. Start with the highest interest loans first and look at increasing your repayments if you can.

   Paying more off your loans each month means you will pay less interest and you can clear your debts faster, often giving you a better return than other forms of savings.

6. Reaching for a particular goal can really help you keep your focus when working on your budget. Once you have identified your goal, you can then work out how much it will cost and how you will put money aside to achieve it. Your goal may be a:
   - Short term goal (one – three months). Have you a wedding that you have to go to and need to put some money aside for accommodation, travel and gifts?
   - Mid term goal (three – 10 months). Do you want to go on holiday this summer or set aside money for your child’s back to school costs?
   - Long term goal (10 months+). You may be thinking of renovating your house. If this is the case you could save rather than borrow the costs involved.

Remember, small changes can amount to big savings. Visit www.consumerhelp.ie for lots more tips on how you can save.
Teachers’ Musical Society tap down 42nd Street...

Nearly a year on from All Shook Up sold out houses in the Tivoli, the Teachers’ Musical Society are proud to present the American musical, 42nd Street. The show opens on Tuesday, 23 February and runs nightly until Saturday, 27 February at the O’Reilly Theatre, Dublin.

Based on the novel by Bradford Ropes and the subsequent 1933 Hollywood film adaptation, the show focuses on the efforts of famed dictatorial Great White Way director Julian Marsh to mount a successful stage production of a musical extravaganza at the height of the Great Depression. The musical follows Peggy Sawyer, a small town girl who journeys to Broadway to fulfil her dreams. The audience will journey behind the scenes as Peggy moves from chorus girl to leading lady. The Broadway musical comes complete with smashing melodious numbers such as Young and Healthy, Shadow Waltz, We’re in the Money as well as the title song, 42nd Street. You’ll be sure to be left tapping in your seats.

The cast of the Teachers’ Musical Society is made up primarily of primary and secondary teachers and, over time, the group has grown into one of the leading musical societies in Ireland. It has won numerous awards at the Waterford International Festival of Light Opera as well as from the Association of Irish Musical Societies (AIMS). TMS welcomes back director Pat McElwain, the superbly talented Dermot O’Callaghan as musical director and returning choreographer Orla Savage.

The society is now 15 years in existence and has established itself as one of the leading musical societies in the country. The 2013 production, Michael Collins – a Musical Drama, was critically acclaimed and was nominated for six awards from the Association of Irish Musical Societies (AIMS), in addition to being sold out for the complete run. Nominations and awards don’t stop there. All Shook Up was nominated for Best Actress and Best Male Singer and Best Choreography was won on the night.

42nd Street opens with a preview night on Tuesday 23 February and runs nightly at 7.30 p.m. until Saturday, 27 February at the O’Reilly Theatre, Dublin. Tickets are €15 opening night and €20 all other nights. www.eventbrite.ie.

For more information email teachers.ms@gmail.com or follow us on facebook: Teachers’ Musical Society.

CEO Conference 2016

The CESI conference is a calendar highlight for those who are interested in integrating technology into their teaching and learning, and this year promises to uphold the high standard that has been set by previous CESI events. The conference features a mix of presentations and hands-on workshops, high-profile keynote speakers, and opportunities to engage with educators from all levels of the Irish education system.

2015 saw the launch of Ireland’s Digital Strategy for Schools. The aim of the strategy is to ‘greatly enhance the learning experience and lifelong learning skills of all our students’. It is with this in mind that the theme chosen for the 2016 CESI annual conference is ‘Our Digital Strategy – making it matter’. Ireland’s Digital Strategy for Schools will be put into practice by the participants of this conference and in the years to come. This year’s event will focus upon our understanding of the importance of information technology in education, the potentials and problems that lie ahead in implementing the Digital Strategy for Schools, and the ways in which we can make a meaningful and magical curriculum for the learners in our care. The conference has an exciting lineup of keynote speakers together with presentations and workshops.

For those of you who would like to dip your toes into the presenting waters – TeachMeets are a good place to start, where presenters (selected in random order from the list of volunteers) speak for two to five minutes on a topic of their choice. These talks are more informal than the conference setting. This is a great way to present an idea to a wider audience. Read more about teachmeets here: http://irishteachmeet.wikispaces.com.

Key dates and venue

- Friday 26 February 2016: TeachMeet CESI (Regency Hotel, Dublin 9)
- Saturday 27 February 2016: CESI Annual Conference (Dublin City University)
- CESI Conference Our Digital Strategy – making IT matter is on Saturday 27 February 2016. The venue for this year’s conference is Dublin City University (DCU). The conference will be preceded by the now-traditional TeachMeet CESI event, which will be held on the evening of Friday 26 February at the Regency Hotel, Dublin 9. To register for this year’s conference or the pre-conference TeachMeet, please use the following www.cesi.ie/conference-2016-registration
The 2016 Allianz Football League season kicks off on 30 January. Two weeks later, the Allianz Hurling League first round of fixtures will be played, on Saturday 13 February. The opening round of hurling fixtures sees Tipperary meet Dublin under lights at Semple Stadium while, in Division 1B, Limerick play host to Wexford at the Gaelic Grounds. Tipperary will line out minus some familiar names as Lar Corbett, James Woodlock, Conor O’Mahony and Shane McGrath, key figures in the Premier County set-up for a decade or more, have decided to call time on their intercounty careers.

Interestingly, Shane was succeeded as captain by Brendan Maher, who is also a primary teacher. Shane played in the All-Ireland finals of 2009, 2011 and the draw and replay in 2014 but failed to add a second Celtic Cross to his collection. He has been closely involved with coaching hurling teams in the Allianz Cumann na mBunscol leagues in East Limerick.

**BRIGHT STAR**

Niamh Mulcahy is one of the brightest stars on the camogie scene. Along with her sisters Clare and Judith, she starred on the Limerick team that won the All-Ireland Intermediate title in 2013. A granddaughter of the legendary John Mackey, Niamh’s first taste of Croke Park was as a player in the INTO Mini Sevens in 2001 and 2002. Niamh excelled in football and hurling and played both codes in the Mini Sevens. Today, she is a young teacher building up her service like many of her peers. She can frequently be seen on the sideline encouraging the players of the future as they take the first steps of their sporting lives.

**TEACHERS INVOLVED**

The demands on intercounty players are extremely time-consuming but, throughout the country, top stars are involved in coaching at school level in their role as primary teacher. Paddy Kelly, the Cork footballer, has won every honour the game has to offer, culminating in an All-Ireland medal in 2010. Paddy teaches in Cloghroe NS where his principal is INTO president Emma Dineen. And the all-conquering Cork ladies footballers mustn’t be forgotten! Juliet Murphy teaches in Crosshaven GNS while Nollaig Cleary is also a primary teacher.

It is also striking how many players credit their teachers in primary school for imparting the skills of the game. Henry Shefflin gives glowing praise to Joe Dunphy, principal in Ballyhale NS while Dublin footballer Philly McMahon often speaks of the encouragement he received in his formative years from Paddy Christie, former Dublin full-back who is now principal of Our Lady of Victories NS in Ballymun. 2015 All Star midfielder from Kerry, Anthony Maher credits Paddy Keane, his teacher in Duagh NS and one of the founding fathers of Cumann na mBunscol in the Kingdom, with guiding him in his formative years.

**NURTURING FUTURE STARS**

In every county in Ireland, through every generation, teachers, male and female, young and not so young, famous or ‘born to blush unseen’, are nurturing stars of the future while contributing to their communities and to the social fabric of their area, be it Ballyhale or Ballymun. Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí.

JOE LYONS, PRO Cumann na mBunscol

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### Dates for your diary

**Leinster Cumann na mBunscol Handball Finals** will take place on:
- **Monday 8 February** – Buachaillí – U11 Singles and Doubles – U13 Singles and Doubles
- **Tuesday 9 February** – Cailíní – U11 Singles and Doubles – U13 Singles and Doubles

**Host county:** Dublin  
**Venue:** St Brigid’s GAA Club, Russell Park, Dublin 15  
**Times:** Starting at 10.30 am each day

**Teacher/coordinator:** Tony Hegarty, Cumann na mBunscol Ath Cliath.  
**Contact details:** 0876199783 / ahego@eircom.net  
**Refreshments will be provided.**

**The National Cumann na mBunscol Handball Championships for Boys and Girls** take place at Kingcourt, Co Cavan on **Saturday 20 February 2016.**

**The AGM of Cumann na mBunscol** takes place on **Friday 11 and Saturday 12 March** at Oriel House, Ballincollig, Cork. Each county and provincial unit is entitled to two delegates.

**The Annual Awards,** sponsored by Cornmarket Financial Group Services, will be presented at a banquet on **Friday 11 March.**
Born to run

Primary teachers promote inclusion in sport

The inclusion of children with special educational needs into mainstream schools is an established part of the Irish education system. This is due to the thousands of teachers and SNAs whose everyday work makes that possible. It didn’t happen by accident, especially in areas like sport.

Many parents fill the stands of Croke Park and Santry stadiums and other venues around the country to watch their sons and daughters display their sporting prowess to the tumultuous cheers of their supporting peers. Children with special needs did not enjoy such accolades or opportunities. Hurling and football are contact sports and may not suit all children whether they have special education needs or not. The first sport in which all children can participate is walking and running. Both sports offer gold, silver and bronze at Olympic level.

In June 2011, we held our first race for children with special needs from the 50 metre point in front of the main stand. Eight eager and very fit young children from Scoil Chaitriona, Coolock, eyed the finish line with intent while their teacher and coach, Fiona Gormley, urged them on. History was made.

True to their commitment, Fiona and her classes have taken part in every race since that day. All schools who attended for the six days of the athletics were given notice of our newest track event and we invited any pupils who wished to participate, to accept automatic qualification for their final. A major stumbling block was the shortage of SNAs and additional teachers to accompany the children to the event – cutbacks being the prime cause.

To facilitate the proceedings, a large group of sixth class boys from St Joseph’s BNS helped the event run smoothly; lining up the athletes in the correct lane, collecting them at the finish line and most importantly, offering invaluable support all the way to the end.

Medals are awarded to all who participate in the races and there is a place on the podium for each participant. There is a wheelchair race and pupils from the NRC partake in this event also. This year we made a dedicated DVD for the race and outstanding photographic shots taken by Mark Monahan tell the story far better than any script can (see www.cnmb.ie). Since our first venture into the ‘unknown’, the numbers of schools taking part has grown and last year we had our highest number yet.

If you wish to participate in the races, contact the athletics section of the Cumann na mBunscol website. Age limit is based on enthusiasm; keen enough is old enough. This event may inspire people in other regions of the country to follow a similar path.

Anthony O’Flynn, St Joseph’s BNS, Terenure.

Corduff students take the food waste reduction challenge!

What’s in your lunch box? Did you eat it? How much packaging do you have? Why and can we reduce this waste? These are the questions VOICE asked third, fifth and sixth class pupils in St Patrick’s JNS, Corduff, Blanchardstown, when they participated in Voice of Irish Concern for the Environment (VOICE)’s food waste reduction challenge and ‘Food Rescue’ event.

Pupils were asked to audit the contents of their lunch boxes and mark down each day what they threw away, how much it weighed, why and how can they could avoid this waste in the future. They did this for one week, after which, they came together to find methods to reduce their food and packaging waste. They refilled their bottled water, they used containers rather than cling film and aluminium foil and they reduced their food waste. Each class measured and weighed, prepared power point presentations and graphs and presented their findings before their peers, teachers, county councillors and other adults.

Their results were impressive. Within one week, the third classes reduced their food waste by 40% and their packaging waste by 26% and the participating sixth class reduced their food waste by 40% and packaging waste by 33%. Through this project they also learned that Ireland throws away one million tonnes of food each year which has an environmental, economic and societal cost.

Such Food Rescue events can be held in schools around the country. Please contact Mindy O’Brien from VOICE at (01) 642 5741 or visit voiceireland.org for more information.
The Easter Rising of 1916 is getting a lot of attention in our classrooms as well as the national media. For the month of January, 9 of the 10 most clicked-on resources on the Scoilnet portal site related to the theme of the Easter Rising. While the events of 1916 are important to study, it is also important that we take our pupils beyond the facts and engage with the skills of working as an historian. Scoilnet has developed a number of initiatives as part of the DES response to 1916 that will do just that while also helping to engage the attention and imagination of children so that they may understand the events of 100 years ago.

The Irish flag
www.scoilnet.ie/irishflag
This site traces the evolution of the Irish tricolour flag through a series of stories also presented in a timeline. Starting in the 1840’s, the stories begin with Thomas Meagher and move through the revolutionary period of 1916 to 1922 before examining how the flag was adopted as our national flag and how it is interpreted in arts and culture. With over 17,000 words the site is not short of content and follows months of research by retired post primary teacher, Dr Pat Callan.

To make it applicable to primary classes, a series of specific lesson plans have been written for the site by Susan Kenny (Corpus Christi Primary, Moyross) that link with the SESE and SPHE curriculums. The lesson plans cover – The story of the tricolour; the events that led to Ireland having its own flag; protocol around the flag; the flag as a symbol of pride; walking debate where children ‘agree’ or disagree’ with specific statements about the flag.

Proclamation for a new generation
www.scoilnet.ie/proclamationtemplate
The object of this project is to help pupils gain an understanding of The Proclamation through an ‘action learning’ project which invites schools to write a new proclamation for 2016, that reflects the values and aspirations of the current generation.

Schools may choose to write one proclamation for the whole school or have each class create its own. One of these proclamations can be added to the Scoilnet site and all proclamations submitted will be publicly available to view.

Each school submitting a proclamation will need to nominate a teacher who will log onto a secure section of Scoilnet with their Scoilnet account. Once logged on, a link to add the proclamation will be obvious on their Scoilnet dashboard. The teacher will cut and paste the agreed text into a form, which will generate the schools’ proclamation.

Each new proclamation should be of a maximum length of 600 words. It can be written in Gaeilge, English, or in any other language spoken or studied in the school. A copy of the schools’ proclamation will be available to download in PDF format.

Ancestry project
www.scoilnet.ie/duchas
Schools are invited to engage in a project that traces a family tree back to 1916. This is intended to give students a real experience of researching archival material and to afford them an opportunity to find out more about the conditions in which people lived in 1916. This project has links to a number of curricular areas, including SPHE, SESE history and SESE geography.

The project can focus on a family tree of a student, group of students, past student, teacher, principal, a local community figure or anyone else considered appropriate. It is a matter for schools and teachers to determine which figures are appropriate for selection.

Students’ 1916 ancestry projects can be uploaded to Scoilnet by any teacher using a Scoilnet account. In order to upload, the projects need to be saved as either a PDF or a PowerPoint and there is a generous file size limit of 50mb. As the projects will be universally accessible on the web teachers need to be mindful of copyright – especially in relation to the use of images.

There is no school limit to the number of projects that can be uploaded and all projects will be searchable by school.

Written by
PATRICK COFFEY, PDST
Technology in Education.
The 1916 Rising and how it should be approached is a topic much discussed and debated at the moment. The necessity for ‘multiple narratives’ is a constant refrain, and indeed our history curriculum refers to our sense of identity being “shaped by the cultural and social experiences of many different peoples in the past.” What better way to explore these various narratives than to utilise the investigative skills of the historian? 

1916: Working as an historian has been developed by INTO Learning as an online resource that can be accessed through the INTO website in this centenary year.

By using primary sources and providing opportunities for the students to work as historians, we are affording them the opportunity to become familiar with a range of experiences and perspectives that existed at the time. Furthermore, by developing skills such as locating evidence, asking questions, comparing accounts, synthesising information and identifying bias and gaps in evidence – we are equipping them with a set of transferable skills that can be used in other historical enquiries.

Setting the stage

The role of cultural nationalism is pivotal in the context of the Rising. Thus the theme of ‘Being Irish’ in the years leading up to the Rising is a focal point in the first module ‘Context’. A PowerPoint for use in the classroom weaves together the various ways that people expressed their sense of being Irish. The presentation is designed to facilitate discussion, debate and reflection on those formative years. One of the activities linked to the theme is based on cló Gaelach, the traditional Gaelic font used in textbooks at Gaelic League classes in 1916. Here students are enabled to decode the cló Gaelach as well as write it. Songs of the period are insightful when examining the mind-set of the ‘revolutionary generation’ and to this end Óró Sé Do Bheatha ‘Bhaile is an ideal choice for this module.

In order to gain further insight into life at the time, the theme of everyday life also features. A presentation for use in the class provides a child-friendly social history but also challenges the students to compare and contrast their own lives with those living in 1916. As World War 1 raged in Europe and affected thousands of Irish people, our song for this section is It’s a Long Way to

This resource is a useful tool to explore the 1916 Rising and pupils will enjoy the active learning involved

Tipperary which was hugely popular at the time, especially after Count John McCormack recorded it in 1914.

The build-up to the Rising

The second module focusses on the build-up to the Rising, looking at both events and personalities involved. The notion of cause and effect is a major concern for historians and the weeks leading up to the Rising provide a wealth of primary sources in relation to this concept. Thus through accessing primary sources such as the witness statements, audio and online video clips, the students are enabled to draw conclusions as to why the Rising was planned for Easter 1916, the impact of the MacNeill countermand and the failure of the IRB to receive arms from Germany.

This section also familiarises the students with the signatories of the Proclamation. Our curricular focus here is ‘Learning to appreciate and understand the attitudes, values and motivations of others as well as the historical contexts in which they lived.’ ‘Potted biographies’ are provided and throughout the three linked activities students work as historians using active learning methodologies such as ‘diamond analysis.’ Further investigation of the signatories is provided by an activity based on using the 1911 Census.

During the Rising

The third module, ‘During the Rising’ is concerned with the week of the Rising and opens with a section on the Proclamation. At the moment, all schools are being invited to write a new Proclamation for 2016, reflecting the values, ideals and aspirations of their generation, starting with an analysis of the ideals, principles and aspirations of the 1916 Proclamation. 1916: Working as an historian provides a variety of materials to support this investigation, including a presentation for students to explore the historical background of the Proclamation, a graphic organiser to facilitate the analysis of its content and an activity based on the typographical quirks of the document. There is also a presentation geared towards teachers which provides additional information on interpreting the Proclamation. The Soldier’s Song – the English version of the national anthem – is the song that is linked with this section, as it was a well-known rallying song for the Irish Volunteers. The lyrics, music and background are all included.

What sites did the rebels occupy in Dublin City and why were they chosen? Both the history and the geography of the week of the Rising are catered for here, as a presentation about the prominent sites of the Rising illustrates where they
Teaching matters were located, who was there and what happened during the week. There is also a series of ‘then and now’ photos of the sites that can be used with students in the classroom.

What happened on each day of the Rising? A timeline activity starting with MacNeill’s countermand on Easter Sunday and finishing with the surrender on the following Saturday is a useful tool to build up a picture of the week. Here the students are given a timeline and their task is to research a given day during the Rising. As in all of the activities throughout, the students will be using primary sources in their research. A comprehensive list of sources guides the students where to go for relevant information including audio clips, online video clips and documents.

The local scene
Activity varied from county to county. The ‘Local Studies’ section in the County Library has contemporary newspapers and often other material relating to this period. Even if you were always told that nothing happened in your area, it is worthwhile having a look at the local newspapers. In order to facilitate teachers’ examination of the local angle, a presentation is included which suggests a variety of ways that your local area can be linked to this national event. Indeed, throughout the three modules, students are encouraged to connect the broader national picture with their own area. In the ‘Being Irish’ module, for example, they are asked to find out if the local GAA club was in existence in 1916. If so, what games were being played and who was on the teams?

We ‘talked to Joe’ and others
A question and answer session about where to go for information was recorded for use in the classroom. Here, student Kevin O’Connor quizzes his granddad, Tony Patterson, about where to go for information and teachers will find this dialogue a useful child-friendly resource.

The role of women and, in particular, Min Ryan from Wexford, who was Sean McDermott’s girlfriend, is the focus of another interview. Helen Bacon, Min Ryan’s granddaughter, provides interesting insights into her grandmother’s activities in 1916 and indeed how the family in general became involved in nationalist politics.

Broadcaster, Joe Duffy is also interviewed in relation to the research he did for his book Children of the Rising. Not only does this shed light on why and how he wrote this book, but students will also get a great sense of Dublin at the time from his rich and descriptive account.

This resource is a useful tool to explore the 1916 Rising and pupils will enjoy the active learning involved. The experience of ‘working as an historian’ using the materials can be applied to other topics in history with which they engage in the future.

ANN MURTAGH works in Kilkenny School Project NS and has an MA in Local History. She cooperated with Tony Patterson, Ellis Costelloe and Kathleen Maher in a local project for teachers on the theme of 1916 in Kilkenny Education Centre. It was further developed by Drumcondra Education Centre as a summer course and offered through education centres in 2015.

1916: Working as an historian, which was developed by Ann Murtagh for the INTO, is available on moodle.intolearning.ie and costs €25
UNESCO, the United Nations Agency mandated to support physical education (PE) and sport identified access to PE as a fundamental right for every human being (UNESCO 1978). Further to this, the importance of providing quality PE to all children has been acknowledged (Woods et al 2010, McLennan and Thompson 2015). The Irish Primary PE Association (IPPEA) believes that quality PE seeks to enable all young people, whatever their circumstances or ability, to take part in and enjoy PE, sport and physical activity. It also strives to promote young people’s health, safety and wellbeing as well as supporting them to improve and achieve in line with their age and potential. Quality PE also endeavours to empower all children to develop physical literacy (IPPEA 2010). The full IPPEA position statement on quality physical education in Ireland is available for download on www.irishprimarype.com.

In recognition of the importance of quality PE, the IPPEA have designed the Primary Physical Education Teacher Award. The IPPEA is a voluntary organisation dedicated to heightening awareness of physical education issues in primary schools and supporting the needs of primary teachers in physical education. The IPPEA hope to highlight the educational importance of quality PE to teachers, principals, parents, children, policy makers and the general public through this new award. They also wish to acknowledge and further encourage those teachers who are delivering a quality PE programme through the provision of the award.

The award

The Primary Physical Education Teacher Award celebrates innovation, achievement and best practice in delivering a quality PE programme. This award is open to teachers delivering PE in Irish primary schools and is targeted at classroom teachers. Nominees must be contributing to the delivery of a minimum of 60 minutes of PE each week. This award relates to physical education curriculum time only and does not include extra-curricular sporting or break time physical activity. The evidence for the award may be selected from any of the following categories:

- Quality physical education – (e.g. quality physical education is planned delivered and assessed as an enjoyable learning experience for pupils).
- Innovative teaching and learning in physical education (e.g. innovative curricular content or methodologies, negotiated teacher/pupil learning and assessment processes).
- Physical education in a technological world (e.g. use of ICT in a PE context).
- Physical education continuing professional development (e.g. attendance at workshops/delivery of workshops).
- Physical education leadership in the primary school (e.g. leading PE curricular promotion, planning or innovation within the school).

Why quality PE?

Quality PE can promote positive attitudes to physical activity, reduce the chances of young people engaging in risk behaviour and impact positively on social inclusion and academic performance (McLennan and Thompson 2015).

Other benefits to quality PE which have also been highlighted include increased levels of fun for pupils during physical activity (Kretchmar 2006), improved self-esteem and confidence as well as better overall health (Le Masurier and Corbin, 2006). Such is the importance of quality PE, the World Health Organisation have highlighted it as a significant priority in their physical activity strategy for Europe 2016 – 2025 (WHO 2015).

To make a nomination

Are you or one of your colleagues passionate about quality PE? Make a nomination on the official proforma, available online at www.irishprimarype.com and submit it to irishprimarype@gmail.com. Nominations from principals, teachers and parents, as well as self-nominations, are accepted. Those submitting a nomination are asked to describe in 300 – 500 words the basis for their nomination.Whilst it is not possible to give detailed feedback, all entries will be acknowledged and the outcome of nominations will be provided. The deadline for 2016 nominations has been extended to Monday, 8 February 2016.

IPPEA conference 2016

The theme of the IPPEA 2016 Conference is Promoting the Power of Physical Education. This year’s conference is being held in the Mardyke Arena, University College Cork on Saturday, 27 February 2016.

Each of the varied practical workshops on the day will exhibit different elements of a quality PE programme. Highlights include legendary All Ireland winning Cork ladies’ football manager and former primary school teacher, Eamon Ryan, exploring child friendly skill development and acquisition, as well as the opportunity to wiggle, twist, stretch and bend yourself into a zen like state during yoga workshops!

Full descriptions of all workshops and online booking details are available through www.irishprimarype.com.

Conference rates are €40 with existing IPPEA members receiving a discount. The price includes your choice of any four workshops (subject to availability), morning refreshments, conference pack, lunch and one year’s membership of the IPPEA. Each attendee will also receive a five hour Continuous Professional Development certificate of attendance.

The focal point of the day will be the presentation of the Primary Physical Education Teacher Award 2016.

LIAM CLOHESSY is the chairperson of the IPPEA. He is a teacher in Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh, Cobh, Co Cork and is currently on leave completing a PhD at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, focused on leadership in primary physical education.
Máirt machnamhach
Mental health through family activities

In 2012, Gaelscoil Osraí became involved in the HSE Health Promoting School (HPS) initiative. This is a WHO evidence based initiative that supports schools to plan for health in a co-ordinated manner using a whole school approach.

**Getting organised**
As part of the HPS process, a committee was set up comprising of teachers, SNAs, pupils and parents. A consultation process, via questionnaires, was undertaken with the whole school community and a number of health topics were identified as important to address; healthy eating, improving the school environment and mental health promotion. Having worked on the school environment as our initial priority in 2013, the HPS committee decided to address mental health promotion in 2014 and Máirt Machnamhach was one of the outcomes of our action plan.

**First Tuesdays**
Máirt Machnamhach takes place on the first Tuesday of each month. Instead of homework, pupils engage in an activity that places particular emphasis on family interaction. Suggested activities including baking, going for a walk, board games or simply sitting down to enjoy a meal as a family. The children may take photographs of their activities to display on our HPS notice board or school website.

Máirt Machnamhach is wonderfully simple and has been a positive experience in Gaelscoil Osraí for students, parents and teachers alike. Everybody gets to take a break from the chore that is homework, (or having to correct it!) using the time to connect and communicate with others. Máirt Machnamhach is anticipated each month and the feedback from parents has been wonderfully affirming.

“The value of this initiative is priceless. In a world where everybody is rushing, the life-skill of being able to stop and spend time on the simple important things cannot be overstated”

**Looking after our sláinte meabhrach**
Through the progression of our school as a Health Promoting School and the adoption of Máirt Machnamhach into the life of our school, we have all gained an insight into the importance of taking time out to look after our sláinte meabhrach. The work of our HPS committee further develops the concept of Máirt Machnamhach by providing a mental health awareness evening for parents and through the development of mindfulness in our school, with the aim of continuing to promote wellbeing across the whole school community.

TANYA HUDSON, Gaelscoil Osraí, Loch Buí, Cill Chainnigh.
1916-2016

Bliain an-tábhachtach i stair na hÉireann ó 2016 nuair a dhéanfar comóradh cuimhneacháin ar 100 bliain Éirí Amach 1916, eachtra cinniúnach i saol agus i stair na hÉireann.

Éire 1916
Dhá leabhar cuimhneacháin mhealltacha iad seo, bunaithe ar imeachtaí Éirí Amach na Cásca 1916, le hocht n-aonad an ceann. Tá leabhar A dírithe ar ranganna 3,4,5 agus leabhar B ar ranganna 5 agus 6 sa bhunsoil, agus blianta 1,2,3 agus an Ídirbhliain san iar-bhunsoil.

Tacaíonn na leabhair ghléite seo le Clár Comórtha Céad Bliain 1916. Clúdaítear na príomhthéamaí:
- Pearsanra agus Príomhimeachtaí Sheachtain na Cásca, 1916
- An Forógra
- Ár mBratach Náisiúnta
- Mná agus Páistí i 1916
- Fíricí agus fianaise ó 1916.

Úsáid sa Rang
- Tar éis iníuchadh a dhéanamh ar an gcaibidil “Pearsanra agus Príomhimeachtaí Sheachtain na Cásca, 1916”, pléigh na ceisteanna seo a leanas leis na páistí:
- An Forógra: Pléigh an bhfíntse a atá leat do na páistí. Luaitear ag an tús gur do Mhuintir na hÉireann an forógra. Déanann an forógra cur síos ar na páistí na stairí na hÉireann a d’fhág i stair na hÉireann iniúdach agus muintir na hÉireann iníon. Láir an pháistí forógra an fhios a féadfadh do na páistí.
  - Ár mBratach Náisiúnta: Cuir i láthair na hÉireann iníon na hÉireann.
- Mná agus Páistí i 1916: Inis scéal Rosie Haicéad do na páistí agus míniog go bhfuil droichead nua thuas an bhféin i stair na n-aonair. Déanann an próiseas do an bplean a d’fhág i stair na hÉireann.
  - Fíricí agus fianaise ó 1916: Níl sé deacair fianaise a fháil ó 1916. Spreagann an forógra ceistí a chur ar sheantaítaí faoi chothrom a bhí aige de 1916. Láir an pháistí forógra a d’fhág i stair na hÉireann.

Cad eile atá ar fáil?
Dhá leabhar sa tsraith In a Nutshell aisteáithe go Gaeilge, agus inste ar bhealach éadrom, greannmarraí, tarraingteach a bhí aige de 1916. Láir an tábhacht a bhainn leasa d’fhorbairt do pháistí.

Méabh Banríon na Troda
Duine de bhallachtaí go dtí anghás a thug na hÉireannach agus a d’fhág i stair, is fearr leis an tsaol stoirmiúil agus churaadh a bhí aige leis an stair, is féidir leis an staid i stair na hÉireann.

Rosie Hackett

Teaching matters

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Rosie Hackett
Parents as partners: a

It was September 1977 when I first encountered the concept of ‘the parent.’ I am, of course, speaking in an educational context and I am returning nostalgically to the past, which, as we all know, is another country! In 1977, I was in my eighth year in the teaching profession. My previous seven years had been spent working very happily with senior classes and it was there I wished to remain. But fate, in the person of the principal, intervened and I was told in the spring of that year that, come September, I would be teaching junior infants. I was gripped by an unspeakable terror, but there was no negotiation, no return, my future was sealed! Of course, I was not to know then how much I would come to love working as an infant teacher or predict the great interest I would develop in the area of early childhood education.

On 1 September 1977, I walked into Room 3 in my school in Cork city and the following met my astonished gaze: approximately 40 infant children (many of them crying); an equal number of mams and dads (some of them crying); several cheery nans and granddads; and a sprinkling of dogs. Flight, even if briefly considered by me, was impossible – there were sentries on all exits! But that, dear reader, was the day I discovered ‘the parent’ and, by extension, educational partnership, because, whether you like it or not, you cannot be an infant teacher without constant interaction and communication with the most important people in these small children’s lives, their parents.

The educational landscape in 1977 was profoundly different from that of 2016. Boards of management had just been established. This was an important step towards partnership as, for the first time, parents, through their representation on boards, now had a say in school management. On a day-to-day basis though, partnership did not exist in any meaningful way for most of us working in schools at the time. It is hard to believe this now but we had no whole-school plan (that I can remember), few school policies and our main point of reference was Curacalann na Bunscoile, contained in two concise volumes. This is not to say that sterling work was not being done by the teachers of the time, but these teachers often worked almost independently within the confines of their classrooms, with little contact with the outside world.

I had the good fortune, in the late 1980s, to attend a lecture given by the excellent and inspiring Dr Concepta Conaty, who sadly passed away in 2009. This lecture opened my eyes to possibilities I had not considered before. Concepta had a vision, a strong, powerful and radical vision arising from her work with parents in a disadvantaged setting, a viewpoint that saw parents as partners in education and that recognised the huge richness that such a partnership would bring to children, schools and parents. Around this time, the Irish government was also recognising the value of partnership, seeing it as a key strategy of educational policy and practice. This recognition was evident from many important government circulars and reports of the time. The thrust of the thinking in many of these documents was given statutory embodiment in the Education Act 1998 which enshrined in law the rights of parents in relation to their children’s schooling.

For those of us working with children at risk of educational disadvantage, a very important development was the introduction of the Home/School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme in 1990, with Concepta Conaty as its national coordinator. When I became principal in 2000, the HSCL scheme was firmly established in our school and was a key component of our efforts to address educational disadvantage. On the ground, it meant that one of our teachers, known as the HSCL coordinator, worked full-time with parents. It is of great importance to the scheme that the coordinator is a teacher in the school as he/she has valuable experience of both the school context and the school curriculum. The latter is especially significant as the coordinator aims to bring parents closer to their children’s learning. The coordinator works closely, not just with parents and school staff, but with neighbouring schools and the surrounding community.

Outcomes of the scheme for our school have been far-reaching and transformative. Epstein has identified six types of parent/school partnership (Connors and Epstein 1995) and I observed how the HSCL Scheme facilitates the implementation of each of these involvement types in the school.

Parenting
The first type concerns the creation by parents of a home environment supportive of children’s learning. Many of the parents with whom the HSCL coordinator works feel marginalised, disenfranchised from the school system and reluctant to engage with the school. Yet many of these parents are investing much care in the task of educating their children. Even getting the children to school and providing for their most basic educational requirements may be mammoth tasks and it is here that partnership comes into play in a vitally important way as the HSCL coordinator can provide both practical and moral support to these parents in order to enrich the children’s learning both at home and in school. In this way, the school can validate and celebrate the parent’s contribution to education and acknowledge the role of the parent as the child’s primary educator.

Communication
Epstein’s second type of involvement concerns parent/school communication. Communication occurs organically and in a great variety of ways through HSCL. The Parents’ Room is a warm, friendly and welcoming place, where mums and dads (and other family members) can chat over a cup of coffee and receive very valuable support from each other and from the coordinator. Through home visitation the coordinator can further support parents, answer questions and offer encouragement and affirmation.

Home and school learning
The third and fourth types of involvement concern parental involvement in school and in learning activities at home. Through HSCL, parents receive much guidance on how they can support their children’s
Teaching matters

**principal reflects**

learning at home. Based on parental needs and wishes, regular classes for parents are held in curricular areas. In addition, parental involvement activities are organised throughout the school. It is here that parent/school partnership is most visible and what a joy it is to observe the engrossment of children, parents and teachers as they work together in activities such as Maths for Fun, Storiesacks or Kidstalk!

**Decision making/volunteering/collaborating with community**

I have seen many parents who were hitherto reluctant to come into the school gain confidence through partaking in such activities, to such an extent that they were empowered to take part in Epstein’s fifth type of involvement and become members of the parents’ association committee or board of management or partake in policy-making and planning groups in the school. I have also seen how partnership with the local community – Epstein’s sixth involvement type – contributes in many ways to school life and the children’s education, whether that partnership is with neighbouring schools, voluntary or statutory bodies, community associations, local youth clubs or third level institutions.

As I said at the outset, the past is another country. In the course of my teaching career I have travelled from that country through several interesting and challenging educational landscapes until I reached the 21st century school from which I retired in 2014. During my journey I increasingly understood and appreciated the truth and wisdom of that familiar seanfhocal, Ní neart go cur le chéile!

**Reference**


MARION HEALy retired from her position as principal of St Vincent’s NS, Cork, in 2014. She researched the area of parent/school partnership for her doctoral studies.

What a joy it is to observe the engrossment of children, parents and teachers as they work together in activities such as Maths for Fun, Storiesacks or Kidstalk!
As a DEIS school, we have many beneficial literacy and numeracy initiatives firmly established within our school. Last year we went about seeking out a new exciting initiative which would continue to encourage parental involvement and benefit our students.

After much consideration and parental consultation we decided to trial Lego education in the senior classrooms. We choose Lego Education as it is a cross curricular tool which integrates elements of science, maths, construction, programming and engineering, whilst also creating an environment where the children need to work collaboratively and find creative solutions.

Before introducing this new initiative in a classroom environment, I held a workshop for parents to introduce them to the activity sets and familiarise themselves with the simple programming tools. Parents showed great enthusiasm for this new activity and many offered their time and assistance. We purchased 10 activity sets but decided to use five of these initially within the classroom. We were extremely lucky that a local IT company donated reconfigured laptops to our school which we could use with the activity sets. Logistically we decided it best to divide the children into five groups of approximately six children. We had myself, in my role of HSCL, the class teacher and three parent volunteers present in the room for the activity. We began by timetabling this activity for a block of six weeks in sixth class. The nature of the work provided the children with the opportunity to communicate, share ideas and work together on a fun and exciting project.

What is WeDo education?

Created by Lego Education, the WeDo Robotics Construction Set is a set of pieces and mechanical parts that can be used to design robots. It has over 150 elements in the set including gears, cams, axles, a motor, motion and tilt sensors, USB hub and many other pieces. The pieces and parts all come in a sturdy, plastic tub. You do need to be extremely careful that all small pieces are accounted for and that the children take great care to ensure that all pieces are returned to the box after the activity!

The Lego WeDo system has software to program the robots, an activity pack to guide learning and an excellent guide for teachers to facilitate teaching. Once the model is built, the children can connect their robot to the laptop using the USB hub. The software allows you to program the robots, controlling its actions, sounds and responses. All the programming has easy to use drag-and-drop software. The activity pack guides you through constructing 12 different Lego WeDo models, each one teaching a specific building concept.

Teacher’s guide and activity pack

The Teacher’s Guide is a very useful part of the set. It provides guidance and support along with questions to pose to the children. It describes what concepts are being taught with each activity. The teacher notes for activities section of the Teacher’s Guide helps you through teaching and building these 12 robots using the 4C learning process: connect, construct, contemplate and continue.

- **Connect** encourages the children to get involved in the activity and start brainstorming solutions. The activity pack part of the software plays a little Lego movie at this point, featuring Mia and Max. The movie and accompanying text describe the problem to solve.
- **Construct** is where the children build their robot. The activity pack steps the children through the building of each model, giving instructions for making the 12 different configurations. Construct is also where children can arrange the recommended program and see what happens when it is run.
- **Contemplate** is where children can use a worksheet to help experiment with different robot and program configurations, and to play with and learn about the parts of the robot and the program. What happens if you change this? What will this do? What if we move this here?
- **Continue** encourages the children to keep experimenting on their robot, trying different programming tools etc.

Lego WeDo has brought great excitement to our school, it teaches high level concepts in a simple, child friendly manner. It has facilitated collaborative learning and creates an opportunity for integration between subjects for the class teacher. More importantly, from a HSCL viewpoint, it has encouraged many enthusiastic parents to volunteer and become more involved in school life. Our weekly WeDo lessons have become a highlight of the school week and certainly compliment our existing HSCL initiatives.

**ERICA HOGAN, HSCL, Castaheany Educate Together NS, Dublin 15.**
Teaching matters

Reviews

Future high king, Brian, sorts out the giant and saves the day

Brian’s village has been destroyed, the river has dried up and there is a terrible stench in the air. Brian leads his brothers on an adventure to solve this mystery. They follow the trail of destruction which leads them to an evil-smelling giant in need of a shower! The giant is using debris from the village to dam the river so that he can have a bath. Will Brian be able to save the day and will the giant ever be able to get clean?

Brian and the Giant is Chris Judge’s second book about the boy Brian Boru who would grow up to become High King of Ireland. This cleverly illustrated, 32 page full-colour text, which is almost A4 size and contains no more than two short sentences per page, would be suitable for story time in the infant classes and for paired reading with junior pupils. The illustrations have just enough detail to engage the young listener/reader and could be used as the framework for an oral lesson. It could also be used to compare the way of life in the past to today. This is an enjoyable short tale that younger children would enjoy.


Reviewed by CIARÁN BYRNE, Rathdrum, Co Wicklow

Out of the primary school chrysalis ...

The Butterfly Shell is a beautifully written debut novel by Maureen White. Set in contemporary, suburban Ireland, the book’s main character Marie has trouble adjusting to secondary school. Her days at school are full of adolescent anguish, exclusion and petty humiliations at the hands of the self-appointed ‘Super-Six’. As her life at school deteriorates Marie slips deeper into a depression. Her nights are increasingly haunted by the cries of a dead sister whom she never met.

There are several other big themes at play in this novel and the issues of self harm, body image and cot death emerge throughout. However the novel itself is rather short and it seems, at times, as if the author ran out of time and space to develop them. The ending for me was also a little unsatisfactory and Marie’s eventual triumph seemed a little contrived. Nonetheless, Marie is a totally appealing and likeable character, as is Stella her odd friend, and their struggles to find identity and place in the world of secondary school are totally believable. This book will appeal to late primary school pupils and while some of the themes may be too complex for a class audience, there is much promise here to show White may develop into a very interesting writer for this age-group.


Reviewed by SHARON O’DRISCOLL, Aghavrin, Co Cork

An ideal tool for a resource teacher

Max and Me is a child-centered publication, which focuses on helping children to understand the stress and anxiety that surrounds sensory overload. It is a beautifully illustrated workbook, which tells the story of a child’s first few days in school as he struggles with the new noisy, busy environment. The child’s mother introduces him to the concept of Max – his modulator. Max lives in the child’s brain and his function is to receive messages from the senses and dictate the body’s responses. When Max received a lot of messages all at once, he became scared and ran away. There are many suggestions in the text to slow down the messages to Max, for example by listening to the sound of one’s breathing. There is also an example of how it feels when Max gets tired and the body begins to fidget and move about. This book is an ideal resource for therapists, teachers and parents to work with children who are having difficulty adjusting to the discipline of school and having to conform to new demands and routines. The workbook format is designed for a child to work with an adult to get to know his/her own modulator. As such, it is an ideal tool for the resource teacher, which will facilitate hours of discussion leading the child to understand and cope with many different situations.


Reviewed by JULIE RYNG, Dunlow, Co Cork
Volunteer teachers wanted
Volunteer in Sri Lanka this summer. Travel as part of a team to work in Sambodhi Home for the Disabled in Sri Lanka, creating an unforgettable camp experience for the residents (old and young) that live there. Expressions of interest to Nadia O’Shea: nadiaoshea@gmail.com For more information visit www.sambodhihome.com

CICE Conference/Reunion
The Past Students’ Association of the Church of Ireland College of Education will hold its annual conference in the Lyraph Estate Hotel, Kilkenny, from 11 - 13 March 2016 for all current and past students of CICE and CTC.

The theme of this year’s conference will be 'Chill, Compute and Create'. It will also incorporate 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, and 40 year reunions.

For further information please contact psacice@gmail.com.

Global Citizenship Schools
Free online support for teachers and schools
Here is a super new year resolution for you:
1. Look up www.into.ie (global citizenship school).
2. Get your school signed up to free online support lessons.
3. Tell-a-friend in another school.

1916: “Cherish all the children of the nation.”
2016: “Cherish all the children of the world.”

Great lessons with videos and activities and 100% free! (This support is suitable for the whole school, is volunteer based and is backed by the INTO)

Copy date
Copy you wish to have considered for publication in the March 2016 issue of InTouch should arrive in Head Office by 8 February 2016. The deadline for the April 2016 issue is 7 March 2016.

Citywide Reading Campaign
Dublin City Council’s Library Service has launched the Citywide Reading Campaign for Children 2016. The campaign encourages children to read for pleasure and runs from January to March 2016.

The Book of Learning by E.R. Murray has been chosen as the book for this year’s campaign. For more details visit www.dublincityofliterature.ie.

Engineers’ Week 2016
Engineers’ week this year will run from 28 February to 5 March. The theme for 2016 is ‘Engineering our Future’. Visit engineersweek.ie for more information.

Survey – Aistear
Are you a junior infant teacher? Do you use AISTEAR in your classroom?
Primary teacher conducting research on AISTEAR would appreciate your participation in survey. The online teacher evaluation survey ‘Learning to Play and Playing to Learn’ is available at http://tinyurl.com/zj6k3xx

INTO/STSG Separated Teachers’ Support Group
Next meeting: Saturday, 12 March Time: 11 a.m.
Venue: Teachers’ Club, Parnell Square, Dublin 1.
Separated, divorced, widowed, lone parents from INTO, ASTI, TUI and IFUT welcome. For further information please contact:
Chairperson: Jackie Moloney, 01 6247476 or 087 9752849.
Secretary: Iseult Bourke, 085 2394661 or 01 5162069.

Long Serving Principals
INTO member, Muiris Ó Mathúna, is conducting a survey on primary principals with 40 years or more service as principal.
If you are one you can contact him at 086 3034410 or by email at momathuna@eircom.net with details of service.
Nótaí deiridh

Winners of December draw 2015

Car – Toyota Auris
Denise Fitzharris, St. Joseph’s N, Ballymitty, Co Wexford.

Cash €500
Deirdre Sinnott, Kilrane NS, Kilrane, Co Wexford.

Weekend for two in Jury’s Inn
Kathleen Dowling, Garristown, Co Meath.

Winners of November draw 2015

Car – Toyota Auris
Susan O’Neill, Bishopstown, Co Cork.

Cash €950
Oilibhia Ní Shúilleabháin, St Brigid’s Boys NS, Foxrock, Dublin 18.

Weekend for two in Jury’s Inn
Christine Timoney, Cork Educate Together, Grattan Street, Cork.

Christmas hampers
Eugene Ahern, Skerries, Co Dublin; Denise Costello, Ennis, Co Clare.

Comhar Linn Crossword no 169

A draw for 2 x €100 will be made from all correct entries.

Simply complete the crossword and send it to ‘InTouch Crossword’, INTO, 35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, before Friday, 26th February 2016.

ACROSS
1. Avail of the end of the house. (3)
3. In France, the Father Cardinal got three Europeans to identify openness (Russian style). (11)
8, 7d & 25a. May agent Hall resend around the identities of Humperdinck’s great operatic children? (6,3,6)
9. Remembered a visit inside the plant. (8)
10. Let us somehow provide musical instruments. (5)
11. Foreign food is provided, thanks to firms like this. (5)
13. An aid to picking up Oriental gangs. (5)
15. Mundane concoction, as yet unidentified. (7)
16. Halted, having gone fast around the summit. (7)
20. Send back this stopwatch. (5)
21. How does a motorist react to a triangular sign? I give up! (5)
23. Note – part of the camera is what Antrim is noted for. (5)
24. Sounds like the mariner can have a more equitable view. (8)
25. See 8 across.
26. (3) Capital. (6)

DOWN
1. One of the French finds carers completely - in a way, that’s of no assistance. (11)
2. He was relatively brilliant! (8)
3. Jetties for Mr Morgan. (5)
4. I garner together a piece of jewellery. (7)
5. Cook, as in the middle of decay. (5)
6 & 17d. Acting in paternal or maternal manner? No replications needed here, literally! (2,4,8)
7. See 8 across.
9. Keeps these on the beach! (11)
12. Tench’s written anew what names an Asian instrument. (5)
14. Rita’s written anew what names an Asian instrument. (5)
15. See 6 down.
17. Plunge with me, with some miser around. (7)
18. Comment about an evangelist. (6)
22. Works given to one beside Laois. (5)
23. It’s grand at floor-covering. (3)
24. Fixed part of the tennis match. (5)

December No 168 Crossword winners
Áine O’Neill, Templeogue, Dublin 6W and Pauline McNally, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary

December Crossword no 168 Solutions

Across

Down
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Down
1916 app launched

Reclaim the Vision of 1916 – A Citizen’s Initiative has launched 1916, A Guided Tour mobile app. The app will take you on a narrated, guided tour of 12 main rebel outposts in Dublin where the insurgents of Easter week 1916 held out against the forces of the British Empire. The tour starts in Liberty Hall and ends in the Garden of Remembrance in Parnell Square.

Scripted by the late Tomás Mac Anna, the tour is narrated by veteran broadcaster, Donncha Ó Dúlaing, app icon design is by Robert Ballagh and app design by Emma B Designs. Enhanced by the music, songs and poetry of some of Ireland’s well-known composers and artists, the app contains a slideshow of over 100 contemporary and vintage photographs to put each 1916 outpost in context.

The app is available for download at €1 on both Google and Apple platforms. All profits go to the National Graves’ Association.

Maths challenge

LearnStorm Ireland (formerly MATHletes) is a free 9-week maths challenge that launched in January. It is powered by the free online learning platform Khan Academy and delivered locally by Camara Ireland.

LearnStorm is an All-Ireland maths challenge for students of all ability levels between fourth class and fifth year (Primary 6 to Year 13). Last year, 13,000 Irish students, 500 teachers and 300 schools took part.

More information at:
Website: LearnStorm.ie
Facebook: LearnStorm Ireland
Twitter: @LSIreland2016.

Pictured at the launch of 1916, A Guided tour were Gillian Gerrard, Cormac Breatnach (1916 Mobile App Project Manager), Emma Dineen, INTO President and Brigid Kildee Doolin.

Gillian and Brigid are teachers in the Central Senior Mxd NS, Marlboro St., Dublin 1, which was represented at the launch with six children from sixth class.

The most clicked resources on Scoilnet for January:

1. SEVEN DAYS IN HISTORY – 1916 RISING
   resources.teachnet.ie/dhorgan/2004
   Teacher-created resource

2. 1916 RISING – BBC
   bbc.co.uk/history/british/easterrising
   Includes a radio archive and rebel songs

3. PROCLAMATION OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC
   nli.ie/1916/pdf/1.intro.pdf
   Copy of the original Proclamation from the National Library

4. REIMAGINING THE PROCLAMATION
   scoilnet.ie/uploads/resources/16395/16071.docx
   Write your own ‘Proclamation for a New Generation’.

5. 1916 POWERPOINT
   scoilnet.ie/uploads/resources/16445/16121.pptx
   Teacher-created presentation for class

6. TOM CREAN: ANTARCTIC EXPLORER
   resources.teachnet.ie/anolan/2006
   The life and adventures of the famous Irish explorer

7. THE EASTER RISING 1916
   timelines.tv/index.php?t=2&e=9
   Short video excerpts

8. THE IRISH FLAG
   scoilnet.ie/irishflag
   Stories in the evolution of the Irish tricolour.

9. EASTER 1916
   easter1916.ie
   The story through pictures and witness statements

10. 1916 EASTER RISING
    iol.ie/~dluby/1916.htm
    Detailed page of notes on the events