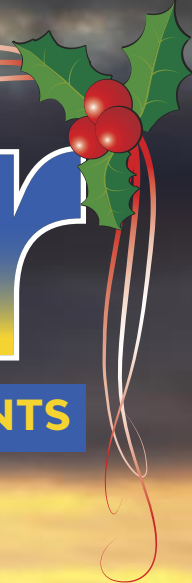


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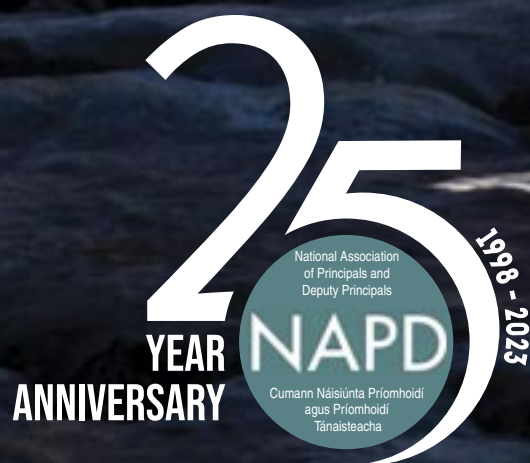
SUPPORTING OUR UKRAINIAN COLLEAGUES & STUDENTS



Sometimes, out at the edges, the night is turning and the waves of darkness begin to brighten the shore of dawn. The heavy dark falls back to earth and the freed air goes wild with light. The heart fills with fresh bright breath and thoughts stir to give birth to colour.

John O'Donoghue

To Bless the Space Between Us
November 2007



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FROM THE EDITOR



At the end of the year commemorating NAPD's 25th anniversary, our final six past Presidents offer reflections on their year in office.

John Walshe, renowned education journalist and former ministerial adviser, casts an eye over happenings in the 25 years and presciently, in a piece written weeks before the anarchic events on our capital's streets on 23 November, alerts us to the baleful agenda of the so called hard-right.

The malevolent voices of the angry, disconnected, subversive, and combinations thereof, are becoming louder. On that Thursday they came for immigrants. It might be timely to reacquaint ourselves – and possibly our students – with the

1946 words of German Lutheran Pastor Martin Niemöller – "First they came for ... and I did not speak out ...". It's an easy Google.

There is fear in many immigrant homes today. We must ensure that all our students, particularly those who don't sound and look like us, feel safe and protected. In Summer Leader, we featured Nano Nagle College in Cork which had been designated a School of Sanctuary, offering security, welcome and a safe-place to non-national children. With, or without, such designation our schools must urgently attune to students' fears and offer sanctuary. No child should be the object of adult hate..

To bring the curtain down on our first 25 years, former Directors Mary McGlynn and Clive Byrne share their memories, framing where we have arrived at via the journey travelled. With the 24 Presidents' reflections and the previous contributions of Anne Looney, Tom Collins and Áine Hyland, there is a deep well of corporate memory and wisdom to guide us into the years ahead.

This Leader coincides with the publication in the media of League Tables. Two respected members of the education community pitch For and Against. This matter annually begets the what-does-educational-success-look-like question.

After the Leaving Cert results came out in 2022, one school tweeted that 80% of students had achieved over a certain number of CAO points. More recently, a school, advertising for a leadership position, promoted their 517 average CAO points scored.

I wondered what did those students in these schools who had done their very best, but scored below the cutoffs feel? Inadequate? Unwelcome? Failure?

It reminded me of a day in September fadó fadó, when we waited in our boarding school classrooms for the intercom to jingle in. Word was out. Inter Cert results had arrived. In those days you failed without enough subjects passed. Five names were called out, to report to reception. Included was my best friend Tommy from Ballina. The whole school knew what this meant. Cruel humiliation. Not quite the subtlety as a boast in a tweet or advert, but the same bitter taste of failure. Tears were shed, not only among the five (first ever public admission).

And so, this 15-year-old came to understand what educational success didn't look like. I bumped into Tommy years later. He hadn't forgotten the day his name was called, but unlike me, he remembered the other four. He was managing fine in life, without ever possessing an Intermediate Certificate. O res mirabilis.

To finish, this is the one break where school leaders have no reason to just drop in to the office for an hour's catchup. Soon will be time for feet up, glowing fires, late nights, long walks, throwing snowballs, icy swims, mulled wine. Not a single sheet of paper on your desk will miss you. Take the break you need and deserve.

We are indebted to contributors to this and all 2023 Leaders. Particular thanks to Mark Daniel and colleagues in CRM who again this year did an outstanding job with the design and production of Leader.

As ever, observations in this space are mine alone.

Hold on, what's that? ... a distant, rasping, slurring voice ... the boys from the *something* choir – hardly the NAPD choir? – were singing Galway Bay ... fading, now silent. Fairytale ending. Turas sábhailte, Shane.

Time for us to be on our way, too.

Barry O'Callaghan

Leader

Quarterly

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Paul Byrne, Tim Geraghty

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SOON**

Dream Space TV: brAI_n_waves series

A collaboration between RTÉ Learn and Microsoft Dream Space which aims to educate young people on the importance of understanding Artificial Intelligence (AI) from how it works and what is behind it, to its impact on us and why we should be learning about it. This series will provide hands-on lessons focused on developing AI literacy with students which enables them to then enter a national competition and win fantastic prizes!



Make sure to receive our monthly newsletter to ensure your school receive all updates about the brAI_n_waves series PLUS other free resources and opportunities that will become available this year.

www.dreamspace.ie

 Microsoft

Front Cover

Back Cover

Cliffs of Moher, Clare,
from Doolin beach.
Photography
by Charlie McManus



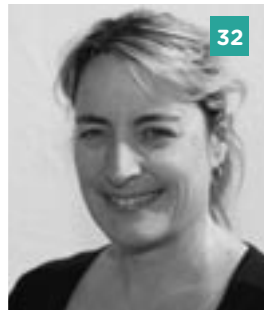
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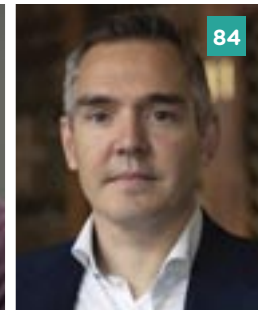
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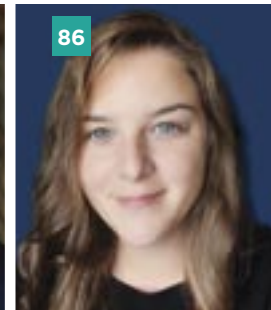
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Presidential Musings

Regina Butler
President



I joined NAPD in the year 2000 when I was first appointed Principal and have been an active member of Region 7 since then. One of the major benefits of NAPD for me at the time was, and still is, the cross sectoral nature of the organisation. I had been teaching in an ETB school and was appointed Principal in a Voluntary Secondary School in which I still work. The third sector embraced by NAPD is the Community & Comprehensive Sector.

This cross sectoral structure helped me to make the transition to a sector, new to me, without losing connection with my colleagues in the other sectors. It was also a vital support to me in building a solid working relationship with the Deputy Principal in the new school, as we had participated together in NAPD region meetings, in-services and annual Conferences.

It also provided us both with an immediate broad-based network of expertise, which has always helped me to grapple with the everyday pressures of the job, in the knowledge that I could pick up the phone to multiple fellow professionals dealing with the same issues and together

find solutions in a spirit of mutual support and co-operation. I was at the same time awestruck and reassured by the level of respect shown to NAPD by the Department of Education officials since the foundation of NAPD.

This was palpable at the recent 25th commemoration in Collins Barracks, Dublin in September. These building blocks have provided a solid foundation for NAPD to grow and provide us, as members, with access to vital connections & links at multiple levels within the DE, which enable us to have our voices heard.

The cross sectoral nature of NAPD is embedded in the structure of how the organisation is run as exemplified by the fact that the Executive meetings are chaired by the current President, assisted by the outgoing President and the incoming President. Each President represents one of the 3 sectors and they work together to represent the views and concerns of all Principals and Deputies in all sectors.

NAPD is actively involved with ESHA, the European School Heads' Association, which meets throughout the year to discuss issues of common concern and seeks to lobby support for agreed education objectives. This year's annual Conference took place in Dubrovnik, in October. Teacher shortage is evident across all member states. The German delegate, for example, explained that while at government level teacher shortage is quoted as 12%, Principals' experience on the ground would say this is more like 40%.

At the ESHA Conference, the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) approach to the mentoring of newly-appointed Principals and the coaching model provided to the Senior Management Teams was highly praised. On foot of the Irish experience, the Dutch have adopted the Irish model and are finding it most beneficial.

Mary Nihill, a former NAPD President, and her team in CSL are to be highly commended for their excellent leadership

I was at the same time awestruck and reassured by the level of respect shown to NAPD by the Department of Education officials since the foundation of NAPD.

At last, we can breathe again without masks and get back to more interactive methods of teaching and learning.

training and support. They continue this vitally important work in the newly formed OIDE. It is essential that the same level of importance be given to Senior Management Training and support under OIDE, as was the case under CSL.

At last, we can breathe again without masks and get back to more interactive methods of teaching and learning. While there are many views on the Leaving Certificate exams, it was interesting to note last June the sense of relative calm and reassurance as the Junior and Leaving Certificate exams began and ran smoothly, without accredited or calculated grades and the accompanying stress.

Whatever the final outcome of all the discussions and the deliberations that will continue to take place over the coming years, it is important that we identify and retain the good parts. As was said at the recent Annual Conference panel conversation, it is important to keep the "fair" and to remove the "brutal".

I end this piece, as I began, with reference to NAPD as a support to us all in our daily jobs which have undoubtedly become more and more challenging. The concept of TEAM – **T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore truly resonates. The concept that nobody is perfect but together we can be, and are at, our best. This is what NAPD offers us.

The opportunity to dialogue, the harnessing of different views and opinions on what affects us all currently and how we feel that ought to look like and feel for all those involved in education, our staff, our students, and their parents and, most importantly, how we, as Leaders, are supported to lead this transformation. Your individual voice matters.

I encourage members to attend regional NAPD meetings and in-services. For the organisation to be effective we need to hear all voices. Regional representatives will bring members' views to National Executive meetings. These opinions will then be represented at national level with the DE and its agencies, with the NAPD Director, Deputy Director and the Presidents, outgoing, current and incoming.

I am humbled and consider it a singular honour to hold the position of NAPD President and I look forward to working on behalf of members to forward the cause of leadership in education. I welcome receiving members' views which can be emailed to me at president@napd.ie.

With every best wish for a successful & productive year -
ní neart go cur le chéile

Regina Butler, President



NAPD Presidents

Anton O'Mahony, *Incoming President*; Regina Butler, *President* and Shane Foley, *Past-President*.

The Learning Power Approach

Graham Powell

The Learning Power Approach (LPA) uses a distillation of international research into how young people learn, based on the exemplary practice of many teachers working in a variety of contexts across the age and ability range.



The focus of LPA lies in the development of those learning habits that all young people need in school and will need in their lives beyond compulsory education. These proven approaches assure student motivation and high levels of achievement.

Important Information for all workshops

1. Workshops run from 9:00am to 1:30pm, followed by light lunch.
2. If face-to-face workshops cannot take place, they will be offered online via zoom.
3. We might need to limit participant numbers, depending on venue capacity and health regulations.
4. Places will be allocated on a first come basis.
5. Registration can be made by Principals or Deputy Principals via the NAPD website.
6. Any questions? Contact Barry O'Callaghan at leading4learning@napd.ie.

Becoming a Leader of Learning in Your School

Workshop

Portlaoise

Wednesday 6 March 2024

This workshop is aimed at Principals, Deputies and senior staff with responsibility for Learning & Teaching.

Together with examples from Irish school leaders who have worked with him over the past decade, they will focus attention on the leadership and whole school implications and practicalities that ensure successful and sustainable implementation.

The workshop will draw on *Powering Up Your School* (Crown House, 2020) which was co-authored by Graham.

A **per-participant** registration fee for the workshop is €70.

Level 1 – Newcomers Programme

2 workshops with a choice of 2 venues

	Workshop 1	Workshop 2
Cork	Wed 4 Oct 2023	Wed 31 Jan 2024
Portlaoise	Thu 5 Oct 2023	Thu 1 Feb 2024

This programme is aimed primarily at classroom teachers but it will also be of interest to school leaders who wish to familiarise themselves with what the Learning Power Approach can offer their school.

Schools can sign up for the remaining workshop. A **per-participant** registration fee for the workshop is €70.

DIRECTOR'S DESK



PAUL
CRONE

A quote from William Arthur Ward, an American motivational writer, recently resonated with me in the context of school leadership in Ireland:

“The pessimist complains about the wind, the optimist expects it to change, the realist adjusts the sails”

The winds of change are blowing as we embark on Senior Cycle reform, which promises to challenge everything that we have known in Irish Education.

Can we be the realist?

Embedding Junior Cycle has fundamentally changed how we teach, assess and empower Junior students. For Senior Cycle, this calls into question the format of the Leaving Certificate, how we assess, use grinds

to game the assessment system and select students for Higher Education.

Given these impending changes, prudent leadership suggests we begin to adjust the sails. An attitudinal shift will require adjusting our thinking, changes in the conversations that we have in our schools with students, parents and staff and changes in our actions around the decisions we make at school level.

It is an exciting, but also worrying, time – worrying in how these changes will be received by staff and parents, by the Further and Higher Education Institutes and by Irish society in general. However, I would argue that while these are all genuine concerns, they are not detrimental to meaningful change to protect the future of Irish education for our current and future students.

The programme for government promises a Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Education (CAFE) and we are hopeful that the government will deliver on this in early 2024. This will stimulate national discussion on the education system to ask such important questions around the current Leaving Certificate, pathways for students following post-primary education, governance and leadership in our schools, patronage and teaching as a profession in Ireland.

These are necessary discussions to build a consensus on what we want from our education system and what we want for our young people from our education system.

Another question arises around the

theme of our recent Conference. How can we reimagine leadership to future-proof the capacity in our schools to adapt to, lead and embrace change?

All evidence points school leadership at this time being primarily focused on administration, which has a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of school leaders. This must change but we must also change. We must proactively embrace the change we want to see in our schools and in ourselves.

If we genuinely believe we should prioritise Leading Learning then our actions must reflect this. We must upskill in this area and we must begin to change our mindset to reflect this.

In order to build on this conversation and expedite action in this area, NAPD has invited Pasi Sahlberg to our National Symposium in January. Pasi Sahlberg, one of the leading architects of the Finnish education system, is currently advising the Australian and Scottish governments on their education systems.

We want Pasi to challenge our thinking, to shift attitudes around reimagining leadership in our schools to deliver more effective schools.

Our conversation with Pasi has the potential to open the door for real change. This event will be live streamed and recorded for members. Our hope is that it will lead to recommendations and a clear pathway to the actions that are required to be taken.

As the winds blow, we are adjusting our sails. Let us hear your voice, let us know your opinions. Armed with this information, we can set them course to get us to the optimum destination.

Ar aghaidh le chéile
Paul Crone, Director

DEPUTY DIRECTOR RACHEL O'CONNOR



Embracing the (Christmas) Spirit of Leadership

Dear School Leaders

As I approach my first Christmas as Deputy Director, supporting and collaborating with school leaders, I am reminded of the transformative power of the holiday season. Christmas, in particular, is a time when we come together to celebrate the values that underpin the educational journey we embark on daily. While I may be new to my position, I am already deeply impressed by, and grateful for, the dedication and commitment I see in each of you.

The world of education is constantly evolving, and your leadership plays a crucial role in

Leadership in education is a unique and multifaceted endeavour. It requires vision, empathy, adaptability and a steadfast commitment to nurturing the growth and development of young minds.

shaping the future of our schools. Your efforts, sacrifices, and tireless work don't go unnoticed; this Christmas, I want to recognise your invaluable contributions.

REFLECTION ON LEADERSHIP

Leadership in education is a unique and multifaceted endeavour. It requires vision, empathy, adaptability and a steadfast commitment to nurturing the growth and development of young minds. As you guide your schools through challenges and triumphs, remember that your role extends far beyond the administrative and academic. You are also mentors, inspirers and the guiding lights for both students and colleagues. However, please, please remember that you are number 1 and you must prioritise yourself in the first instance.

THE GIFT OF EMPATHY

Christmas is a season of empathy and understanding. It's a time when we reflect on the needs and aspirations of others. As

leaders, this quality is especially important. Understand the concerns and aspirations of your students, teachers, and staff. Create a supportive, nurturing environment that allows them to flourish. By doing so, you're providing a priceless gift to your school community.

The hardest part of my job was saying goodbye to our most vulnerable students for the Christmas holidays. Is there something that you can do in your school to give hope and, precious memories to those who won't have the warm, safe Christmas that most of us experience?

ADAPTABILITY IN A CHANGING WORLD

This past year has shown us that adaptability is a cornerstone of effective leadership. The challenges you face daily are

extraordinary. Your ability to pivot, innovate, and ensure that education continues is nothing short of commendable. In the spirit of Christmas, embrace change as an opportunity for growth, learning, and improvement.

SPREADING JOY AND POSITIVITY

During the holiday season, we exchange gifts and share moments of joy. As school leaders, you can do the same within your educational communities. Foster a culture of positivity and encouragement. Acknowledge the achievements, both big and small, of your students and staff. Celebrate the diversity and unique talents within your school, promoting inclusivity and mutual respect.

LEADERSHIP - A YEAR-ROUND GIFT

Christmas serves as a reminder of the joys of giving, and your dedication to education is a gift that keeps on giving year-round. Continue to inspire, support and lead your schools with passion and integrity. Embrace the challenges and uncertainties of the educational landscape, knowing that your leadership is making a difference in the lives of many.

A NEW BEGINNING

This Christmas, as I join you in this exciting journey, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to work alongside such dedicated and visionary leaders. Your guidance and wisdom will undoubtedly be a source of inspiration to me as I navigate this new role.

In the spirit of the season, let us approach the future with renewed determination, a sense of purpose, and a commitment to creating educational environments that foster growth, empathy, and positivity.

May the warmth of the holiday season extend to you and your families as you shut down the laptops, lock the gates and set the alarms in our schools until 2024!

Ar mian le gach duine agaibh Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain lán le deiseanna, fás, agus áthas leanúnach na ceannaireachta oideachais.

Ar aghaidh le chéile

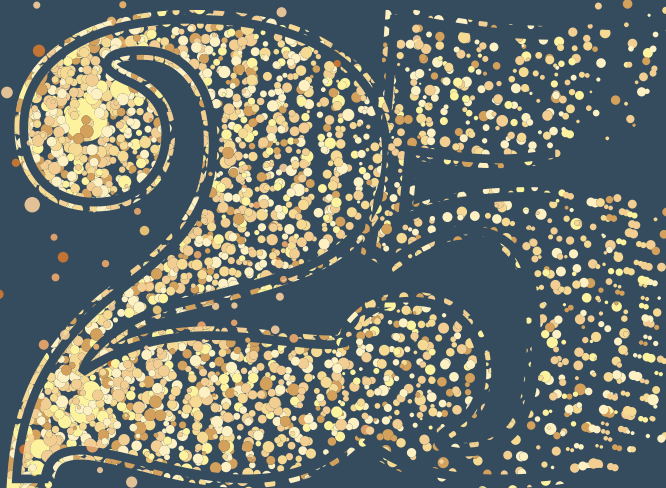
Rachel O' Connor, Deputy Director



Executive Committee 2023-2024

Front row left to right: Tracey Groome, Ingrid Fallon, Paul Crone, Anton O'Mahony, Regina Butler, Shane Foley, Rachel O'Connor, Michael Weafer, Sarah Gibbons.

Back row left to right: David McEvoy, Andrea Finlay-Kajic, Lorraine Sherlock, Deirdre Hickey, Liam Murphy, John O'Donovan, Susan McGann, Brian Doran, Ceola McGowan, Robert Finnegan, Jean-Marie Ward, Kevin Langton.



YEARS of NAPD

John Walshe

The education calendar is peppered with Conferences but over the past 25 years those run by NAPD have proven to be different from any annual get together of the other educational bodies.

Conferences often give a unique insight to outsiders into an organisation's culture – they really can be windows to its soul. The NAPD annual gatherings are more than just regular AGMs – they are energising without being exhausting, provocative without being pessimistic, challenging without being cynical, professional without being pretentious and brisk without being brusque.

Ministers are neither heckled nor listened to in stony silence. They are welcomed as partners in the shared endeavour of providing the best possible education to the rising generation in post primary schools.

Motions are pragmatic for the most part, idealistic at times but rarely too unrealistic. There is serious business afoot but also time to forge and reinforce friendships. And a time for catch-up breathers from the daily toll of leading schools.

Over the past quarter century, I was fortunate to witness the NAPD emerge as a driver of change, a unifier of school leaders and a sensible public voice for calm and rational debate on educational issues. As Professor Anne Looney remarked in the Spring edition of *Leader* "what was a new voice 25 years ago is now established, expected and influential".

The anniversary celebrations in Collins Barracks in September offered an opportunity to reflect on, and celebrate, the Association's origins, which Michael McCann did with his usual equanimity. He recalled that in those pre-NAPD days there was no shortage of disparate voices to speak on behalf of Principals and Deputy Principals. Acronyms abounded including the SSPAI, APVC, APVSCC, VPPA, ESHA, ISA and CHA, as well as separate bodies to represent Catholic teaching brothers and nuns. They were all constituted in different ways and drew their members from different types of schools, religious and otherwise. There was even a Cork Association of Principals and Vice-Principals.

The Irish Schoolmasters' Association and the Catholic Headmasters' Association represented Protestant and Catholic school heads respectively, while APVSCC was made

up of Principals and Vice Principals of vocational schools and community colleges and was linked to the TUI. VPPA comprised Vice Principals of voluntary secondary schools and was linked to the ASTI. One well known SSPAI representative quipped that APVSCC and VPPA were 'wholly owned subsidiaries' of their trade unions.

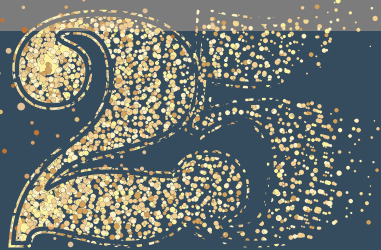
Unifying them all was the challenge. So how did the NAPD emerge from this confusing landscape as a significant voice and force in Irish education? How did it end up on the side of the progressives when it came to reform and was not afraid to say so? How did it also remain independent and critical of Ministers and the Department which subsidised its existence?

Great credit has to go to the Secondary School Principals Association of Ireland (SSPAI) and to the Association of Principals and Vice Principals of Community and Comprehensive Schools (APVC). Their pioneering work in forging a common front was supported by the APVSCC colleges and the VPPA. Also involved in planning the new merged body were representatives of the ISA.

The two main initiators of change, SSPAI and APVC, knew that they were talking themselves out of existence. The contribution of voluntary school leaders to the development of Irish education and to the birth of the NAPD has been chronicled in Michael's excellent book *SSPAI 1993-2000*. He deals with the multiple issues that SSPAI had to grapple with including Principals' contracts, supervision and substitution, pensions and retirement, exams co-ordinators, posts of responsibility, staffing and redeployment, educational welfare, inter-schools' co-operation, funding, secretaries and chaplains, community employment schemes and whole school inspection - to name but a few.

Even as SSPAI grew in strength, it identified the need to reach out to the other groups. As Michael notes "*the struggle to be regarded as one of the 'partners' in education was one that lasted throughout the life of the Association and was really only achieved through the emergence of NAPD*".

The ASTI was not exactly enamoured of the idea of a new body coming into existence to represent the heads of voluntary secondary schools. Despite the union's negative attitude, SSPAI succeeded in establishing good relations with most other organisations and with the Department of



YEARS of NAPD

Education. Minister Niamh Bhreathnach's programme manager Pat Keating told the SSPAI that the Minister was anxious to have the views of Principals. However, she couldn't meet with the Association because of the number of other organisations claiming to represent Principals.

SSPAI's foresight in helping to forge unity was acknowledged by Micheál Martin who was Minister for Education at the time of the inaugural conference of NAPD. He said that the part played by SSPAI in steering through stormy waters to the launch of the unified Association should not be underestimated.

In his book, Michael McCann is very generous to other organisations, especially the APVC whose history is not as well detailed as that of SSPAI. I was given a front seat view into its demise when the late Bride Rosney convinced me to give the valedictory after-dinner speech to its final annual conference in the Slieve Russell hotel in Cavan a quarter of a century ago.

Bride suggested the tone for it as well. It had to be delivered with a dash of humour, an acknowledgment of the Association's contribution to Irish education, an understanding of the mixed emotions the delegates in Co Cavan felt about ending their own representative body and finish on a note of optimism for the future.

No pressure then from Bride - one of the country's first female Principals of a community school, Rosmini in Dublin!

She had left teaching to work as an adviser to President Mary Robinson, but she kept in touch with her old APVC friends, including Valerie McCormick, the Association's final president.

It was an emotional time for organisations such as APVC and the SSPAI, when they voted themselves out of existence but they did so generously and without a whimper.

Convincing so many school leaders (working in 750 different locations) to unite into a single representative body was a great achievement (Teacher unions please copy!). But every organisation needs good leaders to thrive and leaders' organisations are no different. NAPD is fortunate to have had three excellent Directors since its inception - Mary McGlynn, Clive Byrne and now Paul Crone, Deputy Directors Tim Geraghty, Paul Byrne and Rachel O'Connor, as well as a succession of very good Presidents and Executives.

Their skills are needed to respond and provide leadership as the post primary system expands and changes. Apart from the recent challenges posed by COVID and the resultant inflated grades, schools - with NAPD guidance - have responded well to curricular changes, including Junior cycle reforms and other new initiatives. They have absorbed cutbacks and coped with, and welcomed, an influx of Ukrainian refugees and have listened to the growing demands for schools to deal with every new social problem.

Our schools have successfully cultivated student voices. They are, however, also beginning to hear other, more

strident voices from outside the school walls with the steadily rising interest in education by populist right wing influences. Misleading allegations about sex education in the draft SPHE programme were exposed in a useful fact checking exercise published online recently by The Journal.

They included claims that biological sex was going to be replaced by gender identity and that the new programme was trying to normalise social transitioning and gender affirming healthcare, with baseless allegations of seeking the early sexualisation of children and of deliberately promoting a pro-LGBT agenda and causing gender confusion. Libraries in half a dozen towns and cities have been subjected to protests from groups who want certain books removed.

We need to prevent our schools becoming a battle ground in culture wars in the same way that they are in some US states and elsewhere. That's just one reason why the leadership provided by the NAPD will become even more important in the future.

When I had the privilege to act as special adviser to Minister Ruairi Quinn a decade ago, I quickly realised how well the Association was regarded as a voice of reason and sanity, not just by the Department in Marlborough Street but by other Departments as well.

That voice will be needed again in the run-up to, and during, the forthcoming Citizens Assembly on the future of Education. The NAPD is trusted to give honest opinion on emerging and contentious issues, no matter how uncomfortable its view is. That kind of trust is hard earned.

Over time, many organisations eventually become troubled by accusations that the leaders are out of touch with the members. So far, the NAPD has avoided this, largely because of the emphasis on collaboration and co-operation.

There's no 'them and us'. Its leaders and those they represent - the Principals and Deputy Principals - have long ago absorbed the truth of the old Irish proverb - *Ní neart go cur le chéile*.

May the NAPD continue to grow from strength to strength and continue to meet the challenges and shape the future of the Irish education system for decades to come.

John Walshe was appointed special adviser to Ruairi Quinn who was Minister for Education and Skills from March 2011 to July 2014. Prior to that, John was an educational editor, mostly with the *Irish Independent* but also with the *Irish Times* in the early 1990s. He was a consultant to the OECD in Paris, where he was involved in four major studies on education.



He is the author of '*A New Partnership in Education*', which chronicled many of the major changes in Irish education in recent decades and he also wrote '*An Education*' which recounted his experience as a Ministerial adviser. A graduate of both NUIG and UCC, John was born in Galway City. He is currently a consultant and commentator on educational issues.

25 Year Celebration at Collins Barracks, Dublin

Rachel O'Connor



Front row left to right: Paul Crone, Regina Butler, Mary McGlynn, Larry Kavanagh, Shay Bannon, Mary Hanley, Dick O'Connor, Tomás Ó Séaghdha, Anton O' Mahony, Rachel O' Connor.

Back row left to right: Sarah Gibbons, Sean Crowley, Deirdre Hickey, John O' Donovan, Robert Finnegan, Michael, McCann, Susan McGann, Mattie Kilroy, Jean Geoghegan, Ceola McGowan, Ray Kennedy, Ivan Bolton, Brian Doran, Sheila McManamly, David McEvoy, Derek West, Michael Weafer, Lorraine Sherlock, Andea Finlay-Kajic, Jean-Marie Ward, Liam Murphy, Kevin Langton.



Friday, 22 September 2023 was a significant one for NAPD. It was on this day back in 1998 in Collins Barracks, the official launch of NAPD by then Minister for Education and Science, Micheál Martin took place.

There is a great account of that day in Michael McCann's book *SSPAI 1993-2000*. It was very fitting that Michael was our first guest speaker in the Ashling Hotel down the road from Collins Barracks, with circa 70 guests present.

Michael served as NAPD President in 2002. In his engaging, humorous and knowledgeable style gave a very informative oversight of the history of NAPD, but also importantly the Associations and organisations that preceded it.

Michael's speech was delivered, as he explained, in three stages. The first stage he described as *Disparate, Desperate and Disjointed*, the second he told the guests was *Tentative Tip-Toeing* and the third he explained as *Ni Neart go cur le Chéile*.

Mary McGlynn, NAPD's first Director from 1999 to 2008, gave an oversight of the history of the Association, its struggles and achievements in the early years. The focus of her speech was based on building relationships with partners in education. She described how a cultural shift was happening within education that led to NAPD achieving consultative status and having a voice in things such as the EPSEN Act, Oireachtas Committees and others. What resonated throughout Mary's speech was the dedication, reach and impact of NAPD since its inception.





Clive Byrne, who served as NAPD President in 2005 and then as Director from 2008 to 2021, spoke about how NAPD evolved during its latter years becoming viable, visible and valuable. He gave a detailed oversight of the vast variety of initiatives, charities and organisations that NAPD is involved in, such as Mike Hughes's Magenta Principles, The Thomas Francis Meagher Foundation, College Awareness Week, NAPD's Corporate Advisory Board. Clive outlined the extensive educational alliances that NAPD has. This speech also emphasised NAPD's holistic approach to curricular reform that was based on respectful communication and partnerships.

Shay Bannon shared memories of his time as NAPD's founding President. He thanked all of those who have worked so hard on behalf of NAPD both in its founding, up to those working on its behalf today. He reiterated that NAPD provides a safe place for school leaders and that that is something that we should all be very proud of.

An 'open mic' session gave current and past members of NAPD an opportunity to share memories and reflect on the last 25 years. Members of the current National Executive thanked those present for giving them perspective on the journey that NAPD has been on to date.



Paul Crone, Director, thanked all of those present for their contributions. He spoke of those in the room building on the shoulders of giants, taking the baton and continuing to work for, and build on, NAPD's vision as set out in its Statement of Strategy, 2022-2027 – *'to connect and unite the voice of Principals and Deputy Principals and to create an Association that is member led and responsive to the current and emerging needs of school leaders'*.



Front row left to right:
Mary McGlynn, Larry Kavanagh,
Shay Bannon, Mary Hanley,
Dick O'Connor,
Tomás Ó Séaghdha.

Back row left to right:
Michael, McCann, Mattie Kilroy,
Jean Geoghegan, Ray Kennedy,
Ivan Bolton, Sheila McManamly,
Derek West.



Insurance Matters



CASE 1: INJURY IN THE SCIENCE LABORATORY

An injury was sustained by a pupil in the science laboratory. The injured pupil was conducting a science experiment in the company of a fellow student, in accordance with normal and typical practice. The injured pupil was using a popette, a piece of glassware equipment, used to hold a specific volume of liquid, to be released in a slow, controlled manner.

The pipette is filled by placing the pointed end into the liquid and sucking the liquid into the pipette from the opposite end. This is done by the use of a simple vacuum pumping device at the end of the pipette to create suction. The injured pupil was applying one of these devices at the time of the accident. As he was fixing the pipette pump to the end of the pipette, the pipette shaft broke and part of the pipette was driven into his left hand, resulting in a laceration to an area at the base of his left index finger.

The injured pupil was fully trained in the use of the equipment and had previously carried out similar experiments. Liability was denied and the case proceeded to a full hearing in the Circuit Court. The injured pupil in evidence said he did not recall getting any instructions from the teacher and said that the teacher sat at the top of the class, was not walking around and was mostly behind her computer screen during the experiments.

The teacher gave evidence of the training that the injured pupil had received, including confirmation that the whole class received an 80-minute induction at the beginning of term, outlining the dangers in handling delicate glass/hazardous chemicals, etc.

The Judge summed up that he felt the teacher was utterly compelling in her evidence, she was professional and accepted she did give a full 80-minute induction. He felt she could not have done anything more and that it was reasonable that a 16-year-old could take instructions.

He stated that it would be ridiculous to expect teachers to be at the end of all benches in the science laboratory. He said *"they don't have eyes in the back of their heads"*, adding that the teacher did not breach her duty of care and that she was supervising with utter professionalism.

He regretted the injury sustained by the pupil but was of the view that no negligence applied to the school and dismissed the claim.

CASE 2: SLIP & FALL DURING PE CLASS

A student slipped and fell in the yard during a PE Class. It was decided to play five-a-side football outdoors on the day and the nets had been set up at appropriate locations.

This claim was brought two years after the event and an incident report form had been completed. Under the statute of limitations, a minor has two years after they reach their age of majority (18) in which to bring a claim, whereas in an adult's case, they have two years from the date of the actual incident. During the game, a pupil slipped on grit on the tarmac surface and suffered a leg laceration.

The school was going through a program of resurfacing the yard and this particular area was due to be completed during the summer holidays. On examination of photographs taken at the time, it was clear that there were significant amounts of loose surface grit.

As it was some time from the incident, witnesses did not have a very clear recollection of the accident. One witness remembered that the yard was in poor condition at the time. The decision to use the yard rather than the school hall was open to criticism in the investigator's view.

In addition, while this grit might be present in many yards around the country, where there is tarmac laid and football is played on it, a strict application of the Occupiers Liability Act 1995 by a Judge could be critical of the surface.

That, coupled with the decision to hold the games outside knowing the yard was not in the best order was sufficient for a finding to be made against the school for defective premises, resulting in the case being settled on a 100% basis in favour of the claimant.



Emma Coughlan
*Allianz Claims Relationship
Manager*

League Tables – In Favour *flawed but far better than none*

Carl O'Brien

Just over 20 years ago, The Irish Times published the first feeder school tables which provided a school-by-school list of progression rates to higher education. It upset the education establishment at the time, but it was a game-changer for parents. In the absence of any academic information on school performance, parents had to rely almost entirely on the local grapevine for information on one of the biggest decisions they are faced with: what second level school to send their child to.

Twenty years on, feeder school lists remain popular with parents, who are largely aware of the limitations of feeder school tables. The flaws are clear – and we acknowledged them in The Irish Times every year.

Critics, for example, say they are a crude indicator of what schools do. Teaching and learning, ethos and values, school size and gender mix, subject choice, access to sport and other extracurricular activities are just as important in the eyes of many parents and students.

They also do not take account of the socio-economic challenges faced by schools which have higher proportions of students from disadvantaged homes, migrant children or learners with additional needs. For some, simply finishing school is a far bigger achievement in relative terms than going to university.

And, in more recent years, there has been criticism that the data does not include information on school leavers' progression to further education or apprenticeships, reinforcing the notion that anything other than third level is "second best"

These are all convincing arguments. In fact, they are so valid that we acknowledge these limitations in our coverage of the feeder school lists each year. Why? We think it's important to be as informed as possible.

Many who oppose providing school exam data or other information on academic performance, it appears, do not.

In advocating that information be censored or kept under wraps, critics are, in effect, saying that they know the limitations of the data, but the public does not. In simple terms, parents and students are not bright enough to understand this and should be shielded from their own ignorance. It's a condescending argument, as Prof Kevin Denny of UCD has previously pointed out.

Making an informed decision is hugely important for parents – yet it is what much of the educational system seems intent on preventing.

Yes, there could be more sophisticated feeder school lists which take account of the "value added" impact which schools

have on their students. In fact, a team of academics at Maynooth University has produced such a measure. It could prove valuable if it was combined with students' exam results over time. However, the publication of league tables using Department of Education data remains illegal, a stance out of line with almost all other English-speaking countries.

We could also measure the proportion of students progressing to further education and apprenticeships, which have excellent outcomes for students. Again, much of the education establishment doesn't want to release this, either. We've tried to get this data, year after year, without success. The Department of Education's hostility to feeder school lists is understandable. Inequality in education is often hidden – but this is one of the rare moments where the scale of it is laid bare. The fact that getting to college in some parts of Dublin means crossing some of the deepest ravines of the social divide should sound alarm bell at the highest levels of government.

The publication of feeder schools has, in its own way, brought more transparency to education. Whole school evaluations and inspection reports weren't available to the public back in 2002, when The Irish Times first published the feeder school lists. The Department relented on releasing these reports, arguably because critics could not credibly denounce feeder school lists but reject demands for more general information on schools.

In Ireland, the conversation has changed. There's a grudging acceptance in most quarters that the data published now is here to stay, at least as long as the Government refuses to provide any other academic data on school performance.

Information is power. Those parents tied into professional networks likely have a good idea about where the schools that send most students to third level are. Others do not. All parents should have a chance to be as well-informed as possible to help make the right decision for their son or daughter, based on their needs.

That is why we publish feeder school lists. And it's why we believe this information – for all its flaws – is far better than none.

Carl O'Brien is education editor at The Irish Times. He was previously the newspaper's chief reporter and social affairs correspondent. Originally from Cork, he completed a BSc in communications at TU Dublin (formerly DIT) and started out in journalism at the Irish Examiner, where he worked as a general news reporter and political correspondent.



League Tables - Against *a bad idea whose time has gone*

Joe O'Hara

One of the more interesting aspects of writing about school league tables in Ireland is the manner in which we have managed to simultaneously take a strong, formal position that decries their use for sound educational and social reasons, while at the same time facilitating the production of annual sets of the self-same league tables that are avidly dissected across staffroom coffee tables, domestic breakfast tables and, yes, University lunch tables.

I have spent nearly 25 years working with colleagues in the Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection at Dublin City University (EQI), thinking about, researching and writing about how we conceptualise and operationalise notions of quality in our education system. While responsibility for all that follows is my own, I would like to acknowledge the work of my EQI colleagues in helping to shape it.

I think that school league tables are a bad idea. I appreciate the arguments of proponents who suggest that they provide useful evidence for parents, provide rich data for policy makers and hold schools and teachers to account. However, I think that the evidence for many of these claims is flimsy, and more to the point, that the negative systemic impact of the use of league tables as demonstrated internationally far outweighs any claimed benefit. I suggest that league tables often oversimplify the complex landscape of educational outcomes, reducing the rich tapestry of student achievement and school effectiveness to a mere numerical ranking. This oversimplification neglects the multifaceted nature of education, undermining the very essence of a holistic learning experience.

In Ireland, the general issues surrounding the use of league tables are exacerbated by the proxy metric that we use for ranking schools – that of progression to Higher Education. By any standard, this is a limited metric and one with a whole range of inbuilt biases. Perhaps the most glaring of these is the disproportionate importance it gives to the socio-economic profile of the school. Simply put, and this is borne out year after year in the rankings published - schools from more affluent areas do better as they tend to see a higher proportion of their students progress to Higher Education. This doesn't surprise but it fatally undermines any claim that the league tables perform a function allied with transparency and accountability.

Simply put, if we skew the input in such a manner that further advantages those who are already privileged, we create an environment that undermines the work done across our education system to add value to our children's educational experiences and expectations.

This latter point is particularly important given the enormous importance that Irish schools place on their core values or ethos. Recent work conducted by EQI colleagues helping schools define and make informed, evidence based statements about their

ethos, a process also involving parents and students, gives voice and agency in a conversation that is often conducted about them rather than with them to the detriment of all (O'Brien 2022, Skerritt, 2023; Brown, 2021).

The danger with league tables is that they ignore this breadth and instead focus on a metric that fails to capture the diverse talents and skills that students develop throughout their educational journey.

These real world impacts on schooling can be seen in jurisdictions that formally include league tables in their quality infrastructure. Critics argue that league tables create a culture of "teaching to the test", where educators may feel pressured to prioritise exam preparation over fostering a deep understanding of the subject matter. This not only compromises the quality of education but sidelines the importance of fostering critical thinking and other non-cognitive skills essential for real-world success. Furthermore, the public release of league tables can contribute to a stigmatisation of underperforming schools, perpetuating a negative image that may hinder efforts for improvement.

In conclusion, I would argue that while school league tables may offer a seemingly straightforward means of comparing educational institutions, their inherent problems cannot be overlooked. From oversimplification and biased assessment criteria to the distortion of educational priorities, the limitations of these tables call for a re-evaluation of how we assess and communicate the success of schools.

Embracing a more nuanced and holistic approach to educational evaluation is crucial to fostering a comprehensive understanding of how schools work and what they do well, ultimately, improving the quality of education for all students.

Education is one of the great successes of the Irish State; we do it well and are lucky to have committed, engaged and well trained professionals working across the continuum. To endanger that in the name of dubious claims around objectivity, transparency and usefulness strikes me as being a major mistake and one we should continue to work against.

Joe O'Hara is Professor of Education and Director of the Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection at the DCU Institute of Education.



THE CARNEY ANGLE





25 Years – Presidential Roll of Honour

1998-2000	Shay Bannon	2011-2012	Dónal Ó Buachalla
2000-2001	Mary Hanley	2012-2013	Kay O'Brien
2001-2002	Ger Looney	2013-2014	Padraig Flanagan
2002-2003	Michael McCann	2014-2015	Mary Nihill
2003-2004	Derek West	2015-2016	Paul Byrne
2004-2005	Michael Parsons	2016-2017	Cathnia Ó Muircheartaigh
2005-2006	Clive Byrne	2017-2018	Mary Keane
2006-2007	Patricia McDonagh	2018-2019	Kieran Golden
2007-2008	Áine O'Neill	2019-2020	Alan Mongey
2008-2009	Ciarán McCormack	2020-2021	Michael Cregan
2009-2010	Tim Geraghty	2021-2022	Rachel O'Connor
2010-2011	Patricia O'Brien	2022-2023	Shane Foley

Spring
 Summer
 Autumn
 Winter

In the Spring, Summer and Autumn editions of Leader, we carried the reflections of eighteen past NAPD Presidents. In this edition we carry the the remaining six reflections.



Members of the first National Executive at the launch of NAPD – 22 September 1998

Back row (left to right):

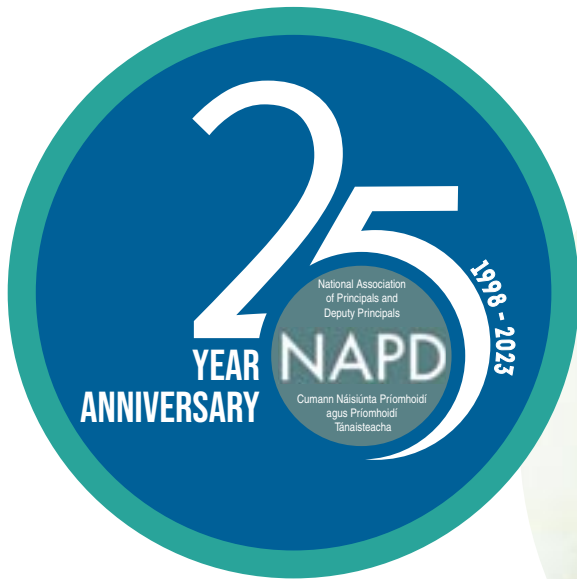
Kevin Bonner (Facilitator), Michael McCann (SSPAI), Mattie Kilroy (AVPSCC), Jean Geoghegan (SSPAI), Dick O'Connor (VPPA), Ray Kennedy (SSPAI), Ivan Bolton (ISA), Sheila McManamly (SSPAI), Derek West (APVC), Robert Kirkpatrick (VPPA).

Front Row (left to right):

Mary McGlynn (ESHA), Larry Kavanagh (APVSCC), Josephine O'Donnell (APVSCC), Shay Bannon (SSPAI), Mary Hanley (APVC), Tomás Ó Séaghdha (ESHA), Michael Naughton (APVC).

MICHAEL McCANN

President 2002-2003



In the course of my Presidential year, the normal day to day challenges facing school leaders in voluntary and dual union schools were exponentially exacerbated by the unrelenting pressure of the ASTI industrial dispute on Supervision and Substitution, which had by then entered its third year.

Those of us who were in schools at the time, whether as school leaders or teachers, will probably remember the so called 'contingency arrangements' followed by the 'interim arrangements'. In the course of my Presidential address to the 2003 Annual Conference, I outlined the many responsibilities that are intrinsic to sound instructional leadership. I listed many such duties and responsibilities including keeping au fait with educational developments, keeping the curriculum under regular review, formulating a vision for change, providing a supportive climate for the

whole school community, giving the lead in school planning, having clear goals and high expectations for staff and students – not to mention such areas as financial management, management of plant and in some cases even fundraising.

This, I stated, was a difficult enough task at the best of times but even more challenging during this prolonged period of industrial unrest, since the very fabric of what we regarded as important in our schools was being eroded on a daily basis. We had teacher protests, student protests and

parent protests. For more than a full calendar year from March 2002, when the ASTI instructed its members to withdraw totally from voluntary Supervision and Substitution, we had succeeded in keeping the schools fully operational to such a degree that after a short time the general public was hardly aware that there was a dispute going on.

After all, students were attending school every day, examinations were going ahead, parent teacher meetings and open evenings etc were largely unaffected. However, this was only possible because we were allowed to employ outside supervisors – at a huge cost to the state – which not surprisingly, caused huge tension in many schools and was highly destructive of the ethos of school communities and very corrosive of interpersonal relationships. The use of

non-teachers against the wishes of teachers inevitably led to tension and a serious increase in indiscipline in some schools.

As Principals and Deputy Principals we were caught in the middle of this debacle, and we were faced with the unenviable task of trying to keep the schools running as smoothly as possible through our own efforts and those of the outside supervisors, whilst at the same time trying not to further alienate our teachers, many of whom were quite bitter about the presence in 'their' schools of people they regarded as 'scabs'.

When preparing this reflection, I came across a piece which I wrote, and which was published in the Irish Times shortly before ASTI members were due to vote on new DES proposals, in which I stated that NAPD believed that teachers were far and away the best people to engage in Supervision and Substitution. I went on to say that we would love to see that those who did these duties on an unpaid voluntary basis for so many years be in a position to do them again should they so wish, when there would now be an allowance available. ASTI members did in fact vote to accept the new proposals and as school leaders we set about rebuilding our school communities.

When I look back now on my Presidency almost a quarter of a century ago, it is, I suppose, hardly surprising that the ASTI industrial action and its effect on those NAPD members who worked in the schools

“ For more than a full calendar year from March 2002, when the ASTI instructed its members to withdraw totally from voluntary Supervision and Substitution, we had succeeded in keeping the schools fully operational to such a degree that after a short time the general public was hardly aware that there was a dispute going on. ”

affected should be what comes most immediately to mind – but, of course, the Association had to deal with many other issues.

Our members in the VEC (ETB) sector and in those C&C schools who had no ASTI members were spared most of the trauma described above but they too faced significant challenges, foremost of which was probably the fact that no appointments were made to promotional post for upwards of three years.

These delays were caused by negotiations on the composition of interview boards and also by an embargo by the Impact Trade Union on new work which essentially prevented the processing of all paperwork relating to the interview process.

Despite the challenges it was a period of great consolidation for NAPD, as the trust between our members in the different sectors continued to grow and enabled the Association to make meaningful contributions in many areas including curriculum.

NAPD had been given designated consultative status to the NCCA and was in a position to submit its views on the various documents emanating from the Council and have them taken seriously at a time when huge developments were in train.

Responding to the implications of education legislation was another area to which the Executive Committee gave a lot of time and thought. The previous five years had seen the publication of both the Education Act and the Education (Welfare) Act and also the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act which was in gestation and published in 2004. The NAPD made detailed submissions on all of these.

On a personal note, I have to say that it was a great honour to serve my colleagues in the role of President of NAPD and it is a source of great pleasure to me to see the progress made in the last twenty-five years.

Ní heart go cur le chéile.

“ Despite the challenges it was a period of great consolidation for NAPD, as the trust between our members in the different sectors continued to grow and enabled the Association to make meaningful contributions in many areas including curriculum. ”

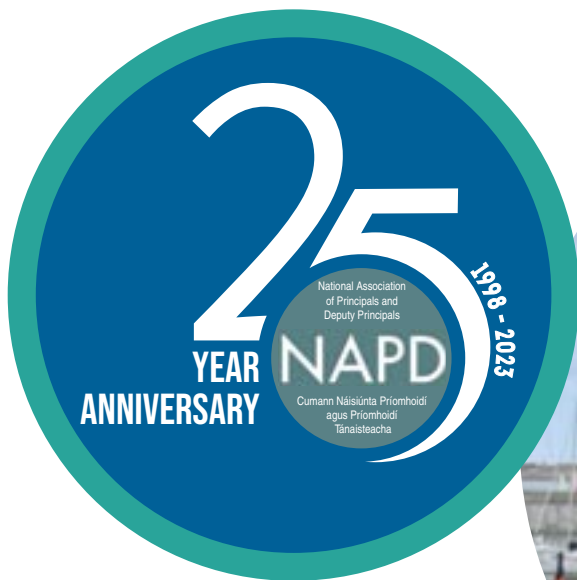
Michael McCann

was Principal of Presentation Secondary School, Galway. He retired in 2006



PATRICIA McDONAGH

President 2006-2007



When I was first elected to the Executive for the C&C sector as a fairly new Deputy Principal in 2002, Michael McCann was President and could not have been more welcoming. Yet, I felt more than a little overawed and hardly spoke for my first year (I know people will find that hard to believe!).

I was delighted to be an active member of the only organisation that saw the Deputy and the Principal as a leadership team within the school and which included Deputies in all its activities.

I soon settled in on the Executive and enjoyed listening and contributing to the views and ideas people exchanged at the meetings.

At that time, the first two-day meeting for the Executive to become better acquainted was not until June and I do remember one of the times I spoke up was to suggest that it might be better

if that meeting took place earlier in the year. The following year the 2-day meeting took place in January and that's when I realised what a welcoming organisation NAPD really was. They listened to everyone, no matter how inexperienced or new you were.

I had always been interested in education as a force for change and equality in society. When I joined NAPD I felt I had found a home. There were people talking about education, about leadership, about vision and values. To me, NAPD is an organisation that is always looking in two directions:

at education as a whole and how to improve it and also what we in Ireland could learn from other countries, while at the same time concentrating on leadership in second-level schools in Ireland in particular.

Being chosen by my peers to be President of NAPD in 2006 was one of the most exciting moments of my life. It was an honour to be representing an organisation and a group of people for whom I had so much respect. I spent half that year on the road visiting the regions and talking to colleagues, sharing ideas and learning new things. It was a hectic year.

It presented two great opportunities that will always stay with me. Firstly, as President, I came into contact with and shared a platform with Dr Anne Looney, Dr Tom Collins, Dr Garrett Fitzgerald, Professor John Coolahan, Professor Aine Hyland, all luminaries in

education. It was such an exciting time and I felt blessed to be a small part of it.

Secondly it gave me opportunities to visit schools around the world.

Through our membership of ESHA and ICP I got the opportunity to visit schools in Denmark, Finland, Singapore, New Zealand, Scotland and England. Visiting these schools and talking to their staff filled me with ideas I couldn't wait to bring back to my school. It also made me realise that Ireland could hold its own on many fronts with schools around the world.

I got the chance to listen to Ken Robinson and Andy Hargreaves. Through NAPD and my work with Barry O'Callaghan in Leading for Learning my school experienced the ideas of Paul Ginnis, Graham Powell, Mike Hughes and Guy Claxton, which for many teachers changed the way they taught and organised learning in their classrooms forever.

The first Spring Symposium of Vision and Values took place during my year as president. It was an idea of Mary McGlynn to have a forum where people from a variety of backgrounds could meet up and discuss education and leadership in the context of vision and values. It is still thriving today.

“ Being chosen by my peers to be President of NAPD in 2006 was one of the most exciting moments of my life. It was an honour to be representing an organisation and a group of people for whom I had so much respect. ”

“ So, what made NAPD such a force in education in the last 25 years? In my view it was the quality of its leadership. It modelled the vision and values and the educational leadership it did so much to develop. ”

So, what made NAPD such a force in education in the last 25 years? In my view it was the quality of its leadership. It modelled the vision and values and the educational leadership it did so much to develop.

I wasn't a Deputy or a Principal when NAPD was established in 1998 but I already knew what a formidable person Mary McGlynn was in education. When I joined the Executive in 2002 I found a warm, kind and caring person, who knew everybody in education and had a very clear view of the role of the organisation. She got on well with everyone and empowered and supported those around her. In the 9 years of her leadership, NAPD established itself firmly as a major player in Irish and International education and Mary was very well respected in education circles

One of the last issues that Mary and I worked on with the DES was the consultation on the development of DEIS schools. We both saw this as a very welcome development in Irish Education and we gave NAPD's full support to it

During my year as President, Mary decided to retire, and I was tasked with organising the job of advertising and setting up an interview panel for her successor. Mary was too modest to ever think she was irreplaceable but there is always unease when a highly thought of organisation has a change at the top. Personally, I was very upset to see Mary retire but I was honoured to be part of choosing her successor.

There was no need to worry. When Clive Byrne was appointed, he took

over where Mary had left off and devoted himself tirelessly to NAPD. Like Mary, he had established strong and trusted links with the educational establishment. With his affable, insightful and calm approach and openness to educational ideas and innovation, Clive quickly brought the organisation on to greater heights and today, 25 years after its establishment, NAPD is still a strong and vibrant voice for educational leadership under the continuing strong guidance and very capable hands of Paul Crone.

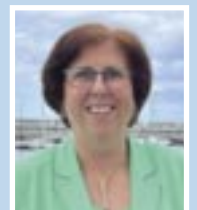
Even I can hardly believe that many schools today have a Principal and three Deputies, after so many years of telling the DES about the workload of the Principal. They were, after all, listening to us!

I have loved being a part of this wonderful, inclusive, dynamic and innovative organisation and no one should underestimate its impact on Irish Education. Part of its charm was that while working hard on behalf of school leadership, it never took itself too seriously and there were plenty of fun moments and good times.

Happy 25th Birthday NAPD!

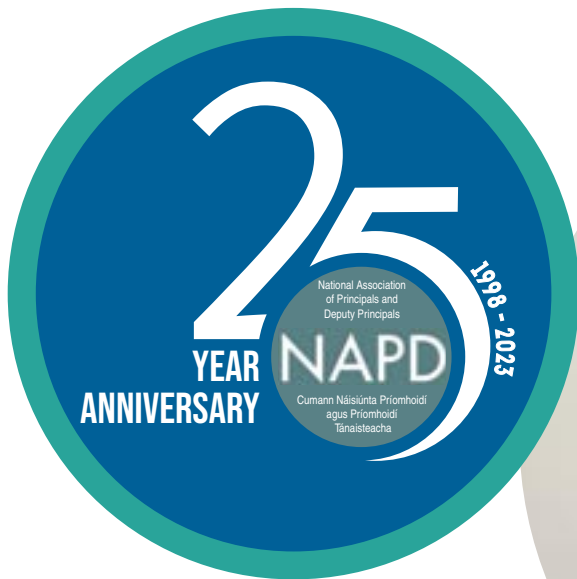
Patricia McDonagh

retired as Principal of Malahide Community School in 2017.



PATRICIA O'BRIEN

President 2010-2011



I was appointed Deputy Principal of St Farnan's Post Primary School in Prosperous, Co Kildare in November of 2002. The Principal at the time was contemplating retirement, so I knew I had a busy time ahead getting to know the school and the new role. So, I wasn't an immediate sign up to NAPD. I was a member but not active; I attended a couple of Conferences but was not a regular attendee at regional meetings.

As the saying goes, things happen for a reason and when the time is right. I was at another event in 2008 and was approached by Aine O'Neill the then President who asked if I would be interested in being co-opted onto the Executive. Saying yes was one of the best decisions I ever made. You really don't know what you are missing until you get involved and experience the wealth of knowledge, experience and support that is sitting in the room alongside you.

I was on the Executive from early 2009 until the 2012 Conference and had the privilege of being President for 2010-2011. In my reminiscences for the 20th Anniversary edition in 2018 I reflected on my Presidential year...

'It was just before the 2011 Conference and we were about to face into 'the mother of all budgets' cuts that were coming to education left right and centre. NAPD, as usual, was busy working with all the educational partners to try and ensure that when we

did make it out of the recession that the changes made would ultimately improve education for all in the future.

In the last seven years we have seen many changes in our education system, some welcome and others well ... new Junior Cycle; The loss and restoration of Guidance Hours; Restructuring of Middle Management; Changes to Special Education provision; Realigning of Leaving Cert points; Changes to Admissions to Schools to name a few. I remember sitting around the table of the NAPD Executive from 2009 to 2012 and these were all items that were on the agendas, with many discussion papers presented to the relevant bodies. Looking at many of these changes, the threads of what we discussed back then can be seen throughout the various Acts & Circulars.'

But being part of the NAPD Executive was not all about work – it was also

about the friends made, the personal support received when needed and of course being able to laugh together are the bizarre things that would only happen in a school with people who understood. We also got to meet with educationalists from Europe and further afield through ESHA and ICP. For me these visits included Amsterdam, Cyprus, Johannesburg and Toronto.

We learned a lot from those we thought were more advanced than us, and we learned to appreciate what we had from those less fortunate. I recall talking to a member of a Secondary School Management Body in South Africa, who said that the children had school when the teacher turned up.

As school leaders we are under a lot of pressure with staff shortages etc but our students haven't walked for hours to get to school only to have to walk the hours home again because the teacher didn't turn up.

We also had many laughs on these trips. In Amsterdam there was a bit of confusion with the language, particularly when the hotel thought Patricia O'Brien and Pat O'Brien were the same person. I was glad that, for

“ Looking back now on the 5 years that followed 2018, the myriad changes that happened prior to Covid, because of Covid and in spite of Covid - throughout it all NAPD was there supporting, advising and guiding the decision making that would get us through the most unusual period of my Principalship. ”

once, I was early and got the room and poor Pat had to be relocated.

Looking back now on the 5 years that followed 2018, the myriad changes that happened prior to Covid, because of Covid and in spite of Covid – throughout it all NAPD was there supporting, advising and guiding the decision making that would get us through the most unusual period of my Principalship.

And here we are in 2023 Covid still around but using many of the learnings from that period to enhance the Teaching & Learning in our schools and celebrating 25 years of NAPD. I have to confess that as Principal now in St Conleth's Community College in Kildare, a DEIS school, coming out of

the Covid years, that I am not getting to as many regional meetings or Conferences but it is my New Year's resolution to make as many as possible in the years ahead for my own benefit and the benefit of both staff and students in my school.

Ar aghaidh le chéile

Patricia O'Brien

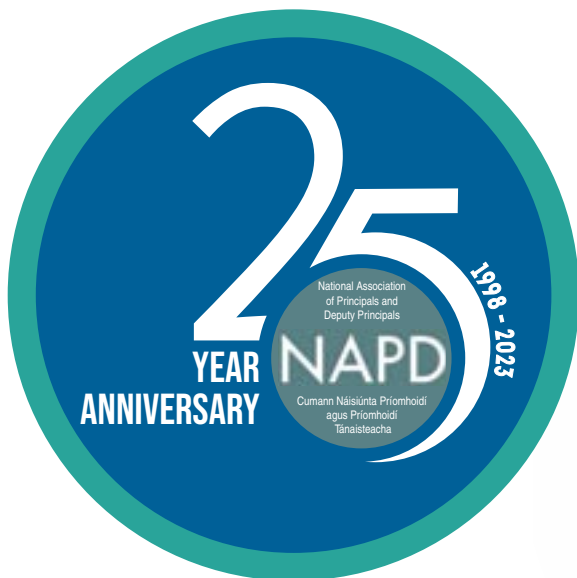
is Principal of St. Conleth's Community College, Newbridge, Kildare.



NAPD Conference 2023

MARY NIHILL

President 2014-2015



As somebody who became a Principal at a relatively young age, NAPD provided for me a community of fellow Principals, many of them with much greater experience and expertise. The fact that I was meeting fellow Principals from other school sectors was an opportunity to learn and to share concerns, and to discover that, despite the different management contexts, the challenges we faced on a daily basis were very similar.

The recognition from the start of NAPD of the role of the Deputy Principal as a member of the senior leadership team, was for me a unique feature of what made the organisation different to others. The professional relationship between Principal and Deputy Principal is a vital one in any school and attendance by both at NAPD meetings and Conferences provided both a formal recognition of this relationship and an opportunity to find the space and time to discuss vision and direction.

NAPD's commitment to supporting the role of the Principal and Deputy Principals as both leaders of learning

and as lead learners is at the core of the organisation. To me the visibility of this core mission was apparent through the engagement of educationalists such as Mike Hughes, Graham Powell and the late Paul Ginnis and has led in no small way towards re-focusing the minds of policy makers and others on the core work of the school leader.

In 2015, NAPD in collaboration with IPPN negotiated the formation of the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) - a

“ The recognition from the start of NAPD of the role of the Deputy Principal as a member of the senior leadership team, was for me a unique feature of what made the organisation different to others. ”

unique example of a joint collaborative between the two professional Associations representing school leaders and the Department of Education. CSL is now part of Oide – a new integrated support service for teachers and school leaders. NAPD have continued to be part of the Oide Leadership Committee which guides the work of the leadership division of Oide. The contribution that NAPD makes to educational discourse around the big questions in education leadership are now at the centre of the work of this committee.

Finally, the singular focus of NAPD on the person and wellbeing of the Principal and Deputy Principal has professionalised school leadership. This focus has led to the realisation that senior school leadership is a unique role requiring unique support and learning. The fact that NAPD is neither a union nor a management

“ The fact that NAPD is neither a union or a management body has allowed it the freedom to speak authentically about the wellbeing of Principals and Deputy Principals, without it being seen as a starting point for negotiations. ”

body has allowed it the freedom to speak authentically about the wellbeing of Principals and Deputy Principals, without it being seen as a starting point for negotiations.

NAPD continues to be a strong and vibrant voice for educational leadership at second level. Ar aghaidh le chéile for the next 25 years.

Mary Nihill is Director of Leadership at Oide, the newly created support service for teachers and school leaders. Previously she was Director of the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) and before that was Principal at Calasanctius College, Galway.



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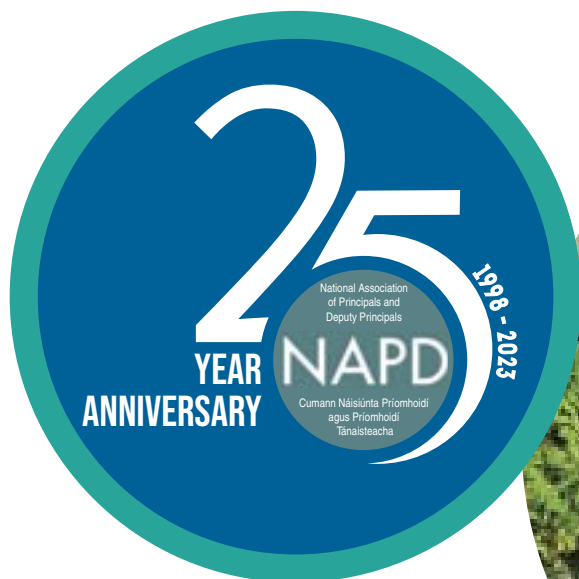
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KIERAN GOLDEN

President 2018-2019



On the Friday evening of the 2018 National Conference in Galway, at the Gala Dinner, the outgoing President, Mary Keane presented me with the President's chain. It was the same Mary Keane who advised me to attend NAPD meetings when I became a Deputy Principal in Mayfield Community School in October 2008. It was one of the best pieces of advice that I ever got.

I have never missed a NAPD Region 7 meeting since and as long as I am a Principal, I will continue to attend our meetings. Thank you, Mary.

I always saw the opportunity of being a President of our Association for school leaders as a way of saying thank you to NAPD, to Clive Byrne, to present and former colleagues in Region 7 for all the support that I had benefitted from over the years as a Deputy Principal and Principal. I saw it as a way to pay tribute to the dedication of all members of the National Executive and viewed it as a

privilege to meet colleagues in the regions around the country, where we continue to support and to learn from each other.

A number of insights struck me strongly during my time in the Presidents' team:

OUR SCHOOLS ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE SUCH HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL LEADERS

From the very start to the very end of our National Conferences, of National Executive Meetings and the meetings

in our regions, it was gratifying and encouraging to know that you were in the company of school leaders who strive – and sometimes struggle – for the very best for their school communities.

Having visited the regions over the year of my Presidency, I saw that our schools were staffed by exceptional, committed school leaders, who wanted only the best for their learners and for their teaching and non-teaching colleagues. In our schools, we have senior leaders who are educationalists with a clear vision for their school, supporting student learning and their growth in every sense of the word. In our schools, leaders are working at building positive school cultures, sometimes in what can be sometimes challenging and difficult contexts. In our schools, leaders are skilled in sharing leadership opportunities to nurture the

personal and professional growth of their colleagues.

NAPD FULLY RECOGNISES THAT IN OUR EVER EXPANDING AND DEMANDING ROLES OUR SCHOOL LEADERS DESERVE THE BEST

NAPD is a progressive, action-orientated organisation and is the only professional association representing school leaders across all three sectors. The great strength of the Association is that we all learn from each other. Attending meetings allow all of us share insights and encourage us to think about current issues in ways that otherwise we may not have thought of. NAPD, as the voice of school leaders, continues to work with senior officials in the Department of Education in a solution- focussed way. Our organisation has always shared, and will continue to share our insights to support the recruitment and retention of our school leaders.

“ Every time I listen to Mike Hughes, I find myself learning something new. At our 2018 National Conferences, we were all present for the Irish Magenta Principles book launch containing lessons devised by Irish teachers in Irish classrooms to benefit Irish students. ”

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NAPD OFFERS REAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT TO ITS MEMBERS

I was very fortunate to be in a position to share the news that NAPD has negotiated cover with ARAG for personal actions members may have to take in fulfilling our roles. This has been a game changer and it is only one of the ways that NAPD provides real and practical support for our members. Well done to all involved and in particular to Tim Geraghty, for getting that important development over the line.

NAPD RECOGNISES THE CENTRAL ROLE THAT WE HAVE AS LEADERS OF LEARNING IN OUR SCHOOLS

Every time I listen to Mike Hughes, I find myself learning something new. At our 2018 National Conferences, we were all present for the Irish Magenta Principles book launch containing lessons devised by Irish teachers in Irish classrooms to benefit Irish students. Thanks to Barry O’Callaghan for driving this initiative over the years and to all the teachers who were so generous in sharing their experiences and lessons with us.

MEETING THE MINISTER

At all our Conferences, we have the pleasure to welcome the Minister for Education of the day. Meeting the Minister briefly the night before and at the Conference itself, it is very striking that they want to hear from us around what are the pressing issues we are working with in our schools.

It says a lot about NAPD's standing that we have this access to the Minister and to the Secretary General of the Department. Away from the megaphone politics and public posturing, it is a real opportunity to share our insights and observations in a way that is measured and clearly presented.

JUST ONE MORE QUESTION ... AND ... FINAL THOUGHT

As President, we started our National Executive meetings by posing 2 questions:

- What is on your mind?
- What do you need to say today?

It was a great way to put your finger on the pulse of education in our country. At our National Executive meetings, we have colleagues from all over the country and from every sector. If you want to know what is happening, just ask the people right there in front of you. And it didn't just stop there. If you want to hear some of the answers, just keep on listening.

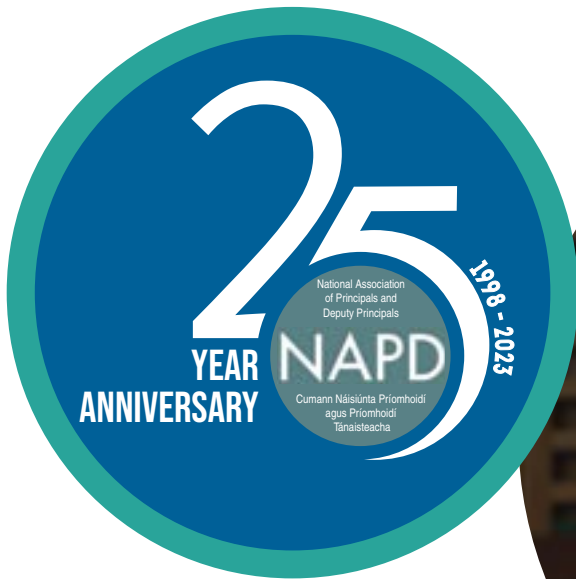
Sometimes all you need to do is just ask one more question ... and listen ...

Kieran Golden
is Principal of
Mayfield
Community
School, Cork.



SHANE FOLEY

President 2022-2023



It has been my absolute honour to have served as NAPD President. I again take this opportunity to thank members for having bestowed that privilege upon me in this our 25th year, a significant milestone in NAPD's history.

Following Conference in October 2022, I began my term as President. One might think that having just been elected as President I would be over the moon – however, having listened to, Rachel O'Connor deliver her Presidential address I felt a little overwhelmed. My initial thoughts focused on Conference 2023, when it

would be my turn to stand before the membership and deliver the Presidential address.

There were numerous engagements over the course of the year but especially in the first couple of months, when I had the opportunity to visit many of the regions throughout the

country. This was such an important part for me in the role as President to be able to connect with members nationally. As a school leader it is such a privilege to be able to sit with fellow school leaders and reflect on our roles and discuss ways in which our educational system can be improved.

In the springtime we had our Symposium and again I remember thinking as I looked down through the list of attendees the significance of this event in terms of the impact that our organisation has on the Irish educational system. For my part, I was delighted to be able to represent the issues that affect us, especially the high administration burden that overshadows a lot of the really important things that we would like to be able to give our time to.

I have also had the opportunity as President to attend the ESHA General Assembly in Oslo where we got to

“ There were numerous engagements over the course of the year but especially in the first couple of months, when I had the opportunity to visit many of the regions throughout the country. ”

hear from renowned educationalist Pasi Sahlberg and, most recently, attend the biennial ESHA Conference in Dubrovnik.

We all know how fast time passes – before I could draw breath it was Conference time again in Galway. This was the culmination of my year as President and for members who attended it a magnificent occasion.

It is such an important event in the calendar for school leaders, both from an education and from a social point of view. I would like to thank all those who were present during my address to the Minister for the kindness shown to me. I was worried about how well I might be able to deliver my address, but the positive energy in the hall

“ We all know how fast time passes – before I could draw breath it was Conference time again in Galway. This was the culmination of my year as President and for members who attended it a magnificent occasion. ”

coming from the audience made the task so much easier. Thank you for your support.

Following that, as is customary, I passed the chain to our new President Regina Bulter. I would like to wish Regina the very best for the year ahead as President. I hope she enjoys the year as much as I have done.

Ní neart go cur le chéile- rath Dé oraibh go léir. Le gach dea-ghuí.

Shane Foley is Principal of Enfield Community College, Meath.



PRESIDENT'S CHARITY

President Shane Foley displays the cheque for almost €6,000 to his nominated charity, Pieta House, generously donated at the 2023 Conference dinner.



THE LEADER PROFILE

Áine Lynch

by John Walshe



Post-Primary parents haven't gone away, you know.

We didn't hear much from them on a national level during the disruption of the Leaving Cert in COVID times but they're getting organised again and you will be hearing their voices soon.

However, it won't be through the National Parents Council Post-Primary any more, since that organisation has been officially defunded and derecognised by the Department of Education for its failure to engage in a governance review. This follows internal wrangling among the four member bodies representing the different types of second level schools. An internal review found it was not fit for purpose.

The Department has asked the National Parents Council Primary to take on Post-Primary as well. That is what it's now doing and, in the process, dropping the word Primary. Henceforth it will simply be known as the National Parents Council, representing parents from Pre-School right through to the end of Post-Primary, with Áine Lynch taking on the enlarged role. As well as funding from the Department of Education, it has also been getting a smaller amount from the Department of Children for the past seven years to represent parents of Pre-School children.

It has taken a few months to regularise the changes – a new logo has been developed and the new look NPC is now getting ready to start a promotion and awareness campaign among parents of Post-Primary students. Word is getting out, as there are already over 3,000 new parents on the Council's database. A number of second level school parent teacher associations have become members of the NPC and this will grow as its extended remit becomes generally known.

Post-Primary parents are also starting to use the NPC helpline which has been a valuable feature of its services for years. It handles everyday issues such as bullying or homework or anything else that affects students in school. The Council is recruiting additional staff to help with the extra workload and will have 15 FTEs soon. That is not a huge number when you consider there are over a million Pre-School, Primary School and Post-Primary School learners and twice that many parents.

So, what happens to the voices of the four separate Post-Primary affiliate bodies that used to make up the NPCPP? "They are associations in their own right and entitled to continue to exist. I have written to all of them and said that I would like to meet them; I'd like to hear their viewpoints and consult with them on education matters" Áine Lynch told Leader in an interview. She also wants to work closely with

the ISSU, which clearly articulated the concerns and anxieties of students during the COVID crisis – “this was a time of complete stress in their lives and they needed to be heard”.

Next year students, unions, managers and other education bodies will be drawing up demands to put to the political parties in the run-up to the general election. But the NPC won't – “we're not political in that way. We don't really engage in the big politics. Our main role is working with the Department of Education and other key education stakeholders, to represent parents' views on education policy. We obviously need to meet regularly with Department officials and the Minister of the day, and we have our own campaigns about what parents think needs to be brought into policy”. Examples include the campaign for mental health supports for Primary Schools and the ongoing campaign for the long-promised Student Parent Charter.

The NPC has worked hard over the years to establish good professional relationships with Principals and teachers and looks forward to continuing these partnerships with Principals and teachers in the Post-Primary sector. Áine – see side panel – believes that the attitude of teachers to parents has changed dramatically in recent decades – “the teacher now who doesn't want to engage and work with parents is the outlier rather than the norm”.

But it's still in the gift of the teaching profession to give voice to parents. “Some parents will say to me ‘my school is great, it really listens to parents’ or ‘my school isn't good at that, and we don't really get a voice’”.

This, she hopes, will continue to become rarer as we continue to work together at national level and support practitioners with the day-to-day challenges of partnership work.

While national conversations about the role of parents have changed absolutely in the 16 years she has been in her current role, Lynch believes that teachers do not get enough support in understanding and developing their relationships with parents. Initial teacher education and professional development should pay more attention to this area.

The NPC developed and delivers electives in two Colleges of Education on this topic – Froebel in Maynooth University and the Thurles campus of Mary Immaculate College - and would like to see more of them. The impact of the electives on positive relationships between teachers and parents is the subject of joint research between Mary Immaculate College and the NPC, which will be published shortly.

The need for positive relationships is obvious, says Lynch; and this can be even more complex between schools and parents at Post-Primary. There is less chance for the informal conversations and building of relationships at the school gate. In addition, students are becoming more independent, and they go from being excited to see their parents in schools when they are in Primary school to wanting the exact opposite when they start Post-Primary school. However, parents remain an important partner in their child's education and the relationships between parents and schools continue to be essential in ensuring better educational outcomes for students.

The CEO hopes the forthcoming research may start a conversation about the best way to develop those relationships. Perhaps it's an issue that might arise at the

forthcoming Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Education (CAFE), which Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has promised will be held in the earlier part of 2024. She believes it's way overdue, since the last major conversation we had was during the National Education Convention held almost 30 years ago in Dublin Castle.

She concluded “I just think it's such a fundamental conversation to have for society as so much has changed in education in recent years on the surface, but so little has changed in reality. We need to look at education in the context of the world we live in today, not in the context of the post-industrial era. We need to find a way to have a conversation that allows for a dynamic education system. One of the outcomes we need from the Assembly is a vision for education in the future. Almost every major policy decision in education is taken in an isolated context. If we have one big vision that's agreed upon, then every single policy decision has to be working towards that vision. And if it doesn't, then it can't come into play”.

Áine Lynch is an unlikely early school leaver. “I found school quite dull. It didn't engage me. I was lucky in that I was bright enough that I could sit my exams and pass them without too much studying, but I left after my O-levels” says the NPC chief executive, who was born in Ledbury in Herefordshire, England. She tried various jobs including training as an accounting technician but hated every minute of it and left after six months. She then followed in her County Wexford born father's footsteps and started nursing - “I enjoyed the human aspect of it, but maybe not the clinical aspect”. So, she left nursing and went to College and did a degree in behavioural sciences, majoring in psychology. She came over to Ireland for one summer in the early Celtic Tiger era and she stayed ever since. She worked in residential child mental health services and then with the ISPCC, taking on the role of manager of its ChildLine service nationally. This was a perfect background for taking on the role of Parents' Council CEO, a job she clearly relishes.



John Walshe was appointed special adviser to Ruairi Quinn who was Minister for Education and Skills from March 2011 to July 2014. Prior to that, John was an educational editor, mostly with the *Irish Independent* but also with the *Irish Times* in the early 1990s. He was a consultant to the OECD in Paris, where he was involved in four major studies on education.



Lead Your Time, Too

Zachary Walker



Do you feel like you're too busy? Like you can never quite catch up? As leaders, we are inundated with daily tasks, meetings, "just five minute" requests, overloaded inboxes, last-minute requests ... before we can even begin to think strategically or long-term.

The overload is challenging and difficult for others to understand unless they have been in a similar position. We work very hard to meet the needs of our staff, our students, our community. We sometimes bend over backwards to support and lead others. The problem is that bending over backwards sometimes leads to broken backs.

So how can we protect ourselves, yet ensure we are proactively leading and not constantly reacting? In my own journey as a leader, I have identified five key strategies that have helped me be more proactive, more thoughtful, more creative, more strategic and better able to support my team:

- 1. Manage your energy, not your time.** The phrase "managing time" is a misnomer. Time is not manageable as it will continue marching on no matter what any of us do. But we can *lead our time* by being clear about where our priorities are and how we want to use it. If you are a morning person, think about how you can best use those first few hours to get your own work priorities done. If you struggle after lunch (like I do!), fill the afternoon with people meetings, so you are forced to wake up. Managing your energy means knowing when you are at your peak and leading your time so you are the most efficient version of yourself.
- 2. Structured Availability.** Are you always available? Do you have an "open door policy"? While it sounds nice in theory, it rarely works in practice, because an open door swiftly becomes a revolving door where you get to play counsellor, boss, friend, parent, work spouse, etc. To manage the flow, structure your availability strategically. For example, I do not schedule any meetings on Mondays. This is my day to think, to write, to plan, etc. I also try not to schedule any meetings in

the week before 10 or 11 in the morning. Most of my days are packed from 11 onward – but those first few hours are mine as I know this is when I am at my most focused for priority work. Maybe meeting with people in the morning works better for you; maybe you take two hours to have quiet in the middle of the day. Whatever it is that works for you, consider structuring your availability so you have time for your tasks too.

- 3. Put the work in the diary, not just the meetings.** After you have figured out your energy and structured your availability, don't just leave blank spaces in your diary to be filled with clutter. Put specific work in those spaces – and protect them. Do not let well-intentioned souls take them! Put the actual tasks you are going to complete in those spaces. Sidenote: that is exactly how I am writing this article (Mondays, 8-gam are for writing!).

- 4. Give the gift of time back.** Does the meeting need to be 30 minutes? Can it be 20? Do you move through agendas efficiently? With back-to-back meetings do you plan a small break in between? If you can be strict with collective time, we free up everybody's personal time. Time is a gift – give it back to people (including yourself) when you can.

- 5. Tell your team your time.** Once you have decided on the strategies above, communicate them clearly and often with your colleagues as a matter of mutual respect. My team know I don't do morning meetings and that Mondays are protected. The rest of my diary is theirs to fill up – and it fills up quick! Tell your team your time – remember, you are the leader here.

As we head into a new calendar year, perhaps you can try a few of these strategies starting in January and see what works for you. Figure out what works and then you will be ready for a new school year starting next year. We have to be strong to lead people and organizations. But are we strong enough and smart enough to lead our time too?

PS – I would love your feedback on these articles. Please do reach out to z.walker@excelanconsult.com if there is anything you want to share or have suggestions for future articles. Thanks!

Zachary Walker is the Head of Department for the Department of Psychology and Human Development (PHD) at the University College London Institute of Education (IOE). He is a Senior Fellow with the Higher Education Academy. Zachary is recognised as an expert in individual and organisational learning performance. In the last ten years, Zachary has worked with educators and policymakers in more than 30 countries on learning, inclusive leadership and innovative practice. He also enjoys frozen yoga, tackle chess, and wrestling with rhinos.
T: @drzacharywalker



Mary McGlynn, Director 1999-2008

The First Director's Reflections



Norma Foley, Mary McGlynn, Clive Byrne

On September 22 last, the First National Executive Committee of NAPD gathered in Collins Barracks, Dublin for a photo-shoot. It was on the same date in the same venue where the Executive photo was taken at the launch of the Association in 1998. It was a truly memorable event. We re-kindled friendships, celebrated achievements and reflected with a sense of pride and fulfilment on what NAPD had accomplished in the intervening years. Our mantra – *Ar Aghaidh Le Chéile* – had certainly been the inspiration and hallmark of everything achieved by the Association since 1998.

Paul Crone has kindly invited me to reflect on my nine years as Director of NAPD from 1999-2008. I will begin by contextualising my decision to apply for the position. This was shaped by my very fulfilling career as a teacher, Deputy Principal and, from 1990 to 1999, as Principal of Mount Anville School in Dublin. I had also worked with several groups and committees in the field of education throughout

those years. From 1988 I was a member and then Chair of ESHA-Ireland where representatives of all Associations for Principals and Deputies from north and south of the border were on the Executive Board. This, I thought, could provide a blue-print for NAPD and I could, perhaps, contribute.

I took up my position as Director in June 1999. Head office was located in Leeson St and the DES provided a start-up grant. Catherine Sheils was appointed Office Administrator and PA. By September NAPD was open to membership.

The inspirational decision of the founding Associations about the composition of the National Executive was pivotal in the history of NAPD. This created an ambience of dialogue and trust that would remain the hallmark of the Executive leadership into the future. Another pivotal determinant of long-term success was the immediate engagement of members, both Principals and Deputies. This was reflected in their enthusiasm and willingness to become involved and focused on the agenda and work of the Association very rapidly. Research carried out by the constituent Associations was shared and developed and any perceived barriers disappeared quickly through regional and committee structures. The role of the first three Presidents from the three post-primary sectors was absolutely vital. Shay Bannon, Mary Hanley and Ger Looney were dynamic, passionate leaders and together they brought all members and sectors along with them.

Against this backdrop, the work of the Association progressed through 1999 in setting up the legal structures and processes required to be presented for ratification at the first NAPD Conference and AGM in Tralee in March 2000. An EGM to ratify the new constitution was held in November 1999.

After the Conference in Tralee, the work of NAPD began in earnest. The initial focus was on building relationships with the partners in education. This was not always a smooth road. However, our role as Principals and Deputy Principals



Mary McGlynn and Regina Butler



*Paul Crone, Norma Foley,
Mary McGlynn and Clive Byrne*

was enshrined in the Education Act 1998 and we had the imprimatur of Minister Micheál Martin. It would take time to build up credibility and trust and to change the culture of school leadership.

What were some of the initial concerns for NAPD as a national Association?

The lack of training for Principals and Deputies at national level was high on the list. The Association began to organise a programme with limited resources and personnel. By degrees, the DES would give generous funding and the programme would evolve and become well-established nationally by 2008.

NAPD was concerned about the introduction of School Planning, Whole School Evaluation and School Inspection. Led by the Inspectorate, these initiatives involved a process of consultation, piloting and feedback. In time they would become embedded with relative ease and satisfaction, contrary to initial fears.

Representation on national bodies, committees, task forces was a clear objective in the early stages. Again, it would take time but access was much more easily achieved as time passed. Ironically the most resistance to the representation of NAPD on the NCCA came from the education partners. This was bewildering since school leaders were responsible for teaching and learning in schools. Eventually NAPD would be the first group to be given consultative status and, subsequently, membership of the Council.

There were issues in the early years about support for schools with the organisation of the State Examinations. This led to the creation of the Examinations Aide (for 5 days) but would later lead to the much wider remit of the Examinations Superintendent.

The Association was also concerned about the recruitment and retention of teachers and this was well-flagged from 1999 onwards.

The inequality of funding between the sectors was always a concern. In 2000 the Blackstock Report highlighted that it was 25% higher in the VEC sector and 12% higher in the C&C than in the Voluntary Secondary sector. It would be interesting to review that again at this point.

The Association made a submission to the Benchmarking

Board in 2002. In 2005 the Unions invited NAPD to make a submission on the Board's findings. It would take time but the Board's findings would, eventually, begin to change the structure of PORs in schools.

In September 2000, as NAPD was beginning to become established, the unimaginable happened. The ASTI issued a directive to members to withdraw cover for Supervision and Substitution from schools. External personnel were recruited and trained by Principals to supervise students. Inevitable tensions and resentment ran high at school level. This would continue throughout the school year.

In summer, a Contingency Plan (CP) was announced for the following school year. The National Executive called an EGM in the Burlington Hotel, Dublin in August, attended by over six hundred members. The meeting addressed two issues: would members support the CP and should NAPD become NUPD? It was agreed to support the CP since teachers would again be involved in Supervision (as was the preferred option of the Association). It was also agreed that NAPD could not become NUPD. This has been thoroughly researched by the founding Associations and their decision ratified at the first AGM.

Another torturous year followed with the implementation of the CP to bring about a final resolution. At Conference 2002 in October in Killarney, Minister Noel Dempsey expressed his personal gratitude and the gratitude of the public to NAPD for keeping schools open at great personal cost to members.

I have detailed these decisions at the EGM because they were absolutely pivotal in the history of the Association. NAPD could have self-destructed at the EGM had the membership split on trade union lines or about the future of NAPD as a professional Association.

These years had on-going media cover that gave a high profile to NAPD and the Association gained respect and status in the eyes of the public as a result. Equally interesting and important would be the change in attitude towards the Association. In the education sector there was a more positive and helpful response to addressing our agenda. It was less difficult to ensure consultation on a wide range of committees and task forces. Both Unions extended membership of their Principals' Committee to Deputies.

Very unfortunately, that period of industrial action was followed immediately by another period of turmoil for members that would again continue for a protracted period. At school level the implications of the implementation of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the EPSEN Act 2004 were immense. Much of the legislation, welcomed in spirit, was followed by rapid-fire implementation and members juggled with new responsibilities, processes and procedures that required a change in culture at school level.

A slower-paced, consultative approach would have caused less anxiety and stress. In time, good templates were created but piloting would have anticipated a lot of avoidable confusion and misunderstandings. Three Acts involving Education in six years was a very heavy toll for schools involved in the intricacies of implementation. From 2004-2006 the Association was fortunate to have Michael McCann, Derek West and Michael Parson as Presidents. They were attentive to the legal difficulties and frustrations, yet enormously involved in the campaign to improve opportunities for creativity in post-primary schools.

The Association also gave back generously to the education sector through participating on Expert Groups on Staffing, Student Behaviour, Student Councils, the Erosion of the School Year, the DEIS Programme, Senior and Junior Cycle, PISA, to mention but a few. The Association met with Oireachtas Committees, other government Departments and State Boards. I re-read last September the minutes of the National Executive meetings during my period of office and they record the huge diversity of our work. IPPN was set up in 2000 and some of the issues raised about the transfer of students from the primary to the post-primary sector were addressed by NAPD and IPPN.

Within the Association, other key committees and programmes were in place. The Arts and Culture Committee went from strength to strength by keeping a focus on the arts, culture and creativity in schools. Creative Engagement was an initiative funded by the Arts and Education Departments and student creativity and participation is still richly reflected in their projects.

The advancement of Further Education, Guidance, ICT, NAPD publications, had committed, dedicated groups taking responsibility for these areas. Annual Conferences and Forums always addressed the bigger picture. Vision and Values in society and in education remained core. Professor John Coolahan and Dr Garret FitzGerald were great visionaries and their commitment, advice, contributions and friendship were greatly respected and precious to the Association. Go gcónaí siad anois sa tíocháin.

The strong links with ESHA were maintained through conferences, seminars, school visits, visiting speakers, and openness of members to the importance of engagement with our European colleagues. Curriculum development was a lively topic in many European countries and the Presidents from 2006 to 2008 – Clive, Patricia McDonagh and Áine O'Neill - had vast experience and interest in bringing best practice to the NAPD agenda. My only regret

was that I could not accept the Presidency of ESHA during the early years of the Association. It would have been too onerous for the first Director of a nascent Association. I was so delighted that Clive took up that mantle and continued to develop our European and ICP contacts with such commitment. Paul Byrne's recent appointment as Secretary General of ESHA will ensure that our links with ESHA will remain strong.

As the first Director I saw my role as one of bedding down solid roots for NAPD. The Association had earned respect, fulfilled promises and gained leadership and moral authority in a rapidly-changing society as the years passed. I decided in 2007 that it was time to step down. Clive Byrne was appointed as Director the following year. That would enable those roots to strengthen and the Association to continue to flourish in the years ahead.

I loved working with, and for, all my colleagues in NAPD. I came to work each day with a spring in my step and, behind the scenes, we had great craic and fun and I cherish the many friendships that have endured.

We all know what Catherine Sheils meant to members for her personal and professional dedication to the Association throughout the years. She certainly was our national treasure! We are also deeply indebted to Paddy and Ena Boyle for looking after our website. Derek West and Tim Geraghty did trojan work with our early publications. Remember 1999 was still the era of pen, post and fax!

Thank you to the groups and organisations with whom I worked. Even when there were difficult issues to be resolved, we managed to work through them with mutual understanding.

The support of Colette Duggan and her team at Conference Connections and Mark Daniel and all at CRM Design continues to this day. Thank you both for your enormous contribution to NAPD and for your unfailing commitment to the Association way beyond what we could ever have expected.

The DES ensured that initial promises made to NAPD would be fulfilled. Pat Burke, former Assistant Secretary, and now Chair of the SEC, was our anchor and his advice, support and friendship will forever be appreciated.

MAR FOCAIL SCOIR

I would like to say to Paul Crone, Rachel O'Connor and Regina Butler and the National Executive: be confident in your school leadership role in our schools. Your school communities and society at large hold you in high respect. A survey this October on the public perception of the professions, ranks teachers at the top, ahead of doctors. NAPD is a small group of just over 1,400 leaders nationwide and 80% of new Principals appointed this year were former Deputies and thus already members of the Association. NAPD has brought you to new heights.

Learn from its history and continue to find trust and confidence in going forward together in the spirit of our founding mantra: Ar Aghaidh Le Chéile.

Clive Byrne, Director 2008-2021

The Second Director's Reflections



Paul Crone, Paul Byrne and Clive Byrne

The establishment of NAPD coincided with the significant change in Irish education policy. 25 years ago, Ireland still had to experience the Celtic tiger, the population dynamic was changing and many people of different nationalities saw their future on our small island, on the western edge of Europe.

It was an exciting time to be involved in educational leadership.

Issues relating to funding and resources were, in the main, dealt with by the management bodies and the teacher unions. Early on, one of the issues for NAPD was the effective use of scarce resources. The role of the school leader was vital in this regard. When I took over as Director in 2008, NAPD was well regarded by the education community. It was clear that the issue of accountability for the resources allocated to our schools was something that politicians were keen to ensure was up to scratch.

In my time as Director, I dealt with seven different Ministers, each with their own special emphasis and projects close to their heart. Ministers were happy to accept invitations to Conferences and Symposia because they knew that they would not be set up to be pilloried or belittled. Respectful engagement was the order of the day, and as well as being grateful for the access afforded.

NAPD brought much to the table in terms of Conference and Symposia themes, as well as the quality of ideas and keynotes available to delegates, officials, and the media. Education giants such as Andy Hargreaves, Guy Claxton, Paul Ginnis and John Hattie, among others, were delighted to accept invitations to address delegates.

JUNIOR AND SENIOR CYCLE REFORM

Managing Junior Cycle reform and other curricular changes was a key issue for school leaders. The new Junior Cycle was visionary and NAPD previously worked closely to influence key aspects of the reform. The NCAA was central to driving the vision, so the successful embedding of the new reform was seen as key to any potential changes at Senior Cycle. The need to change Senior Cycle was becoming evident. The Leaving Certificate exam was seen as brutal but fair and certainly it was an efficient way of allocating Third Level places. However, the impact on student mental health and well-being, as well as catering for students with special education needs, was a worry. The NAPD always tried to have a holistic approach to education reform.

COLLEGE AWARENESS WEEK

College Awareness Week (CAW) was designed to promote different avenues for students to aspire to Third Level. NAPD has been to the fore in promoting CAW, along with the Access Programmes to Third Level. The range and variety of College courses shows clearly that there is a course to suit every ability and taste. Close links with the school



Clive Byrne, Mary Hanifin and Clive Byrne



Clive Byrne, Garrett Fitzgerald and Mary McGlynn

students in the Irish Secondary Students' Union (ISSU) and the active support of the National Parents' Council have contributed to CAW being up and on a par with Seachtain na Gaeilge, Engineers' Week etc. Promoting meaningful conversations at home is central to the success of CAW.

THOMAS FRANCIS MEAGHER FOUNDATION

Pride, respect and peace are three core values of the Irish flag. The TF Meagher Foundation, with which NAPD has been associated since its establishment, raises awareness of the aims of the flag and fundraises for charities close to the hearts of the pupils. The idea of a flag day just before St Patrick's day is inspired and in schools throughout the country Irish-born students and newcomers to Ireland are encouraged to take pride in their own national flag as well as the Irish tricolour.

Such has been the change in Irish society over the last number of years that the flags of 20, 30 or even over 40 flags are raised and honoured in schools each year on 16 March.

ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE COMMITTEE AND CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

This Committee under Chairperson, Kay O'Brien and Arts Officer Dermot Carney is one of the most active committees in the Association. Creative Engagement, the NAPD programme of Arts-in-Education, is approaching its 20th birthday and continues to be a rich source of inspiration for students throughout the country. There is a wide variety of projects created in schools across the arts from theatre and film to ceramics and music. Members of the Arts and Culture committee visit schools during the year. Teachers and artists are very encouraged by these visits. The programme would not be possible without the commitment of school leaders and art teachers and the willingness of the Creative Engagement team to promote the programme regionally and locally.

CORPORATE ADVISORY BOARD

Such was the reputation of NAPD that when the decision was taken to explore the establishment of a Corporate Advisory Board, every person invited to contribute agreed to do so. A group of leaders from public, private and non-

profit sectors generously give their time to support the Association, particularly in the areas of leadership and strategic planning. The idea behind the Advisory Board was to support the Executive by bringing corporate and business expertise to running NAPD.

The Covid #GRMA initiative enabled society to express its gratitude to all who enabled schools to stay open throughout the pandemic. The value of keeping our schools open for our students' educational, developmental and wellbeing needs cannot be overstated.

NAPD PUBLICATIONS AND LEADERS OF LEARNING

The Association was very fortunate to have Derek West as publication's editor available to drive our publications for the benefit and information of members. The Association has moved from issuing a brief report after each Executive meeting to the more comprehensive Executive Report which was published monthly and now to the impressive Leader Quarterly.

The Association was centrally involved in the publishing The Magenta *Principles - Na Prionsabail Maigeanta* by Mike Hughes. NAPD has published *Positive Behaviours, Relationships and Emotions - the heart of Leadership in a school* by Jacinta Kitt, *Towards a Better Future - a Review of the Irish School System* with John Coolahan, Sheelagh Drudy, Padraig Hogan, Aine Hyland and Seamus McGuinness (in conjunction with IPPN), and a volume on the Secondary Schools Principals Association of Ireland by a founding member of NAPD, Michael McCann. Our educational journal *Le Chéile* has been widely commended for the quality and breadth of its articles.

We have over 12,500 followers on Twitter, now X, which is a great way to keep members informed regionally and nationally. Our website www.napd.ie is a font of information, carrying a wealth of articles and resources.

EUROPEAN SCHOOL HEADS' ASSOCIATION (ESHA) AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

ESHA-Ireland was very involved in the amalgamation of the different organisations representing school leaders to form NAPD. When my second term as President of ESHA came to an end, it was interesting to note the influence of outside voices on our list of Conference speakers and workshop presenters over the years.

As well as ESHA, NAPD has played a leading role as a Council member of the International Confederation of Principals (ICP). Close links between international school leadership organisations is a valuable way of raising the profile of the profession from grey and old to being vibrant, visionary and valuable in our local community, making a positive contribution to the values of life-long learning.

The close links made because of our ESHA and ICP contacts have enabled many study visits abroad to countries such as England, Scotland, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and beyond.



Barbara Novinec, ESHA and Clive Byrne

OIDE LEADERSHIP

Probably the greatest achievement during my time as Director was the establishment of the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) in partnership with the Department and the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN). Investment in leadership is core and the mentoring programme for newly appointed school leaders, coaching for established Principals and the post-graduate diploma for aspiring leaders - all achieved within the first three years of CSL's establishment - gave great confidence for the years ahead. The willingness of serving and retired colleagues to work with CSL, and now with Oide, is greatly appreciated.

Coaching is now regarded as part of the professional development portfolio for school leaders. NAPD has taken early steps to extend the coaching service to Deputy Principals. The regional structure of the Association lends itself to mentoring and coaching at local level.

The Confidential Support Service exists to support and sustain members at challenging times, to help them grow and develop strategies to move on.

LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

Over the last 12 years the Association has invested heavily in hugely successful Leading Learning programmes, aimed at teachers and school leaders, led by the late Paul Ginnis, Guy Claxton, Graham Powell and Mike Hughes.

Now our challenge is to promote Senior Cycle reform. NAPD has commissioned a report to add to the national debate, as we seek to adapt our Senior Cycle to meet the needs and abilities of all students in the system. If change is to come about it will be slow and will involve negotiation and consultation with all the partners.

PRAMERICA SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY

The ability to recognise and acknowledge the volunteerism of students as they worked to improve their community was at the heart of Pramerica, which complemented the work of Gaisce and other citizenship programmes, with substantial benefits accruing for local communities. NAPD was proud to support the Spirit of Community campaign in our schools for over 15 years.

STATE EXAMINATIONS COMMISSION (SEC)

The State Exams Commission regularly communicates its gratitude to school leaders for their role in facilitating the smooth organisation of exams nationally. Over the years, NAPD has been invited by the SEC to engage with myriad issues such as the practicalities of the exam timetable, shortages of teachers to undertake oral and practical exams and superintend the exams and the need for trained teachers to correct scripts.

There is no doubt that one of the best achievements over the last number of years has been the availability of the Exam Aide for longer during the exam process - one successful outcome, among many others, for the Association in our engagement with the partners.

IN CONCLUSION

Within two years of being NAPD President, I succeeded Mary McGlynn as Director in 2008. Many of the issues and challenges discussed during my interview have changed for the better but others have not.

It is my view that change is difficult in the education sector and that things often happen in Irish education because they have always been thus.

The Minister's recent announcements have placed renewed focus on the Leaving Cert. The syllabus changes brought forward are welcome, as are the new subjects to be introduced earlier than planned. While it is important to be aware of the dangers of the use by students of Artificial Intelligence via ChatGPT and other LLMs in project or assessment tasks, the decision to move away from final grades based on one terminal exam to a possible 60:40 grade breakdown seems a way forward.

Following the Minister's announcement about the Leaving Cert, perhaps a Citizens' Assembly format, used successfully in recent times to guide us through civic reform, could be used to focus debate on reform of the Senior Cycle.

Over its 25 years NAPD, has developed a reputation as a forward looking, solution focused Association enabling Principals and Deputies to be leaders of change.

NAPD has few salaried employees and relies on the volunteerism, generosity and expertise of Presidents and members of the National Executive. The quality of our interactions with the Dept. Inspectorate, NEPS, NCSE, NCCA, HSE, SEC, SOLAS, TUSLA and others has raised the status and profile of the Association, so that NAPD, after 25 years, is regarded as a significant and reasoned voice in the Irish education sector.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and offer gratitude for the commitment and vision of all those who have contributed generously, selflessly and wisely to the growth of the Association since 1998, as we look forward and continue to articulate our vision for Irish education and to embed our values to enable our society to flourish.

Ar aghaidh le chéile agus gurb'fhada buan an NAPD.



ANALYSING EDUCATION

By Sean McDonagh

LANGUAGE MOVEMENT



Language learning and competence are achieving a greater importance in Ireland.

Ireland's population and economic growth attract a growing multilingual migrant population. Home languages in Ireland are now more diverse. Irish enterprises and investors in Ireland are seeking success in wide global multilingual markets. Ireland is a member of the EU which has 24 official languages. Irish tourism seeks to attract international visitors ever more widely. Language competence and multilingualism enrich national cultural life.

This note, for discussion, seeks to draw attention to some facts related to language use and languages in the Educational System.

LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

The Census 2022 reported 631,785 (12% of the total) non-Irish people resident in the Republic of Ireland, bringing a diversity of languages to Ireland. The figure had grown 18% from 535,475 in the 2016 Census. The top 15 countries contributing to this total are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Census 2022: Non-Irish Residents in the Irish Republic

Poland	93,680	Brazil	27,338	Croatia	13,649
UK	83,347	Italy	18,319	USA	13,412
India	45,449	Latvia	18,300	China	13,050
Romania	43,323	Spain	17,953	Germany	12,390
Lithuania	31,177	France	13,893	Ukraine	11,791

- Since the 2016 Census, the numbers had declined for Poland, the UK, Lithuania and Latvia. Some Eastern Europeans had returned home.
- All the other countries in Table 1 showed an increase since 2016, with India, Romania, Brazil and Croatia showing the strongest increases. Since Census 2022 there has been a major influx of Ukrainians, estimated at 86,000 by Summer 2023.

In 2022, 751,507 people, usually resident in Ireland, spoke a language other than English or Irish at home, an increase of 23% from 612,018 in 2016. Of these, 212,285 were born in Ireland. Of these 751,507 people, 13% indicated that they did not speak English well or at all.

In Northern Ireland, Census 2021 showed an increasing diversity in relation to main languages. In that Census 4.6% (85,100) aged 3 or more had a main language other than English – up from 3.1% (54,500) in Census 2011. The most prevalent languages, other than English, were Polish (20,100), Lithuanian (9,000), Irish (6,000), Romanian (5,600) and Portuguese (5,000).

LANGUAGE STRATEGY

The Department of Education's "*Language Connect 2017-2026*" described Ireland's strategy for foreign languages in Education. It outlined a number of goals:

1. Improving language proficiency through a more enjoyable learning environment
2. Diversifying and increasing the uptake of languages
3. Cultivation of the languages of the New Irish
4. Increasing the awareness of the importance of languages
5. Encouraging the wider use of foreign languages
6. Enhancing employer engagement in the use of trade languages

Enterprise Ireland has identified eight languages as important for Ireland's future skill needs: German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Arabic and Japanese. The Enterprise Ireland *Grad Start Programme* offers support to enterprises seeking to employ graduates with proficiency in languages at Level 6 or above relevant to their business. Enterprise Ireland states "cultural understanding is very important when entering a new market and the ability to speak to potential customers in their own language is vital in this respect".

TOP 10 SUBJECTS AT HIGHER LEVEL

Ireland's Established Leaving Certificate Programme, which typically involves students taking 7 subjects, offers wide opportunity to include languages in their choices. Table 2 illustrates the top 10 choices of male and female candidates in 2023, as measured by their Higher Level examination entries and the importance of languages in those choices.

Enterprise Ireland has identified eight languages as important for Ireland's future skill needs: German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Arabic and Japanese.

Table 2: Higher Level Entries, 2023, By Gender, Ranking

Female		Ranking 2023	Male	
English	23,475	1	English	19,800
Biology	18,187	2	Biology	10,596
Irish	14,646	3	Maths	10,409
Maths	10,107	4	Irish	9,253
French	9,230	5	Geography	9,021
Bus Studies	8,067	6	Bus Studies	7,802
Home Econ	8,036	7	Construction	7,798
Geography	7,868	8	French	5,471
Art	5,678	9	Engineering	5,103
Chemistry	4,827	10	PE	4,354

- English, the global language (and the language of Yeats, Joyce and Heaney), which had a total of 57,271 entries at Higher and Ordinary Level in 2023, was the top subject choice at Higher Level for males and females.
- Females had 2 languages in their top 3 and 3 languages in their top 5.
- Males had 2 languages in their top 5 and 3 in the top 10. Male entries at Higher Level in these 3 subjects were significantly less than the female entries.
- Irish, a compulsory subject at primary and secondary level, and the language of instruction in some schools, was in the top 5 for males and females.
- French was the third language choice for both genders.

MAJOR LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE

The top five languages taken at the Leaving Certificate include the two official languages of Ireland, English and Irish, and three foreign languages French, Spanish and German. Table 3 gives information on participation and performance in these language at Higher level by gender in 2023.

Table 3: Main Languages, 2023, Higher Level Entries, Gender, H1/H2

H1/H2 Female	Female %	Language Total	Male %	H1/H2 Male
28.5%	23,475 (54.2%)	English 43,275	19,800 (45.8%)	21.3%
41.1%	14,646 (61.3%)	Irish 23,899	9,253 (38.7%)	31.3%
36.4%	9,230 (62.8%)	French 14,701	5,471 (37.2%)	32.0%
38.5%	4,537 (59.9%)	Spanish 7,574	3,037 (40.1%)	33.4%
31.7%	3,334 (54.4%)	German 6,129	2,795 (45.6%)	27.1%

Table 3 reveals that the male pattern of lower participation in major languages is accompanied by a male pattern of comparative underachievement as measured by the % of candidates who received H1 or H2.

Less than two in every five Irish language Higher candidates were male and their gap of 9.8% in achieving H1/H2 compared to females is the largest in Table 3. This comparative participation and underachievement raise serious questions about national Irish language policy.

The growing Higher entries in Spanish, in Table 3 at 7,574, exceeded those in German for the first time in 2022 – a significant change. The pattern of Higher-Level entries six years earlier in 2017 was French 15,934, Spanish 4,916 and

German 5,618. Spanish has half a billion speakers world-wide, including 62.5 million in the USA – 19% of the total US population.

In 2023, the five languages of Table 3 also had the following entries at Ordinary level: English 13,996, Irish 22,852, French 5,130, Spanish 2,520 and German 1,729. Many thousands of Irish adults have a Leaving Certificate achievement in a foreign language, creating a potential demand for a Higher Level 6 language qualification accessible through various formats and conferring a high language fluency.

OTHER LANGUAGES

It is important that students in Ireland be encouraged and enabled to study their home language and that tuition through a variety of delivery methods and formats be available to enable this throughout their schooling. The recognition of other qualifications may be appropriate to enable and encourage such study.

The results of the Leaving Certificate in 2023 record the success in a range of languages. Table 4 lists those languages, together with the entries recorded at Higher Level. The EU languages had about 2,350 entries at Higher Level in 2023 and the non-EU languages close to 1,300.

Table 4: Other Languages, EU and non-EU, Higher Level Entries, 2023

EU Languages				Non-EU	
Polish	916	Latvian	59	Russian	505
Italian	409	Hungarian	51	Japanese	256
Romanian	367	Dutch	28	Arabic	229
Lithuanian	193	Slovakian	20	Latin	48
Portuguese	187	Czech	15	Bulgarian	27
Croatian	95	Swedish	13	Ancient Greek	11

Irish school students should be aware of Ireland's Ulster/Scots language inheritance. They also should be aware of the importance of Irish Sign Language. Older readers will view the survival of Latin as a subject with interest – a language that in the past had a monopoly in many schools after English and Irish!

LANGUAGES IN THE EU

The European Union (EU) has designated language learning as an important priority. In the EU's view, multilingualism is an important element of European competitiveness.

The EU Erasmus Programme has the promotion of linguistic diversity as a specific objective. Erasmus student exchange encourages the learning of the language of the host country.

Eurostat provides interesting information on languages in schools in the EU. In 2020, 96.1% of primary level pupils, 98.4% of lower secondary pupils and 90.3% of upper secondary education students studied at least one foreign language.

In 2020, English was the most studied foreign language by far at upper secondary level in the EU. In upper secondary general 96% of students studied English, while 79% studied English at upper secondary vocational. Brexit has resulted in Ireland being the only English-speaking country in the EU, raising the major opportunity for Ireland of providing high quality English language courses and courses through English, using a variety of delivery methods and formats and at a variety of levels.

It is revealing that many EU countries now provide a variety of degree and post-graduate courses through the medium of English to attract international students – including Irish students – and to confer qualifications in demand internationally.

In the EU in senior general education, Spanish ranked second as a foreign language at 27% followed by French (22%), German (21%) and Italian (3%). In senior vocational education, German came second at 18% followed by French (17%) and Spanish (7%).

Girls outperformed boys in PIRLS 2021 in 51 of the 57 countries participating, including in Ireland, though the advantage of girls here was less than the international average.

In 2020, 60% of EU pupils in upper secondary general education studied two or more foreign languages. Ireland had one of the lowest levels taking two foreign languages at this level, as it has two official languages, English and Irish. A foreign language is now being introduced at primary level in Ireland from 3rd class. The continued use in Ireland of the term “foreign” in relation to EU languages is questionable.

Of non-EU languages, Russian is the most commonly studied in the EU at 3%, but with 67% in Estonia, 57% in Latvia and 30% in Lithuania.

LABHAIRT NA GAEILGE

Nochtaigh Daonáireamh 2022 eolas spéisiúil faoi labhairt na Gaeilge – tar éis céad bliain de neamhspleáchas agus polasaí Gaeilge.

I 2022 dúirt 1,874,000 den daonra go raibh siad ábalta Gaeilge a labhairt - sin 40% den daonra ós cionn dhá bhliain d’aois – gan athrú ó 2016.

- Dúirt 624,000 (33%) de na daoine seo gur labhair siad Gaeilge go laethúil taobh istigh agus taobh amuigh den córas oideachais.
- Dúirt uimhir i bhfad níos lú, 72,000, go labhraíonn siad Gaeilge go laethúil taobh amuigh den córas oideachais amháin – titim 1,835 ó 2016.
- Duine as gach ceathrar, 472,887, de na daoine a bhí abalta Gaeilge a labhairt, d’admhaigh siad nár labhair siad Gaeilge riamh.

I measc na ndaoine a dúirt go raibh Gaeilge acu, dúirt 10% dóibh gur labhair siad í go líofa agus dúirt 32% daoine eile gur labhair siad í go maith. I measc daoine óga, idir 15 agus 19, dúirt 63% dóibh gur labhair siad í go líofa nó go maith.

Sa Daonáireamh 2022, ba iad Contae na Gaillimhe agus Tír Chonaill na contaetha leis an gcéadcodáin de chainteoirí líofa is mó sa tír..

INTERNATIONAL TESTS

International tests enable international comparisons and an analysis of student achievement from different backgrounds.

The Programme for International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2021 assessed the reading literacy of pupils at the end of 4th class primary in 57 countries. Results indicated that the Republic of Ireland retained a place amongst the very high achieving countries. So did Northern Ireland.

Girls outperformed boys in PIRLS 2021 in 51 of the 57 countries participating, including in Ireland, though the advantage of girls here was less than the international average. In Northern Ireland the advantage of girls was greater than the international average. The advantage of the lowest achieving girls over the lowest achieving boys was small here while the advantage of the highest achieving girls over the highest achieving boys was larger.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which assesses 15-year-olds, had Reading as its main test in 2018. In that test, the Republic of Ireland was ranked significantly above the OECD average. Northern Ireland ranked above the OECD average. In all participating countries girls ranked above boys in Reading. That gender gap in the Republic of Ireland was less than the OECD average while in Northern Ireland it exceeded that average.

International students studying English require certification of achievement. One source is IELTS (International English Language Testing System). IELTS has two types of test – Academic and General Training. IELTS tests Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme offers opportunities to study Language and Literature and Language Acquisition.

UNITED KINGDOM

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, students can take A-level examinations at the end of Senior Cycle. Typically, students take 3-4 subjects, so their choice is less than those of Leaving Certificate students. Table 5 outlines the uptake of languages in 2023 A-level and it is interesting to compare it with Table 3 giving the Higher Leaving Certificate analysis.

Table 5 looks at the percentage gaining top grades A* and A. At A-level there are three subjects -English Language, English Literature and English Language and Literature. Other means Other Modern Languages.

Table 5: UK, A-Level, Main Languages 2023, Gender, A*/A

A*/A Female	Female %	Language Total	Male %	A*/A Male
13.8%	9,461 (70.6%)	Eng. Lang. 13,394	3,933 (29.4%)	8.6%
26.1%	28,612 (77.9%)	Eng. Liter. 36,743	8,131 (22.1%)	25.2%
16.1%	5,393 (73.4%)	Eng. Lan./Lit. 7,352	1,959 (26.6%)	12.1%
35.7%	5,480 (67.6%)	Spanish 8,110	2,630 (32.4%)	36.5%
38.3%	4,912 (69.5%)	French 7,063	2,151 (29.4%)	39.5%
42.6%	1,423 (60.3%)	German 2,358	935 (39.7%)	49.9%
63.0%	3,528 (59.2%)	Other 5,955	2,427 (40.8%)	56.7%

Table 5 again shows a pattern of male lower participation in Languages. In the English language subjects, males constitute about one in four of the participants. Males have a higher but minority participation rate in German and other languages.

In performance, as measured by the % gaining A* or A grade, males again underachieve in English. However, interestingly, in the three major foreign languages males have a higher % of A*/A grades.

In recent years, Spanish has become the major A-level foreign language in the UK, surpassing French in 2019. Five years earlier, in 2017, the pattern of A-level entries was Spanish 8,601, French 9,468 and German 3,663. The male proportions were higher then at 33.8%, 30.8% and 42.4% respectively.

In Northern Ireland in 2023, Spanish A-level entries (420) exceeded entries in French (295) and German (62) - males formed 3 in every 10 of these 777 language entries. In 2018 these three subjects had 973 entries – 25% more – as recent years have seen a decline in language uptake in Northern Ireland. An ESRI 2023 report on Student Mobility states that “the language requirement (in the Republic) for many courses limits access for students from Northern Ireland where smaller numbers take a foreign language at A- or GCSE-level compared to the number of Leaving Certificate students”.

Table 6 shows the major language entries at Higher level in Scotland in 2023 and the changes since 2017.

Table 6: Scotland, Higher, Major Language Entries, 2023, 2017

2023	M%	F%	Language Entries 2023		Entries 2017
	44.1%	55.9%	English	35,515	36,713
	27.2%	72.8%	Spanish	2,605	2,809
	28.8%	71.2%	French	2,280	3,918
	40.6%	59.4%	German	520	890

Table 6 shows a decline in major foreign language entries since 2017 with a comparative strengthening of Spanish. Major gender differences in participation are shown.

Comparing Table 3 with Tables 5 and 6, it is clear that the wider choice at Leaving Certificate enables far more students in the Republic of Ireland to study languages at Higher Level than study at A-level or Scottish Highers, conferring a major potential long-term advantage.

Celtic languages also provide a contrast with the Irish Language entries in Table 3. In Northern Ireland in 2023, 285 students took A-level Irish. In Wales the Welsh language has two versions at A-level – one for first language speakers, the other for learners. Both versions attracted 188 and 165 entries in 2023 respectively. In Scotland at Highers similarly Gaidhlig attracted 60 entries in 2023 while Gaelic for learners had 125 entries.



Seán McDonagh is a former Director of an Institute of Technology and a former University Lecturer in Mathematics. He was Director of the Skills Initiative Unit promoting actions to increase the supply of technicians to the Irish economy. He was a member of the national Expert Group for Future Skill Needs. Recent activities have included membership of an international group advising on Educational Strategy in the Sultanate of Oman. He was keynote speaker at a European Conference of the Universities of Applied Science in the Hague and at a meeting of the Danish University Colleges at Kolding. He has spoken on education in Columbia and at the national conference of the British Educational Studies Association.

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Paul Lynch Winner of the Booker Prize 2023 Carndonagh Community School

NAPD Leader congratulates our colleagues in Carndonagh Community School in Donegal on the news that their past-pupil Paul Lynch has, in recent days, been awarded the prestigious Booker Prize for his novel *Prophet Song*. He becomes the sixth Irish Booker Prize winner, following Iris Murdoch, John Banville, Roddy Doyle, Anne Enright and Anna Burns.

Paul is remembered by Principal John McGuinness (who taught him Maths) as an outstanding student and an avid reader, who excelled in English, displaying a literary aptitude way beyond his years.

Carndonagh Community School rightly takes pride in knowing that their educational foundation has played a significant part in shaping Paul's success.



Oide

Oide Leadership Division

Mary Nihill

“Leadership & Learning are indispensable to each other” – John F. Kennedy

Oide is a new Department of Education (DE) support service, formed from the integration of four existing support services:

- Centre for School Leadership (CSL)
- Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)
- National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)
- Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)

Oide will support the professional learning of primary and post-primary school leaders and teachers in all DE recognised schools and centres for education in Ireland.

The Leadership Division of Oide is dedicated to supporting school leaders, including teachers and middle and senior school leaders in both primary and post primary schools. This division of Oide involves a partnership between the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN), the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) and the Department of Education (DE).

It is the shared objective that Oide Leadership will be a centre of excellence for school leadership and the lead provider of professional learning supports to school leaders and aspiring school leaders. Its responsibility will extend across the continuum of leadership development, commencing with pre-appointment training through to induction of newly appointed school leaders, to continuous professional learning and development throughout the school leader's career.

The Oide Leadership Division is staffed by school leaders from primary and post-primary schools and provides support and information for all school leaders in all areas of professional learning such as Mentoring, Coaching, Research and School Support. A range of programmes, previously facilitated by CSL and PDST, are now part of the work of this Leadership Division.

These include:

- Programmes for the induction of newly appointed Principals (**Misneach**), Deputy Principals (**Tánaiste**) and established Principals (**Meitheal**)
- Developmental programme for School Leadership Teams (**Forbairt**)
- Programmes for middle leaders (**Comhar and the Post Graduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL)**).

Providers of professional learning for leadership can also avail of the Oide Endorsement Process.

Dr. Pádraig Kirk, previously Director of JCT, has been appointed Managing Director of Oide. As previous National Director of CSL I have been appointed as Director of Leadership and will work closely with Leadership Coordinators Dr. Alan Kinsella, Finbarr Hurley and Anna Mai Rooney to guide the work of the Leadership Division.

The bringing together of all supports for school leaders into one division within Oide is a tremendous opportunity to offer coherent and comprehensive support to school leaders at a time when the role of the school Principal is becoming increasingly challenging. I am really looking forward to working with this team of experienced school leaders to further develop existing programmes and supports and to respond to emerging needs.

The role of IPPN and NAPD in collaboration with the DE in setting priorities and providing direction, advice and support for the Oide Leadership Division, will ensure that Oide Leadership will be informed by both DE policy priorities and by the voices of school leaders on the ground.

We are also committed to developing effective collaborative arrangements and to continuing the close working relationships already established with other providers of professional learning for school leaders and with all stakeholders in the system.

The Leadership Division will work collaboratively with other divisions within Oide to ensure that the organisation's vision of supporting the professional learning of teachers and school leaders is fully realised. School leaders working within the division will ensure this happens through the development of high quality, innovative and responsive professional learning for all teachers and school leaders.

Mary Nihill is Director of Leadership at Oide, the newly created support service for teachers and school leaders and launched on 1 September 2023. Previously she was Director of the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) and before that was Principal at Calasanctius College, Galway.



NAPD Conference Reports

The Galmont Hotel & Spa, Galway, October 2023



NAPD CONFERENCE OCTOBER 2023

- Keynotes and Workshops reports follow on pages 50-61. Each report is an individual take which doesn't set out to report on each and every item; rather it aims to give a flavour of the contents.
- The NAPD website contains recordings of Keynotes and Workshops. It also contains Conference photographs shot by Domnic Lee.
- Email info@napd.ie if you have difficulties gaining access.



Reimagining our schools for the future: deconstructing the impact of culture: Reflections of a Higher Education School Leader

Patricia Mannix McNamara has spent the last 26 years studying culture, and, as the Head of the School of Education in the University of Limerick, she sees many parallels between her work and the work of post primary school leaders. She worries that the gap in the literature regarding culture is growing. She reminded us that "culture is nebulous", but that it affects how we think and feel about our roles – and ultimately can impact on how long school leaders remain in their jobs.

According to her, leadership is no longer about authority – it is about influence and persuasion – which can be a heavy load for school leaders that affects the sustainability of leadership positions.

Interesting, and possibly contrary to the thought processes of most school leaders and teachers, Patricia claims that we as school leaders are overly focused on the experience of the students in our care. While this is of course a hugely important aspect of our roles, there is a lack of recognition of the culture of the school as a place of work.

The nature of the work of school leaders is "unique" and culture is often seen as positive or negative but she argued that culture shifts on a continuum and we have the leverage to make changes. We are reminded that people are the "architects of culture" or "agents of change" and very often we must "name it to tame it".

Patricia spoke about culture versus climate. Culture is "the way we do things around here", whereas climate is a manifestation of culture - it is what it feels like when you walk into a school. This social atmosphere is also on a continuum and can sway from negative to positive. We must be aware of the difference between the espoused culture and the lived experience in the school and school leaders can do this by focusing on what it is like to be a worker in this school.

One key aspect for school leaders in terms of the creation of positive culture and a positive climate is the toll that emotional labour takes on our bodies and minds. "We dance in a web of connections" reminds us that just like with our students, there must be connection before content and this can leave many school leaders feeling mentally and physically exhausted.

Conference Keynote – Professor Patricia Mannix McNamara

by Andrea Finlay-Kajic

Patricia explained about "regulocrats" and how we are "generating work about work". School leaders begin their careers as teachers and most of us have a notion of "service" but this leaves us vulnerable to systemic exploitation. We must both lead and manage and so we cannot move away completely from the language of management.

We were asked to question "What makes staff follow one leader and not another"? This is a dynamic relationship - without followers there can be no leaders, so "leaders need to secure the hearts and minds of followers in order to function effectively".

Throughout her keynote presentation, Patricia encouraged us to hold onto hope. Culture can be changed, most notably by surrounding yourself with positive people. We can change the culture "hire by hire", we must remember to hire not just for professional knowledge but also for disposition, kindness and for people who get the collective. We must always remember our core values and purpose and be clear on the positions we take and why we take them.

I really enjoyed this engaging and thought-provoking keynote. As a school leader, I related very much with the idea of Cultural Architects versus Cultural Assassins. As school leaders we deal with culture and climate daily; it is exhausting and challenging and places a huge emotional load on our busy lives but I took solace in the fact that it is changeable.

Patricia succinctly summarised exactly what we school leaders are feeling and trying to manage in our daily lives in our schools and she reminded me that schools are essentially "places of hope". We can positively affect the culture and therefore the climate in our schools by remaining true to our core values and through leading by example.



Andrea Finlay-Kajic is Deputy Principal in Loreto Secondary School, St Michael's, Navan, Meath.

Conference Keynote – Enda McNulty

by Michael Weafer

Reimagining Leadership

Enda McNulty, a performance coaching specialist, explored key insights and concepts, ranging from leadership, personal development, and the transformation of educational systems.

He began by engaging the audience in positive, energetic movements. In doing so, he highlighted the importance of stepping out of one's comfort zone and the role of positivity in leadership, where leaders 'set the tone'. This also brought the concept of unity into focus, where during the keynote, the audience was divided into the four provinces of Ireland, and Enda encouraged unity by inviting the audience to participate in tackling and singing "Ireland's Call." This simple yet effective exercise exemplified the power of leadership in bringing people together.

Enda referenced the book "*Deep Work*" by Cal Newport and emphasised the need for professionals and leaders to focus on deep, meaningful work. He encouraged the audience to aspire to be innovators and leaders who make a substantial impact.

He stressed that how we lead in our schools and how we empower and transform individuals will shape the future of our schools and, in doing so, the future of education. In doing so, he set out to prioritise life skills, such as communication and confidence, to serve people across the globe, far beyond traditional academic subjects. He asserted that these skills improve the quality of life and make a difference in the world. He asked participants to imagine an educational system that not only incorporated these skills but prioritised them.

Throughout the keynote, Enda was particularly committed to emphasising the concept of leadership of the self as a fundamental component of effective leadership. In doing so, he discussed the inner game of life and referred to the work of author Tim Gallwey. He emphasised the significance of understanding one's internal motivations and challenges in personal

development. Enda then introduced some fundamentals of self-leadership, including knowing one's purpose as a motivation driver.

Enda advocated for a shift in mindset, emphasising that leadership should focus on resourcefulness rather than relying solely on available resources. He suggested that this perspective change would allow leaders to embrace change and transformation in education, allowing them to challenge traditional classroom norms and encourage innovation.

He highlighted the importance of passion, determination, and action in leadership throughout the keynote. He called on the audience to actively participate in transforming the educational landscape. He offered himself as a willing participant in the process, stating that he would be honoured to work with NAPD in this space.

This keynote provided a wealth of insights and inspiration for reimagining leadership in education. In particular, Enda emphasised the importance of positivity, unity, life skills, self-leadership, emotional intelligence, and redefining standards. These concepts challenge traditional approaches and encourage a proactive and transformative approach to leadership in education and beyond.

It is time to wake up to the opportunities and challenges of reimagining leadership in schools and society.



Michael Weafer
is Principal of
Selskar College,
Wexford.



Conference Keynote – Richard De Hoop

by Susan McGann

Richard De Hoop's entertaining and inspirational keynote at revolved around the metaphorical transformation of classical orchestration into collaborative jamming to illustrate the principles of effective teamwork and leadership. The overarching theme was the necessity for adaptability, resilience and a deep understanding of individual strengths within a team. Delegates were encouraged to see the character of individuals on our teams as if they were musical instruments. By likening leaders to conductors guiding a symphony, he emphasised the creation of an environment characterised by trust, creativity, and courage. The central message encapsulated the journey from rigid planning to agile problem solving, fostering operational excellence through collaborative efforts and collective problem solving.

UNIQUE INSTRUMENTAL APPROACH

Richard used a distinctive methodology, utilising eight instruments to classify individual characters within a team. By assigning distinct roles comparable to instruments, he demonstrated a parallel between the orchestra and a team, highlighting the importance of each member's contribution to the overall harmony.

THE ORCHESTRA ANALOGY

The central message to delegates revolved around the orchestra as a metaphor for a successful team. He emphasised that, like the joyful ensemble playing of an orchestra, our staff must work collaboratively under the guidance of a motivating conductor, or in our case, Principals and Deputy Principals. Only through this unified effort can the team produce a full sound experience and deliver top performances.

THE REVOLUTION OF STRENGTHS

A cornerstone of Richard's philosophy is what he terms the "Revolution of Strengths". He motivated the audience by urging them to focus on the unique strengths of each individual team member. Drawing inspiration from the roles of instruments in an orchestra, he advocated for placing individuals where they can best use their talents. This approach ensures that each team member plays a vital and harmonious part in the collective performance.

ENTHUSIASM AND PASSION THROUGH INDIVIDUAL ALIGNMENT

The key insight from this is that individuals, when operating from positions that align with their strengths, can demonstrate genuine enthusiasm and passion in

their work. This, in turn, contributes to the team's ability to strive for exceptional performance. Richard's message to delegates was clear: unlocking the potential of each team member is essential for achieving collective excellence.

LEADERSHIP ADVICE - LOOK FOR THE SPARKLE

NAPD members were offered a poignant piece of advice: "look for the sparkle in your colleagues' eyes". This simple, yet profound, guidance encouraged delegates to recognise and nurture the unique qualities and passions of team members. By doing so, leaders can create an environment where individuals are placed in roles that resonate with their strengths, fostering a culture of enthusiasm, passion, and high-performance collaboration.

Richard's keynote skillfully captured the essence of effective teamwork and leadership in a unique way. The journey from classical to jamming vividly illustrated the necessary shift in mindset needed in order to achieve success in our schools.

The presentation was not only informative but also engaging and entertaining, captivating the audience and prompting enthusiastic participation. His rendition of 'Under Pressure' was particularly remarkable, leaving a lasting impact on everyone present. De Hoop's ability to merge insightful content with an engaging and energetic delivery created a memorable and impactful experience for delegates, keeping them actively involved throughout.



Susan McGann is Deputy Principal of Clarin College, Atherny, Galway.

Senior Cycle Fireside Chat

by Lesley Byrne



Rachel O'Connor hosted this fireside chat with Andrea Feeney – *Chief Executive of the State Examinations Commission*, Dalton Tatton – *Assistant Secretary General of the Department of Education*, Yvonne Keating – *Chief Inspector*, Andrew Brownlee – *Chief Executive of SOLAS* and Arelene Forster – *Chief Executive of the NCCA*.

The vision for this piece was to give a sense of the people behind the decisions and to help us as school leaders to get a greater understanding of what their vision for Senior Cycle Reform was. There was a sense that a greater understanding is needed of the collaboration and consideration that already exists, which perhaps is not well understood by school leaders but also by the public in general.

Rachel facilitated questions that required that guests to explain why the process might take longer than we would like. There was an emphasis on the good aspects of our system and whilst we all acknowledge the need for change, the value and integrity of our school system and in particular final assessments should not be underestimated.

Each of the speakers outlined different ways in which their particular institution was contributing to progressing change. The process of developing specification, the new pathways being created and the challenges being considered formed a large part of the discussion. There was a strong sense that the process can't be rushed and that feedback from all stakeholders had to play a vital role including – and perhaps most important – the voice of students.

All the speakers seemed to be united in their view that ensuring people were able to experience an education that helped them to flourish was their underlying purpose. This was particularly evident in the summary line from each speaker who Rachel had asked about what would be on their wish list for any changes we may see in the future.

All speakers were honest in their acknowledgement that that pace of change has been very slow, with some specifications almost 40 years old. The skills needed to be global citizens in an ever-evolving world was referenced on numerous occasions.

There was a suggestion that our own assessments and practices could also be evolving and flexible enough to adapt to the rate of change we experience in how we live our lives.

Personally, there was much value in getting a sense of the people who were sitting at the decision-making tables and there seemed a genuine desire to ensure that any reform was meaningful and that the processes are done with integrity.

I think that Rachel asked the questions that needed to be asked and held the panel to a level of accountability, by ensuring their own personal views were heard, as well of those they were representing.

I would have liked to have heard more understanding on the need for reform for those young people marginalised by the system and perhaps some interrogation of how the system can perpetuate inequality.

And I can't leave out challenging the parting words that the Leaving Certificate may be brutal but fair. The Leaving Certificate, in my opinion, may be objective but that does not necessarily equate to it being fair.



Lesley Byrne is Principal of Clogher Road Community College, Dublin.

Conference Workshop – Loretta Dignam

by Lesley Byrne



LORETTA DIGNAM
Menopause Hub

Menopause Hub

Loretta hosted a lively and inspiring workshop on a topic that up until recent times has rarely been spoken about. When she asked us to consider that 50% of the workforce will be experiencing menopause symptoms to some degree throughout their career, it seems unbelievable that this has been for so long simply ignored.

She started her workshop by outlining some of the symptoms experienced by women from fatigue, loss of memory, poor sleep, digestive issues to headaches. For some women these are so severe that a significant percentage (67%) considered giving up work.

She focused her workshop on how important it is that employers and us as school leaders take into consideration that for all women these factors can really affect how they do their work and also their confidence. The fact that 77% of women in their recent survey felt that they would not feel comfortable discussing with their line manager that they were unwell due to going through the menopause is a stark wakeup call that we cannot

continue to have women's healthcare considered taboo.

She gave us some recommendations of how we could be more accommodating to women during their menopause – flexible working conditions, regulating temperatures and considering having a menopause support policy in place. However, whilst recognising that it is harder to have some of the suggestions in place in a school environment, simply being willing to have the conversation and ensuring it is not something that any woman should have to feel embarrassed about, can go a long way to supporting women.

It was a really well-presented workshop and it was particularly refreshing to see some male school leaders attend – showing solidarity with their female staff colleagues. Hopefully at further workshops even more men will be willing to join their female colleagues in working towards more gender equitable practices in schools.



It was a really well-presented workshop and it was particularly refreshing to see some male school leaders attend – showing solidarity with their female staff colleagues.

Lesley Byrne is Principal of Clogher Road Community College, Dublin.





KEITH YOUNG
Maynooth University

Conference Workshop – Keith Young

by **Ceola McGowan &
Jean-Marie Ward**

Impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence on Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has revolutionised education by enhancing teaching methods, personalising learning experiences and improving educational outcomes. AI-driven tools and platforms have the capacity to adapt to individual student needs, providing tailored lessons and resources, thus catering to diverse learning styles. Instructors can benefit from AI-powered grading and assessment systems, reducing administrative tasks, thus allowing for more time to focus on effective teaching.

Additionally, AI can analyse vast amounts of educational data to identify trends, enabling institutions to make data-driven decisions and continually improve curriculum and teaching methods. By harnessing the power of AI in teaching, educators and students alike can access a more efficient, dynamic and effective educational landscape that caters to the demands of the 21st century.

Keith provided us with a very interesting talk. AI is to be embraced cautiously. The UNESCO report of 2023, balanced and worth reading, states that generative AI could well be a turning point. Of course, there are many concerns, around plagiarism and detection, the accuracy of the information produced, data protection and privacy, the possibility of bias being built into the models and the impact on human skill development.

Climate sustainability also features as an issue when one considers the power used in computing but this technology is moving forward. AI is starting to go multi-modal. Early versions of the technology relied on text but now is starting to take audio and image input. The functionality of this is likely to expand, as will its types of output.

Simply put, no one knows where this is going.

As educators, and in particular as leaders, we are going to need to adapt, cautiously embrace and upskill. The possibilities are endless.

Keith presented in an accessible and relevant way, providing a comprehensive overview of the current use and possibilities of AI – both the good and the bad. Some interesting observations from the floor were made around assessment – should we reconsider what we are assessing? If the AI can generate the content, should it be more about how students collate, moderate and present the information, rather than the actual information itself? What skills do we want to assess? What skills do we need students to demonstrate?

This session was definitely thought provoking. It is clear that this technology, like the calculator before it, is here to stay and we need to watch this space carefully to make sure we don't get left behind.

Ceola McGowan is Deputy Principal of St Clare's Comprehensive, Manorhamilton, Leitrim.



Jean-Marie Ward is Deputy Principal of Malahide Community School, Dublin.



Conference Workshop – Dr Richard de Hoop

by Anthony Reynolds



Leading on from Richard's engaging, energetic (even triumphant!) keynote address, he continued his mantra of looking at ourselves and around our staffrooms in order to view our professional life and our personal live through a musical lens so we can "play together... and not just work together".

- Richard began the workshop with trying to categorise eight different musical instruments under the headings – Decisiveness, Brainpower, Willpower and Emotional Strength.
- Having grouped the various instruments, participants had to decide what instrument best matched themselves as a person. Richard then counted the number of instruments selected and collated the information on a flipchart in four quadrants, under the headings above.
- He then explored the relationships that appeared, the number of instruments across the 4 quadrants and spoke about the interconnectedness of all these. Ultimately, he concluded, you need all these elements to have a functioning team. It was fascinating to see how he was connecting Belbin's Team Roles with the tune of a piano and the blast of a trumpet!
- Having created an orchestra out of the workshop attendees, he then went on to explore what would drive us towards our goal. To begin, we all have talent - this was a 'gift', something 'we are good at'; this talent 'gave us energy' and 'has value'. There

was no space to drift off in this workshop - Richard masterfully orchestrated crowd participation.

- After assessing our innate skillset, he then proceeded to explore what would make us an effective team. He stressed this model is cyclical - obviously we need a goal, we then need defined roles, accepted procedures and the key ingredient of interpersonal relationships. Without the latter the others will hit a bum note. The goal must be valued by all, roles may change throughout the course (and so may procedures depending on context) but ultimately it is the relationships which will harmonise all team players i.e. the instruments.

There were a number of key takeaways from the workshop. He asked us to reflect on what type of team player we were individually - aligning yourself to one or two different musical instruments which have specific characteristics. Knowing what you are will help you look for what you need.

He suggested going back into our school and viewing our staff differently – as instruments. Who is the trumpet, the drum, the piano? Thus, when forming teams ensure you have the right mix of instruments to set up that team for success – the collective strengths and weaknesses will complement each other and hopefully yield goal driven results.

Overall, he enabled us to view ourselves and our staff in a totally different, yet accessible, way. I, for one, think it was pitch perfect. Ultimately, he left us as leaders with this challenge – 'there is so much music in our colleagues ... let's try to get it out...'



Anthony Reynolds is Deputy Principal of Presentation Secondary School, Kilkenny.

Unpacking School Culture – Exploring the Art of the Possible

Nicolaas Blom and Niamh Hickey facilitated an engaging workshop which complemented Professor Patricia Mannix McNamara’s Keynote. It delved into the multifaceted concept of school culture, focusing on understanding its historical roots, identifying the barriers and opportunities for change and exploring the potential futures it can encompass.

Both Nicolaas and Niamh suggested that to understand the concept of school culture, examining the “Futures Triangle” is essential, saying his model allows us to consider three critical dimensions when thinking about the future.



Workshop participants were guided towards the reality that reflecting on the past and the history of a school’s culture is crucial. This historical perspective helps us identify both barriers and opportunities for change. It also highlights the impact of mindsets and resistances that may have shaped the current culture.

Nicolaas and Niamh challenged those in attendance to look at their settings and share with colleagues the idea of the quest for change and how it is essential to recognise the driving forces. These could include external factors such as evolving educational practices, societal changes, or internal pressures to adapt and innovate.

Participants were asked to reflect on the goals, hopes, and ideas that propel the school culture forward. It was highlighted that the focus should be on the change process rather than the immediate outcome.

With this in mind, Principals and Deputy Principals were asked to consider the following aspects of school culture: expectations, staffing, and change.

Rich discussion flowed, highlighting that expectations placed on students, teachers and the institution can shape the culture. Clear values and traditions may influence these expectations. It was also noted that the staff composition can significantly impact the school culture. A personality-driven culture may change with

Conference Workshop – Nicolaas Blom & Niamh Hickey

by Michael Weafer

staff turnover. Hiring practices should align with the desired culture, which affects how change can be both a blocker and an enabler. Resistance to change and fear of the unknown can hinder progress, while adaptability and open-mindedness can drive positive change.

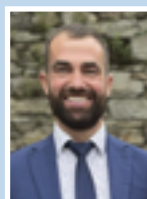
One of the key take-home points that reinforced Patricia Mannix McNamara’s Keynote was that understanding school culture requires examining it from both leadership and follower perspectives. Workplace culture is a dynamic interplay between leaders’ actions and followers’ responses. Distributed leadership is a practice that encourages involvement from various stakeholders.

Questions for consideration were offered:

- How can we involve more people in leadership activities?
- What can shake us from our current path, both from a leader and follower perspective?
- Are there aspects of our school culture that need to change for us to realise a more productive distributed approach to leadership practice?

Unpacking school culture is a complex but necessary process for developing more productive and distributed leadership practices. By considering the weight of history, the forces pushing for change and the pull to the future, schools can create a culture that is adaptable, inclusive and aligned with their vision of a productive future.

The Cone of Possibilities is a valuable tool to engage stakeholders in shaping this future, fostering rich discussions and enabling positive change.



Michael Weafer
is Principal of
Selskar College,
Wexford.



Leading successful change initiatives in schools

***“What needs changing in our School?
How do I know? How will I convince others?”***

Alan Kinsella opened the workshop quoting the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who said that ‘the only thing that is constant is change’. This provided the segue into the general theme of change in our schools over the past five years.

This theme framed the context of the workshop which concentrated on leading successful change initiatives in our ever-evolving schools.

Some reflective questions emerged:

- How do you know that you need to change?
- How do you know this change will make things better for students?

A key response to these thought-provoking questions was the importance of data-informed practice. Workshop participants provided contemporary and illustrative examples of successful change initiatives. There was also a discussion on important and anticipated change initiatives that school communities may encounter in the time ahead.

One of the key studies informing the workshop is the McKinsey report of 2008 which found that around two thirds of all organisational change projects were unsuccessful. This report found this outcome to be similar across a wide range of organisations in different areas. To address this in the education context, the work of Armenakis and Harris was referenced.

Their research looked at five key change aspects:

- What is the benefit and value of the change?
- What is the need for change?
- Can it work?
- Can we make it work?
- The Leadership support for change

Creating a culture where readiness for change is in place is an important challenge. The work of Armenakis and Harris provided valuable practical advice which began with emphasising the importance of the leadership selling the benefits of change and creating a systematic plan that will measure readiness for change, address the obstacles to change and identify the obstacles plan to alleviate, remove or resolve them.

Conference Workshop – Oide

by Liam Murphy & Kevin Langton

The research indicated that this helped organisations create a readiness for change and that this change was enhanced and had more durability when informed by the five key change beliefs.

Director of Leadership for Oide, Mary Nihill, facilitated the second strand. She talked about the importance of winning the confidence of the staffroom was recognised, quoting Henry Ford who said “If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself”.

This strand of the workshop was supported by the research of Dr Meredith Belbin. This focused on the different types of competencies that are in every organisation and how best to match and facilitate these competencies to support and drive meaningful, successful and lasting change.

The role of Belbin's driver, helper, pioneer, loyalist, individualist, perfectionist, worrier and analyst were discussed and it was noted that all of these characteristics can help advance change in the school and give that change depth, as it has benefitted from a diverse range of viewpoints.

The content resonated with participants since it reflected the diverse range of competencies in our organisations, while giving some very practical and evidence-based advice on how to incorporate these abilities to lead successful change initiatives.

The workshop provided relatable and topical advice on leading change which was underpinned by strong academic evidence.



Liam Murphy is Principal of Coláiste Íde agus Iosef, Abbeyfeale, Limerick.



Kevin Langton is Principal of Comeragh College, Carrick-on-Suir, Tipperary.

Conference Workshop – Michelle Stowe

by Deirdre Hickey &
Lorraine Sherlock



MICHELLE STOWE

Human-Centred Leadership Conversations – Getting the best out of our Leadership Teams

Michelle's workshop was on human-centred leadership conversations. To start the workshop, participants were invited to a "human-centred" check in, using a sheep-scale to see how they felt on the day. Using images of the bear, the sloth, the puppy and the dolphin, Michelle proceeded to discuss relational thinking, practices and language in a leadership context.

She spoke about making generous assumptions when working with colleagues. She went on to explore relational practices and processes and how to scaffold them within the school culture. Using the relationship scale – Smile, Connect, Ask, Listen and Engage, Michelle outlined the need to nurture relationships through positive communication.

Developing this further, she went on to look at relational language, explaining that words can be windows or walls. She introduced the concept of conflict literacy – considering the words and language we use to navigate difficult conversations.

Michelle succeeded in creating a space where the participants experienced a human-centred conversation. Working in circles, in groups of five, she introduced mini-talking pieces, including the giraffe. Michelle explained that the giraffe has the biggest heart of all the land animals. Participants were guided to work from the heart-space. The giraffe also has a long neck allowing for wider perspective. She invited participant to channel their giraffe, using "giraffe talk

and perspective" when working with our leadership teams.

Schools are values-based organisations, each with its own distinct philosophy, ethos and mission statement. In our day-to-day conversations, school leaders were encouraged to reflect on how this is implemented in the daily operation of our schools. In addition, school communities are needs-led.

School leaders were invited to look at our relational school culture and implement structures that were sustainable for the long term.



Deirdre Hickey is Principal of the Teresian School, Donnybrook, Dublin.



Lorraine Sherlock is Deputy Principal of Mercy College Sligo.

Gaelscoileanna Tuairisc

Feargal Ó Giolláin



DR RÓISÍN NÍ MHULLÁIN



GEAN GILGER

Ag tús na ceardlainne thug an cathaoirleach achoimre ar stádas roinnt ábhar bainteach le hearnáil an Ghaeloideachais.

- Nil aon eolas tagtha go fóill faoi na haighneachtaí a lorgáidh maidir le polasáí don Ghaeloideachais lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht.
- Tá próiseas ag tosú le hathbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an scrúdú Gaeilge T1 sa Sraith Shóisearach.

FÓRAM FEASA: CEANNAIREACHT ATHLÉIMNEACH A NEARTÚ TRÍ LÍONRÚ AGUS POBAL

Thug Gean Gilger ó BOOÉ agus an Dr. Róisín Ní Mhulláin ó ChOGG ceardlann dúinn ar thábhacht agus ar bhuntáistí a bhaineann le líonrú i measc an earnáil Ghaeloideachais agus an ról atá ag cinnirí sa phróiseas seo.

Díríodh ar luach na líonraí sa cheannaireacht agus tugadh léirmheas dúinn ar cad atá i gceist leis 'an Fóram Feasa'. Is éard atá i gceist ná pobail chleachtais ag obair agus ag comhoibriú lena chéile. Ina measc bheadh tacaíocht á thairiscint, acmhainní á roinnt, dea-chleachtais á chur chun cinn.

Fiosraíodh cé chomh minic a ndeachamar, mar chinnirí ag lorg comhairle le líonra ghairmiúil, go háirithe trí mheán na Gaeilge. Pléadh na buntáistí a ghabhann lena leithéid de líonrú.

Déanadh cur síos ar cad go beacht a bhí i gceist leis 'an Fóram Feasa' ag cur béime ar chinnirí scoile, múinteoirí ábhair ag cabhrú ag tacú, ag obair lena chéile – go léir ar leas na ndaltaí, ag cinntiú go bhfuil dea-chleachtais idir acmhainní teagasc agus foghlama ar ardchaighdeán, ar fáil trí Ghaeilge.

Gabhadh buíochas le Gean agus Róisín as ucht na hoibre atá ar siúl acu don earnáil Ghaeloideachas agus moladh an comhoibriú idir BOOÉ agus COGG, maraon le Ghaeloideachas chun aghaidh a thabhairt ar na dúshláin atá romhainn.



Tá **Feargal Ó Giolláin** ina Phríomhoide ar Choláiste Chilllain, Cluain Dolcáin, Baile Átha Cliath.

FETCI Workshop

Nessa White

by Markita Mulvey

Nessa opened the workshop with a focus on the FET College of the Future, outlining the characteristics that would define such a College.

The workshop was an interactive session with Nessa who welcomed questions from attendees. The focus of the presentation was positive, with an emphasis on what is working well. She acknowledged the increase in numbers in the FET Colleges across the country and spoke about both cultural challenges. She also talked about the journey of reform for SOLAS i.e. the new funding model.

She acknowledged the various pressures experienced at College level and stated for some aspects SOLAS had no authority to engage – such as union matters. They had to work within existing structures.

Regarding branding of Colleges, Nessa was aware of the healthy tension between the Colleges and the ETBs. She was also aware of the various pressures facing the Colleges, such as centralised administration perhaps not being the best model. She believed that SOLAS had a role in the staffing structures and model.

SOLAS knew that NAPD FETCI had great ideas and that NAPD FETCI needed to be at the table in relation to funding models and future plans. She believed that core principles would drive the new funding model.

The voice of FET Principals and the Deputies, the leaders at the coalface, needed to be listened to.

A discussion on fees followed a question from the floor. There were differences in approaches across the country, some free and some charging fees. (Apparently, there are 16 different versions of FET funding and FET Colleges). Nessa said that she would bring various matters back via the ETBI Principals' Network. It was agreed that in relation to communication lines, consistency regarding fees, applications and shared services that centralising was not the ideal model.

Also discussed was the new tertiary model and some teething issues at the outset. Attendees stated that a model, already in existence, was working.

Other matters raised by attendees included:

- Allocation of funding streams outside of PLC.
- No incentive for Colleges to expand.
- Staffing structures.

- What does course competition mean?
Needs definition and clarity.
- Barriers for students with additional needs and the supports required.
- What is the FET College of the Future and what does it actually mean? – how is it structured etc, as it is not determined yet. Not always on the same site.
- Branding needs consistency and opportunity for all.
- SOLAS was looking at the cap, allocating for expansion and growth.
- FORSA – admin and PLSS remains an issue.
- FSD – collective approach and consistency.
- Allocation to Colleges needs to come earlier – SOLAS are aware of this matter and its impact.

It is very positive that SOLAS continues to engage with the FETCI Committee and has made a commitment to further engagement. The presentation was described by attendees as both positive and inspirational. Nessa hoped that, through ETBI, there would be a further meeting with a detailed discussion on the issues raised in the workshop.

NAPD FETCI will continue to actively engage with SOLAS to represent the voices of FET Principals and Deputy Principals.



Markita Mullvey was Principal of Carlow Institute of Further Education, retiring in 2023.



Unlocking New Horizons

How Mindset and Performance Coaching can further enhance and support Principals and Deputy Principals in their multifaceted roles.

Hugh Fitzmaurice

The role of school leaders in today's uncertain world is complex and demanding. From daily firefighting to managing a vast array of tasks and different stakeholders, to relationship building, problem solving and daily "known unknowns", it is not for the faint hearted.

This always-on mentality can naturally become overwhelming for individuals, where personal time is often restricted, leaving leaders feeling exhausted with limited energy and cognitive bandwidth for reflection and rapport building.

So, what can help to retain great people in these leadership roles?

Leaders can benefit significantly from having a variety of supports.

As a mindset and performance coach, my central objective is to create a safe space to help leaders manage their thinking, mood, behaviour and energy, so they can perform at their best as people and in their daily roles.

MINDSET COACHING - "FINDING THE JOY"

Mindset coaching offers a confidential environment for educational leaders to embark on a process of reflection using a strengths-based approach to help them focus on what really matters.

By having a safe, non-judgemental listening space to reframe stress, to uncover hidden strengths and potential, to unplug from limiting beliefs, group think and fears, leaders can return to generating increased momentum and find joy in their everyday actions and interactions.

In working with school managements, their staff, and leaders from a wide variety of industries, I have seen how coaching acts as a powerful catalyst and energiser to enhance individuals in leadership positions.

Mindset coaching is a transformative tool that has the potential to unlock inner horizons of learning and holistic potential. As an educator myself with over 20 years' teaching experience and now a mindset coach, I am enthusiastic about helping leaders explore how mindset coaching can unlock a fresh perspective across the spectrum of educational leadership to empower Principals, Deputy Principals and future school leaders.

A JOURNEY WITHIN: PERSONAL GROWTH AND EMPOWERMENT

At the heart of mindset and performance coaching lies a journey of self-discovery and present-moment awareness. As an educator I have witnessed the importance of self-compassion, empathy and understanding in education for our students, teachers, and educational leaders.

Schools are busy places and sometimes we get so fixated

on completing the next task and "to do" list that we forget to give attention to how we are being and connecting.

Constant striving and doing can strangle presence and constrict creativity making us masters of tasks rather than leaders of learning. How the school management team models their mindset, their staff meetings, their communication, and everyday behaviour can influence the students and staff in *their* everyday actions. Knowing and having clarity on the vital behaviours you wish to see in your staff and school that match your values, can transform your school.

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Through working on a recent empathy programme for schools with Professor Pat Dolan from Galway University and writing a Chapter on Education and Empathy in the book "Ionbhá – The Empathy book for Ireland", I realised that empathy was a cornerstone to empowering educators and generating effective rapport building.

Empathy is a vital quality that can be further cultivated through mindset coaching. By developing a deeper understanding of your own emotional state, fostering a mind frame that helps you thrive and having awareness of your own strengths, leaders can have a greater knowledge and understanding of the needs and challenges faced by their staff.

This shift towards empathy driven leadership is challenging but it can be deeply rewarding and transformative, elevating the sense of belonging and unity within a school's culture. The more we create space to actively listen to ourselves and our own needs, the more we have the capacity and ability to actively listen to others.



Hugh is a superb coach who enabled our senior leadership team to develop our leadership capacity and connect into our school's strategic goals

**Padraig Conaty, Principal,
Harold's Cross Educate Together Secondary School**

SHAPING POSITIVE LEARNING SPACES

The ripple effect of mindset coaching extends far beyond the individual, permeating throughout the entire school. As leaders embrace space for reflection on how they are being rather than the familiar thinking-traps of always doing, they have room to further enhance their schools as spaces where everyone is appreciated, affirmed and seen.

In contrast, it is challenging to lead authentically if we

constantly return to our default behaviour of putting tasks and the cult of busyness before self-awareness and relationship building, which is the heartbeat of our schools.



I have worked with Hugh for a number of years now. He has delivered training and talks for the Innovation Academy. He is an inspiring person and people really engage with his authentic voice. He helps people to create real change in their lives

**Alan Morgan, Programme Director,
Innovation Academy, UCD**

FUTURE FOCUS WITH THE TOOLS TO GROW IN MY ROLE

As we look towards the future of education, it matters that we recognise new approaches to educational leadership. By investing and cherishing our personal growth, self-awareness, and continued development of everyday soft skills, we pave the way for a more innovative, stimulating, and holistic approach to education, so that our schools continue to thrive as centres of learning, human flourishing and empowerment.

Hugh Fitzmaurice, creator of ClarityCoach.ie, is a mindset and performance coach who works with individuals, groups and teams to help them optimise their personal and professional lives. He trained as a Personal Business and Executive Coach and is a certified trainer in team coaching and addiction coaching. He is also a trained practitioner of NLP.

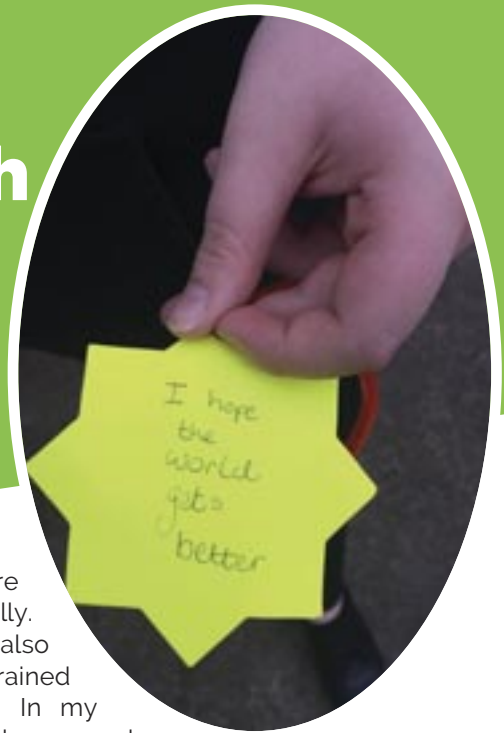


Hugh was a secondary school teacher for over 20 years. He created www.learningrevolution.ie, a social entrepreneurship initiative, which hosted regular meetups and events to support educators.

He was a contributor to "*Ionbhá: The Empathy book for Ireland*" in the company of President Michael D. Higgins, U2's The Edge, Cillian Murphy and the RTÉ radio presenter, Brendan O'Connor among others.

How can a Strengths-Based Approach support your school

Orlaith O'Sullivan



The latest research reveals that mindfulness when blended with character strengths can create a paradigm shift in wellbeing.

How can it help your school?

WHAT IS A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH?

A strengths-based approach pays attention to the best parts of human beings. Research has identified 24 character strengths that are key to both individual wellbeing and collective flourishing. These strengths help us meet adversity and live a meaningful life. With this approach, we train to recognise and deliberately cultivate these positive traits in ourselves and in others.

Current research clearly sets out the benefits of well-delivered mindfulness programmes. Such interventions offer teachers and students improved emotional regulation, enhanced focus, a reduction in stress and a boost in wellbeing. But there is even more to play for: harnessing mindfulness with the science of character strengths can catalyse a paradigm shift in wellbeing.

Character strengths interventions are a newly-emerging field. Back in 1999, psychologist and educator Dr Martin Seligman observed the overwhelming focus on dysfunctional behaviour and called for new research into the goodness of human experience. This research led to a comprehensive effort to research human cultures and understand how we can live meaningful, wise and connected lives.

In 2004 a schema of 24 strengths was introduced, mapping out the characteristics of humans at their best – along with tools to measure them in adults and youth. Some characteristics are commonly considered key strengths, such as self-regulation, leadership, perseverance and teamwork. Others such as humour, curiosity, kindness, creativity, hope and love are more subtle.

Together, they provide a key for human flourishing.

These strengths are in each of us, naturally. Crucially, they can also be intentionally trained and strengthened. In my work with teachers and schools, I am fascinated by three things that happen when we deliberately focus on the strengths in us and in others.

INCREASED STUDENT WELLBEING

A character-strengths approach offers many benefits supporting the healthy development of young people. As students learn to recognise and cultivate their unique character strengths, they experience elevated self-esteem, life satisfaction and meaning (which is key in protecting against depression and trauma).

For students, recognising where they are naturally at their best brings an awareness of their unique contributions. It also helps them to notice how they face challenges and develop ways to resource themselves appropriately when they encounter obstacles and setbacks.

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN ACTION?

During the summer of 2020, I led a group of teens in an 8-week course on mindfulness and strengths practice. They had endured the first wave of the pandemic and faced isolation, loss and the distress of lockdown. Schools were preparing to reopen and the teens in my class had no idea what it would feel like. Our group reflected on the new 'first day of school' that awaited them. They identified the specific character strengths they would need to support them on that first day and designed a 'Character Strengths Elixir'. It was a great moment of strengths in action, leveraging their own resources to meet a difficult moment.

ENHANCED RELATIONSHIPS

Research shows that one of the clearest outcomes of this approach is better relationships – with ourselves and others. Teachers learn to recognise the best in colleagues and students. Young people can value the diverse strengths of their classmates and teachers.

These heightened prosocial skills foster a culture of inclusivity and collaboration.

Furthermore, when encountering difficult or unskilful behaviour, people have the tools to identify what strengths are being overused or underused (and have become toxic). Too much curiosity becomes nosiness; too little becomes disinterest. Such reframing builds our own agency in managing our behaviour and in having empathy for others.

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN ACTION?

One of my students (aged 11) was playing an important GAA match and an opponent committed a foul against him. He felt it was deliberate and went unchecked, ultimately helping the other team to win the match. My student's father described how in the car on the way home, the young boy reflected on his opponent's actions in terms of what strengths had been too strong (teamwork, zest) and too weak (fairness, humility). Reframing the incident expanded his perspective and helped him to face and care for his feeling of disappointment and frustration.

POSITIVE WHOLE-SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Strengths are particularly valued for their ability to help us to live a meaningful life. This sense of thriving can be expressed via a PERMA model, which maps out wellbeing in five areas: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment.



Strengths practice boosts all of these five areas. Thus, it improves not only learning outcomes but also the joy in learning. It helps us to 'behave' but also to care for our behaviour - to connect and empathise. Students have both an increased sense of agency and a deeper sense of purpose. It's both about the whole school and our whole lives.

HOW DOES IT LOOK IN ACTION?

In India, I've been supporting healthcare professionals (social workers, psychiatrists and clinical psychologists) to spot strengths in their young clients. It is a massive shift to move from 'diagnosing the problem' to a strengths-based intervention. By training teachers - and families where possible - we are co-creating a supportive culture, a shared language across the ecosystem of these young people.

WHAT CAN IT LOOK LIKE?

1) Strengths-Spotting in the Classroom

Strengths can be woven into curriculum delivery to boost engagement and empower students to support themselves. You can spot strengths in an individual ("Great question - what wonderful curiosity") or in the whole class ("You worked so well as a team today"). Over time you can help the class to reframe difficult behaviour ("Too much zest! We need self-regulation now"). You can do Youth Strengths Surveys to help your students get to know their highest strengths.

2) Strengths in the Curriculum

Reading a story? You can spot strengths in the main characters. Make a Spotify playlist dedicated to zest, teamwork or perseverance. Watch a great scene from a film and explore the strengths. Which strengths help the character? Which are at toxic levels and are getting in their way? What strength do we need when we face a new maths equation? What will help us to train on a rainy morning? To speak out? To energise us when we're bored? Strengths can help each moment of our life.

3) A School supported by Strengths

As a collective, we learn this common language of strengths, so that we see the best in each other. Over time, we create a kinder environment with more joy and better learning outcomes. You can bring strengths to regular activities - enrich an anti-bullying campaign with social intelligence and fairness; bolster a Science project with perspective and creativity. You can try new themed events like Creativity Week or Hopeful Friday. Strengths-based approaches are shown (uniquely) to boost our own job satisfaction and improve the quality of our work. They transform parent-teacher conversations, helping us all to appreciate the present and feel more hope for change and improvement.

You can explore your own strengths at: <https://orlaith.pro.viasurvey.org/>



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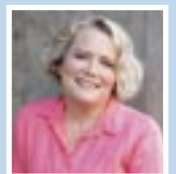
Youth Surveys (ages 8-17) are available here: <https://www.viacharacter.org/surveys/takesurvey>



SCAN ME

Orlaith O'Sullivan teaches

mindfulness, happiness and character strengths to all ages. She is a consultant with Harvard School for Public Health on mindfulness for children and is the International Coordinator of Wake-Up Schools, a grass-roots movement to infuse mindfulness in education.



She works directly with NEPS, HSA, HSE, primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, parents' associations and after-school groups.

Among the schools she has worked with are John Scottus, Holy Faith Clontarf, Fingal Community College and Coláiste Dhúlaigh.

She co-produced Ireland's first mindfulness retreat for educators in 2018, an online International Family Retreat in 2020 and Happy Teachers Together International Retreat in 2022.

See www.orlaithosullivan.com for more information and resources.



CREATIVE EDUCATION

TOWARDS A MORE CREATIVE FUTURE



Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Education An Opportunity to Re-imagine Education for the 21st Century

Martin Hawkes

ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY

NAPD's 2023 Conference foregrounded the role of Principals and Deputy Principals as leaders in education. Many leaders feel, however, that their capacity to make the mood music in their schools and shape the experience of education for their students is constrained by the culture of the larger system of which they are a part.

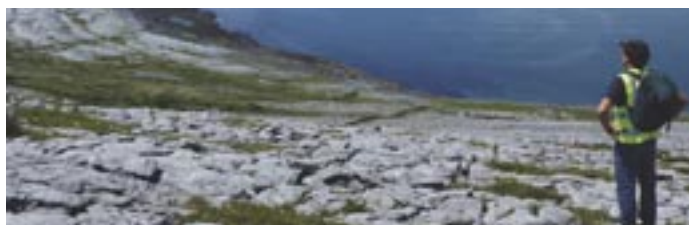
With an ever-increasing burden of management and governance responsibilities accruing to Principals in recent years, the room for leadership of Teaching and Learning is increasingly squeezed. Now, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity presents itself to interrogate and reshape the larger system such that it is fit for purpose in the 21st century.

A Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Education (CAFÉ) is due to be held in the first half of 2024. The commitment to the holding of the Assembly is contained in the Programme for Government:



"We are committed to supporting the development of a shared understanding of the value of education which addresses how education can prepare people of all ages to meet new societal, environmental, technological and economic challenges which face us all.

We will establish a Citizens Assembly on the Future of Education, ensuring that the voices of the young people and those being educated are central.



SYSTEMIC RESET

CAFÉ had its genesis in the symposium Towards a More Creative Education System (<https://www.burrencollege.ie/resource/creative-education/>) convened by the Burren College of Art (<https://www.burrencollege.ie/>) in 2018 at which the then NAPD Director Clive Byrne was present. The symposium was preceded by a wide-ranging engagement process across the field of education which revealed a latent consensus around the need for a systemic reset to reflect the shifts that were taking place in the wider world. As one symposium participant commented *"We are in liquid times, anything is possible"*.

The symposium proposed a range of initiatives that would help shift the system in a more creative direction. Two suggestions, reflecting the symposium process itself, gained particular traction – the idea of a Citizens' Assembly on education and BEACONS (<https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/about/commissioned-research/#beacons>) (Bringing Education Alive for Communities on a National Scale), both forms of participatory engagement at national and local school level respectively. The work of a group of supporters led to a break-through commitment to a Citizens' Assembly in the Programme for Government.

Meanwhile BEACONS, championed by the then head of the Teaching Council, Tomás Ó Ruairc was piloted in several school communities across the country and was the subject of an OECD study, the report on which was launched last October.

(<https://www.oecd.org/publications/roadmap-for-scaling-up-local-school-community-engagement-to-inform-education-policy-making-in-ireland-8eb17b2c-en.htm>).



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Together, CAFÉ and BEACONS constitute elements of a potentially exciting process for scaffolding change and adaptation in the education system. It is easy to imagine future Citizens' Assemblies that review progress and provide fresh guidance.

REALISING CAFÉ'S POTENTIAL

The potential of CAFÉ was nicely captured by Minister Norma Foley in her message to a BCA symposium in May 2022 which addressed how to make CAFÉ the best it could be.

She observed it was a:



Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reimagine education and to consider Ireland's education needs.

Realising this potential is critically dependent on two factors: asking the right questions and the process by which CAFÉ is hosted. The one sure way to curtail this potential is to ask questions that remain within the prevailing industrial-age paradigm of education. In this regard the Minister's invitation to *'reimagine'* education is promising, as is the wording in the programme for government which invites the development of *a shared understanding of the value of education which addresses how education can prepare people of all ages to meet new societal, environmental, technological and economic challenges which face us all.* The hope now must be that these expansive framings will be honoured in the terms of reference to be agreed by government and the Oireachtas in the formal establishing of CAFÉ.

In the ongoing engagement by the CAFÉ group with actors in the education system, the recurring call is for the Citizens' Assembly to enquire into a shared vision, values and purpose for education in the 21st century. What this might look like was eloquently expressed at the 2023 NAPD Conference where there were calls for a distinctively Irish vision of education and for an approach that transcended sectional boundaries, the releasing of curricular and other chains, allowing a system that was flourishing and free and where students became informed citizens possessed of agency and resilience.

If the Assembly can agree the larger vision/purpose question, then the one hundred members will have the compass to navigate and agree the more specific areas that need to be discussed. These could include how to unburden school leaders of their current administrative burden and the processes required to translate policy into practice.

The second key to the success of CAFÉ is the process by



which the Assembly is conducted – how to give real effect to the commitment to *'ensuring that the voices of the young people and those being educated are central'* (an important innovation in this Citizens' Assembly); how to give voice to the voiceless, those on the margins of the system, for whom the mainstream doesn't work; the choice of chairs/co-chairs and the expert group to guide the Assembly; where the Assembly meets – why not in schools or creative spaces?

CAFÉ IS IMMINENT

It is more than five years since the Burren symposium launched the idea of CAFÉ. In the intervening period the climate and biodiversity crises have worsened, the Covid pandemic has disrupted our lives, the war in Ukraine has led to mass migration in Europe and the possibilities and dangers of AI have loomed large. Events have conspired to make ever more urgent the need for a national conversation about education than was evident at the start of this journey.

As we enter the home-stretch before the shape of CAFÉ is determined, now is an ideal time to consider how we can collectively contribute to making this a landmark moment in Irish education in the interests of all who value a system that we are all justly proud of.

The NAPD, which was present at the genesis of CAFÉ, has a key role to play in influencing the terms of reference of CAFÉ and, looking to the future, in ensuring that the insights of CAFÉ are brought to fruition.

Martin Hawkes: A former civil servant and a banker, his career has spanned commercial and social enterprise. He was a founding trustee of the Burren College of Art <https://www.burrencollege.ie/> and the landscape charity Burrenbeo Trust <https://burrenbeo.com/>. His current focus is on bringing the creative processes of an Art College to bear on systemic social challenges, from climate change and the fate of the Gaeltacht to the future of the education system. He has also chaired an ETB school board for many years.



SCAN ME

Key Legal Considerations for Boards of Management



David Ruddy
B.L.

On 20 September, the Education Team of Mason, Hayes & Curran LLP, in collaboration with the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE), hosted a webinar in relation to the above topic. Registrants submitted questions in advance which formed the basis for content. A significant number of questions concerned the management of challenging behaviour.

AN ONLINE POLL OF REGISTRANTS REVEALED THE FOLLOWING:

- 97% of school leaders want guidelines in relation to managing behaviours of concern issued by the Department of Education
- 59% are not confident in managing challenging behaviour

The survey also found that the majority (59%) of school leaders are not confident in managing behaviours of concern, and only 28% of schools polled have a Behaviours of Concern Policy in place.

- 72% do not have a Behaviours of Concern Policy
- Disruption to other students is the biggest issue (56%), followed by injury to students (20%) and injury to staff (18%)

Reacting to the survey, Eileen O' Rourke, General Secretary of NABMSE, stated that she was not surprised by the results, considering her experience of supporting special schools and mainstream schools with special classes.

Liam Riordan, Education Partner at Mason Hayes & Curran said: *"School leaders, teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs) are frequently confronted by students exhibiting challenging and disruptive behaviours. It is crucial to avoid reacting in the heat of the moment, so that any decision made is in the best interest of all parties. Before suspending a student, it is important to consider the legal implications, ensure adherence to the school's code of conduct and ensure that fair procedures are followed"*.

The survey also found that the majority (59%) of school leaders are not confident in managing behaviours of concern, and only 28% of schools polled have a Behaviours of Concern Policy in place.

Catherine Kelly, Education Partner at Mason Hayes & Curran, commented: *"Managing challenging behaviour in*

The webinar gave updates in relation to employment law issues to include scenarios involving teachers, SNAs and bus escorts. Other issues addressed included data protection and governance.

students is one of the most difficult issues for schools. Our survey results underscore the pressing need for clear guidelines and training in this area, to provide schools with greater confidence and clarity and to enhance the safety of both students and staff”.

I personally added: *“There will be crisis situations where it may be necessary for a physical intervention and possible restraint. Schools that have a Behaviour of Concern policy (as an Appendix to their Code of Behaviour) and training are in a much stronger position to limit liability. It is critical that school leaders are equipped with the necessary knowledge and tools to navigate this complex landscape”.*

OTHER TAKE AWAYS FROM THE WEBINAR INCLUDE:

- Do not consider the demands of other parents when considering the imposition of disciplinary sanctions on a student.
- The Code of Behaviour applies to all students, including those with special needs, notwithstanding that the bar is higher in relation to the said students.
- A dress code for staff is an important consideration, particularly when one may encounter students

exhibiting dangerous behaviour. Long hair and certain jewellery can constitute a risk.

- Have schools rehearsed scenarios where there may be a crisis that merits a physical intervention?
- If you are opening a special class in a mainstream school, ensure the admissions policy is updated and your health and safety statement has a revised risk assessment.

The webinar gave updates in relation to employment law issues to include scenarios involving teachers, SNAs and bus escorts. Other issues addressed included data protection and governance.

If you would like to view the webinar, you can access the recording on the following link: <https://www.mhc.ie/latest/events/key-legal-considerations-for-school-boards-of-management>



SCAN ME

If you have any queries in relation to this article you can contact druddy@mhc.ie



David Ruddy works with Mason, Hayes & Curran LLP as an adviser and trainer. For further information on this article, contact David at druddy@mhc.ie





A New Model For Teaching Nature

Patrick Kirwan

“Humanity needs nature to survive, and so do the economy and banks. The more species become extinct, the less diverse are the ecosystems on which we rely.

This presents a growing financial risk that cannot be ignored” -

Frank Elderson, Dutch lawyer, member of the Executive Board of the ECB

This language is new, as is the realisation by more and more business leaders that when ecosystems collapse so too does their business model. The loss of biodiversity, or nature, poses a serious risk to humanity. We are dependent on nature for clean air, water, food, medicine, to draw down carbon from the atmosphere.

Nature is crucial for our health and wellbeing.

This is poorly understood because it is not being taught in our schools in a meaningful way. Our rapidly degrading connection to nature doesn't help. In 2005, Richard Louv, an American author, coined the term *nature deficit disorder*



to describe the cost of our alienation from nature, which includes the diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, conditions of obesity and higher rates of emotional and physical illness. This is something we as educators can reverse.

I showed one of my classes a picture of tightly mown grass and another picture of long grass rich with the yellows of buttercups juxtaposed with a colourful tapestry of blossoms of pollinator plants. I asked them which would they prefer? The majority preferred the former, a biodiversity desert. Their reasoning was it was “neat and tidy”.

They have absorbed their perceptions of beauty from the adults around them. We, as their parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and teachers have taught them that nature has no value, nature is silent, nature is a manicured lawn. Nature should be its own core subject. If this was implemented decades ago, I think we would be living in a very different world to the one we are living in now; a lush verdant thriving world with a more certain future.

It is time for radical transformational change.

When I was teaching in London, I developed a bespoke whole school Environmental Leadership Development Programme based in a school garden. Last academic year we replicated this model in Árdcoil na Mara, Co. Waterford.



"I have absolutely loved all aspects of the programme, from making friends to getting to know our school's students. I loved teaching the students, and learning all different things about plants and the topics of the talks that we gave, as well as how to run activities that are fun and good for the environment!" TY Student Leader

A small group (15) of TY students was given training throughout the year.

These student leaders deliver nature engagement workshops to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year wellbeing classes. Students teach their peers how to deconstruct and upcycle pallets into bird boxes and bug hotels, how to make twine from flax, sow seeds, pot on seedlings, and a host of other things. They also teach their peers about biodiversity, how climate and biodiversity are interlinked, food security, the importance of soil, and the actions we can take to help.

The programme is much loved by students and staff. A survey of 303 students showed that nearly 90% wanted more time in the outdoor classroom. For the student leaders it was a transformative experience which had a tremendous impact on their confidence, knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

Once a month, teachers come to Árdcoil na Mara for CPD on the Environmental Leadership Development Programme.

If you – or your teachers – are interested in attending a training session, please register your interest with aoifedenton@ardscoilnamara.ie.

ARDSCOIL NA MARA
AN EDMUND RICE SCHOOL

TEACHING NATURE
An Environmental Leadership Development Programme - 1 Day CPD

Mon 15th Jan | Wed 7th Feb | Wed 13th Mar | Mon 29th Apr | Wed 8th May
Time: 9:30 - 3:00 Venue: Ardscoil na Mara, Tramore

– 10 Places Available – For Primary & Post-Primary Teachers

Free Programme To register a place, email: aoifedenton@ardscoilnamara.ie
Note: Please state the date you wish to attend.

9:30 - 10:00 Get up to speed on biodiversity
In this workshop we will explore what biodiversity is, the drivers of biodiversity loss, & biodiversity in an Irish context.

10:00 - 10:20 Observing a class in the outdoor classroom
Here we'll take an opportunity to observe part of a lesson in the outdoor classroom to understand how we work with whole class groups.

10:20 - 11:00 The moral purpose for teaching nature & the challenges
In this session we will look at the extent of nature knowledge in schools, the benefits of teaching nature, challenges & solutions.

11:00 - 12:00 A new model for teaching nature: The Environmental Leadership Development Programme
This **PRACTICAL** session takes place in our **outdoor classroom**.

12:00 - 1:00 Awareness to action
We'll share some whole school action projects & resources, and discuss how we can avoid subconsciously greenwashing ourselves.

1:00 - 1:40 Lunch

1:40 - 2:00 Utilising our school grounds
Walk & talk around the school ground exploring how best they can be utilised for nature education.

2:00 - 3:00 A Strategy for Nature Education
To round off the day we'll develop a school action plan.

I would highly recommend this course to other teachers. It is amazing, inspirational and thoroughly enjoyable!!

For more information of our CPD Programme scan.



SCAN ME

Patrick Kirwan teaches in Ardscoil na Mara, Waterford.

He founded The Irish Schools Sustainability Network (ISSN) to provide a forum for teachers and students to work in partnership to accelerate climate and ecological action.

You can follow Patrick on twitter @growgardeners or catch up with the ISSN @IrishSchSusty or visit their website www.issn.ie.



THE EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE COMMITTEE:

A Strange Episode?

Judith Harford & Brian Fleming

In the course of her very interesting review of the last twenty-five years (*Leader*, Autumn, 2023), Professor Áine Hyland mentioned the work of the Education Disadvantage Committee (2002-2005), which she chaired, and the subsequent introduction of the DEIS programme. As we will outline in these columns, it is timely to revisit these events in some detail.

The first reference to such a committee was in 1997, when the Education Bill contained a stipulation that the Minister 'may' appoint a committee to provide advice on the issue of educational disadvantage. As the bill progressed through the Oireachtas, the Minister, Micheál Martin, introduced an amendment, changing the word 'may' to 'shall'. The bill became law in 1998. Four years later, in March 2002, the Educational Disadvantage Committee (EDC) was appointed. It had a three-year term of office, and was designed as an expert rather than a representative group.

Over the course of its tenure, the group submitted four important reports to the Minister for Education on the issues of identifying disadvantage and targeting resources, teacher supply and staffing in disadvantaged areas, an integrated delivery service and priority areas for action in adult and community education. It concluded its term of office with a final report, *Moving Beyond Educational Disadvantage* in 2005, in which the committee identified a number of principles which it felt should underline any national policy.

This represented a rights-based approach to equality, inclusion of diversity, integration of strategies, structures and systems, coherence of provision, focussed target-setting and measurement and monitoring of outcomes and results. This in turn led to a strategy based on three goals:

1. Achieve educational equality in the broader context of achieving social inclusion.
2. Provide inclusive opportunities for learning at all stages of the life cycle, from birth onwards.
3. Improve the mainstream school system so that all young people aged from three to eighteen receive an education that is appropriate to their needs.

DEIS

In May 2005, the Minister for Education launched the DEIS (*Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools*) Programme. As Professor Hyland described it, DEIS brought coherence to the various standalone schemes that had been introduced over the years, as well as providing some additional resources. It is noticeable, however, that no effort was made then or since to analyse the problems faced in particular areas and the level of resources that would be needed to overcome them. This weakness has continued to be ignored for almost twenty years now until recently the Minister, in a welcome

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When the term of office of the first committee ended, it fell to the Minister for Education and the Government to appoint a new one, as required by law. There is no evidence of any urgency on the part of the Department and the Minister to appoint members to commence a new term of office.



The Minister's comments in the Dáil and Seanad that consultation with education partners and commissioned research on DEIS were equivalent to the role an independent statutory committee might have fulfilled in evaluating provision is not convincing.

development, announced that a review has been initiated.

In its final report, the EDC welcomed the introduction of the DEIS plan. However, as they pointed out, their own plan went further. In particular, it was based on the belief that 'schools alone cannot achieve educational equality' and so it stressed the role of other bodies, government departments and agencies, together with the voluntary sector, in working towards a bigger social and economic change agenda. The DEIS plan had a narrower focus, essentially outlining actions that should be taken within the formal education system.

The production by the Department of the DEIS plan in May came as something of a surprise to members of the EDC. It seems that they were unaware that the Department was intending to take this step even though senior officials had been attending meetings of the EDC. Interviewed by one of us some years later, one member, with long experience in the ways of government departments, recalled his feelings, 'we were gazumped'.

In his view, the representatives of the Department who attended EDC meetings never really engaged with the process but, 'made a pretence of doing so' (interview with Brian Fleming, September 2012). Another felt that the EDC was viewed as an 'unacceptable intrusion' into the decision-making role of the DES (interview with Brian Fleming, October 2012). He summarised it as the 'EDC could advise but the DES will do its thing'. The chairperson, Professor Áine Hyland, sensed from the officials 'a lack of support which I never understood', and a feeling that, 'somehow it had been set up without their approval' (Interview with Brian Fleming, March 2013).

When the term of office of the first committee ended, it fell to the Minister for Education and the Government to appoint a new one, as required by law. There is no evidence of any urgency on the part of the Department and the Minister to appoint members to commence a new term of office. It wasn't until 2006, six months after the first committee exited office, that letters issued to the education partners advising that the process of appoint a new committee was underway, seeking their views on the future work the committee should undertake. In March 2007 the Minister indicated that the views, as expressed by the various groupings, were being considered, following which 'the members of the new committee will be appointed' (DÉ, 29/03/2007). However, a few months later, the Minister of State at the Department, Seán Haughey, announced that the government had decided

that 'a formal statutory committee is no longer required' (DÉ, 4/11/2008).

As the setting up of an EDC was a requirement of the Education Act of 1998, legislation was required to abolish it. This came before the Oireachtas in 2012, seven years since it had last met, notwithstanding the legislative requirement to have an EDC in the meantime. The Minister for Education, Ruairi Quinn, expressed the view to the Senate that the EDC, 'is no longer required since the establishment of DEIS' and that 'the implementation and evaluation of DEIS has been continuously supported by ongoing consultation with education partners and stakeholders' (SÉ, 25/01/2012).

Subsequently, in the Dáil he advised that the Educational Research Centre (ERC) and the Department's inspectorate had evaluated DEIS and that he was confident that the ERC and other research bodies would continue to provide data on disadvantage and inform future policy decisions' (DÉ, 29/02/2012).

These events are difficult to rationalise. More than three years elapsed between the end of the term of office of the first EDC and the announcement of its abolition. The Minister's comments in the Dáil and Seanad that consultation with education partners and commissioned research on DEIS were equivalent to the role an independent statutory committee might have fulfilled in evaluating provision is not convincing. Asked about this episode some years later, a former very senior official in the Department put it succinctly, 'it is about control' (interview with Brian Fleming, November, 2012). Whether his assessment was accurate or not, the result was an approach based on the view that schools, and the education system more broadly, were well placed to tackle the problem of educational disadvantage in a fundamental way.

The EDC, on the other hand, felt that a whole-of-government and indeed a wider-society approach was what was required. This is apposite in light of An Taoiseach's decision to establish a Child Poverty and Well-Being Programme Office within his department and his subsequent observation that education policy would be a central focus in its work.

It is our contention that the establishment of such a unit is recognition, belated somewhat, that the strategy of the EDC was the correct one. This initiative, if it succeeds in harnessing the energies of all the relevant agencies, could bring about serious and meaningful change.

Time will tell.



Judith Harford is Professor of Education and Deputy Head of the School of Education, UCD.



Brian Fleming was Principal of Collinswood Community College, Dublin. He retired in 2009, Brian is a former member of the NAPD National Executive.

NAPD-R

Ciarán McCormack



NAPD-R held its second post Covid in-person AGM on Thursday 28 September 2023 in the Castleknock Hotel, Dublin with approximately 40 members in attendance. A brief report of the year's activities was given and the accounts, prepared and presented by the treasurer Teresa Murphy, were approved. Mary Friel provided an update on the work of the Alliance. Tim Geraghty gave a brief outline of some possible new developments that may happen in the coming year. NAPD President, Shane Foley and newly appointed Deputy Director Rachel O'Connor addressed the meeting.

The AGM's highlight was, undoubtedly, Clive Byrne's presentation, in which he reflected on his time in education, both on a personal level in school and during his time as NAPD Director.

Those present subsequently divided into sectoral groups to elect the committee for the year 2034-2024. Many thanks to Sean Crowley for his many years of service and also to Cahil Doherty, both of whom had retired from the committee.

A number of members emailed their regrets that they were unable to attend the AGM and dinner but looked forward to engaging with NAPD-R in the coming year.

A little later in the evening members, some accompanied by spouses, partners (and even some siblings) attended a pre-dinner wine reception (generously sponsored by NAPD, for which we are appreciative).

We had a number of guests for dinner: Deputy Director Rachel O' Connor, outgoing President Shane Foley and President in waiting, Regina Butler. Paul Byrne, recently retired Deputy Director, was unable to attend due to illness.

After the dinner, prizes were presented for the golf tournament which took place earlier in the day. The main award for the winner, a beautiful glass trophy, was presented to Tim Geraghty, a very popular winner. Many thanks to Mary O' Donnell for overseeing the competition (and ensuring that all played within the rules – considering the calibre and reputation of participants, I doubt that this was an onerous task for Mary).

I believe that those present enjoyed the day, which provided an opportunity to meet up with former colleagues.

The new committee had its first meeting, in November, to plan for the year.

Finally, retired colleagues who are not receiving information from NAPD-R, should send an email to napdretired22@gmail.com.

Ciarán McCormack is Chairperson NAPD-R. He retired as Principal of St Paul's College, Raheny, Dublin in 2014.







Mount St. Michael is the first Irish school to receive funding for a Wellbeing Professional

Ciarán Ryan

Mount St Michael Secondary School, Claremorris, Mayo, is the first school in Ireland to receive three-year salary funding for a dedicated Wellbeing Professional to be placed in our school by the charity **md**educational foundation.

Mount St Michael, a Convent of Mercy under the trusteeship of Ceist, is underpinned by the core value of inclusion providing a caring, child-centred school community with the wellbeing of each student as our greatest priority.

With this funding, we will be able to kickstart our long-term wellbeing strategy and take pioneering steps to improve the wellbeing of our students. This funding will allow us to significantly enhance our existing pastoral care and wellbeing systems.

Soon after I was appointed Principal, I was contacted by a former pupil of our school, Miriam Dervan, who was involved in philanthropy and a trustee and co-founder of **md**educational foundation. Miriam shared fond memories of her time at Mount Saint Michael. Following this



mdeducational foundation

conversation, we applied for funding in order to place a Wellbeing Lead in our school.

The charity's co-founders, Miriam Dervan and Tarquin Scadding-Hunt, created **md**educational foundation after identifying a gap in wellbeing supports for senior students. They believed that there should be a stronger focus on a more well-rounded holistic education, with a vision is to ensure that every student had access to timely wellbeing support that they needed.

My knowledge of **md**educational foundation was non-existent in advance of our first conversation. However, they brought to the table the personal touch of our former student Miriam Dervan. What sets them apart is that they convinced us through their personal experiences and through our interactions that they cared deeply about their mission and purpose.

mdeducational foundation had successfully trialled the programme in schools in the UK and wanted to continue to support more schools across all regions, including Ireland.

While we have our curriculum, our extracurricular and co-curricular curriculum, this development provides something different – somewhere for students to go, feel safe, have space and navigate a pathway for themselves.

Initially, some in our school community thought that this



As part of this collaboration, we have re-purposed an old classroom into a Wellbeing Hub, which provides a safe, welcoming space for our senior students. The Wellbeing Lead will use this space to develop a range of different activities to enrich the wellbeing of our students.

opportunity was too good to be true. Yet here we are, actively improving student wellbeing with a fully funded, newly appointed Wellbeing Lead and a brand-new Wellbeing Hub. We are very pleased to see the wellbeing needs of our students being supported in such a unique way.

We consider ourselves to be one of the most progressive schools in the West of Ireland and I think this puts us on the map for pioneering a collaborative approach to wellbeing provision. We are now responsible to make sure the funding is well spent, that it works for our young people and that it supports our existing pastoral care system.

As part of this collaboration, we have re-purposed an old classroom into a Wellbeing Hub, which provides a safe, welcoming space for our senior students. The Wellbeing Lead uses this space to develop a range of different activities to enrich the wellbeing of our students.

Last month, we hosted a launch event to celebrate Ireland's first Wellbeing Lead placement and the opening of our



brand-new Wellbeing Hub. At the launch, Leah Iles, **mdeducational** foundation's CEO, spoke about wanting to put student wellbeing at the forefront of education: *"we're very happy to have started our collaboration with Mount St Michael, Ireland's first school to receive salary funding for the placement of a dedicated Wellbeing Lead"*.

She added: *"mdeducational foundation will continue our mission to make all senior cycle/ post-16 students feel supported in every aspect of their wellbeing, helping them on their journey to a brighter future. We will continue to provide salary funding for the placement of qualified Wellbeing Leads into educational settings in Ireland and across the UK"*.

We were honoured to receive a message from Sabina Higgins, wife of President Higgins, and a Mount St Michael alumnus - *"I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations and well wishes to all involved in this wonderful organisation. The work that the **mdeducational** foundation does, providing much-needed wellbeing support in schools speaks volumes about the organisation's commitment to the health of young people"*.

One of our guest speakers, Minister Dara Calleary, encouraged our students to support one another and look after their wellbeing needs. He added: *"while mental health is something that we haven't dealt with very well in Ireland, you're really privileged to have the army of support and the army of love that will come with this programme"*.

Learn more at www.mdeducationalfoundation.org.



SCAN ME



Ciarán Ryan was appointed Principal of Mount St Michael Secondary School in Claremorris, Mayo.

The Leader Review

Book Title:	The Future is Now
Author:	Ciaran Mullooly
Date:	2023
ISBN:	978-1-80517-042-6
Publisher:	Independent Publishing Network
Reviewer:	Áine Keenan

It's the voice you recognise first – sonorous, steady, sensible – telling things as they are, delivering difficult news, offering glimmers of hope.

When Ciaran Mullooly left RTÉ News in June 2021 after 26 years of service to the national broadcaster, the former Midlands Correspondent replaced his microphone with the pen. “Just before my departure, I returned to third-level education to study more about those other great passions of my life - community development, tourism and social enterprise in rural Ireland. Completing a BA in Business in Social Enterprise, Leadership and Management, I followed this up with a Postgraduate Diploma in Tourism Management”.



In *The Future Is Now* Ciaran Mullooly applies the lessons learned from the first two years of the Covid pandemic, that remarkable yet dark period in our nation's history, to the challenges facing rural Ireland itself in terms of rebirth and renewal, especially the enormous work needing to be done throughout the Forgotten Heartlands in rebuilding a 'just transition' following the demise of Bord na Móna and the ESB in the region. He returns to his Roscommon People weekly columns between 2021-22 and the unique regional challenges of homelessness, unemployment, emigration and rural isolation. In particular, he addresses how the erosion of community values and core principles threaten the decay of our villages and towns nationwide ... and raises a clarion cry as to what we ourselves must do to reverse this worrying trend.

On his recent visit to Ireland, Joe Biden declared “You know, I often say: We Irish are the only people in the world who are nostalgic for the future”. Elsewhere, he had insisted that the point is “not to live in some romanticised version of the past, but to remember what's possible – as we recommit ourselves to the unfinished work that lies ahead of all of us”.

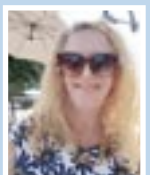
In this he was echoing Fintan O'Toole - “One of the problems with Ireland's relationship to ideas of the future is that so many of the aspirations that fuelled the creation of the State quickly curdled into pious rhetoric at odds with reality. The future was just an attic in which we dumped all our present failures. So, here's the challenge: can we somehow recover the sense of aspiration about the future that animated the creation of the State, without falling into the hollowness of empty dreams? The best kind of public memory is the memory of what's possible. It encompasses the bitterly hard-won knowledge of what cruelties and stupidities we are capable of. But it must also embrace that nostalgia for the future in which the sense of possibility becomes the fuel for public policy and collective action”.

In the multiple themes which make up *The Future Is Now*, Ciaran Mullooly challenges how Ireland remains one of the most centralised political economies in Europe. He details how the Midlands and North-West has in effect been overlooked and undervalued for decades and questions whether Just Transition is but a vague aspiration which lacks definition in rebalancing an economy which suffers from a higher level of regional inequality. Central government seems to have no intention of spending the kind of money necessary to level up a region scarred by underinvestment, deindustrialisation and closure of energy-generating stations. Nor is funding either large enough or targeted enough to make a dent in regional inequalities.

By the end of *The Future Is Now*, he proposes an alternative community-centred political policy which aims to reduce the imbalances, primarily economic, between areas and social groups throughout all of Ireland, doing so without acting to the detriment of prosperous centres and improving standards of living across the country, narrowing the divergence between locations in issues such as health, housing, education and public service provision, and helping each town and village of whatever size and population to reach its productivity potential.

The future *is* now, Ciaran Mullooly telling things as they are, delivering difficult news, offering glimmers of hope.

Áine Keenan is the author of *Essentials of Irish Business Law* and has taught Accounting, Taxation and Irish Law at Senior College Dún Laoghaire (now Blackrock Further Education Institute).



Jigsaw

National Consultation Event in partnership with Jigsaw – The One Good School Initiative

Rachel O'Connor

NAPD and Jigsaw co-hosted an event in September in the Ashling Hotel, Dublin, which saw stakeholders from across Ireland take part in a national stakeholders' consultation on the possible national roll-out of the *One Good School* initiative.

Director, Paul Crone, outlined the journey of Jigsaw and stated that now was the time for discussion of possible national roll-out. The main objective of the consultation was to engage stakeholders to identify the strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats to such a roll-out.

Siobhán McGrory and Dr Siobhán O'Brien from Jigsaw gave an overview of the *One Good School* Initiative since its inception through a pilot phase in 2019. A panel of guest speakers gave wonderful insights into the day-to-day workings of *One Good School*.

This panel included:

- Danny Wade, a *One Good School* Team Lead
- Marita O'Connor, Wellbeing Co-ordinator and *One Good School* Team Lead

- Shirley McConalogue, Guidance Counsellor
- Diane Birnie, Principal
- Mikey Riglar and Amelia Hallahan, both students

The discussion was focussed on each participant's reflection of *One Good School* from their own perspective.

Feedback from stakeholders was moderated. Each table was asked to identify areas of strength and opportunity, challenge and threat, and then make a recommendation to the forum. These recommendations will be submitted to the Jigsaw Advisory Board for consideration.

The event was a positive collaboration between educational stakeholders.

Rachel O'Connor is Deputy Director of NAPD.



SOLAS

learning works

Current and future jobs in demand in Ireland

Joan McNaboe

The recently published National Skills Bulletin 2023 was produced by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS, the state body with responsibility for funding, planning and co-ordination of Further Education and Training in Ireland. The Bulletin provides an overview of the Irish labour market at occupational level and identifies where shortages and recruitment challenges exist. This is the nineteenth in an annual series of reports produced by the SLMRU on behalf of the National Skills Council.



SCAN ME

The National Skills Bulletin provides key insights into employment trends, occupations set to expand and skills for the future.

The rapid recovery in the Irish labour market from the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic has been remarkable. In 2022 we saw a record 2.55 million people in employment and an unemployment rate of just 4.2%. Employment forecasts for Ireland (produced by EU agency Cedefop) predict annual average growth rates of 1.7% for the period up to 2035, which, if they come to pass, would see an additional 650,000 persons employed compared to 2021.

This is not to say that the Irish economy is without its challenges, with issues such as inflation, housing supply and geo-political tensions having knock-on effects for employment. However, the jobs market is currently buoyant, with opportunities across a wide range of careers.

KEY SECTORS AND OPPORTUNITIES

This year's edition of the National Skills Bulletin identifies skills shortages persisting in occupations in science and engineering, ICT, health and social care, construction, other craft, hospitality and transport and logistics. In addition, recruitment issues have been highlighted in several occupations including primary/secondary school teachers, social workers, project/operations managers, production managers in manufacturing and construction occupations.

Employment in the ICT sector remains strong and despite some layoffs and restructuring earlier in the year, demand for ICT professional workers continues to be strong, not only in the ICT sector but also across many other sectors in the economy.

Engineers and scientists continue to be highly sought after which is likely to persist, as society continues to evolve and respond to the sustainability agenda, addressing issues such as circular lifestyles, energy efficiency and waste minimisation. Training places are being expanded for nursing, medicine and therapy related courses to meet the demand for skills in healthcare, with shortages also persisting for healthcare assistants and care workers. With our ageing population, demand for these roles shows no sign of easing.

Construction is another key sector for job opportunities at present. The well-documented housing shortage and climate-action targets means that there is significant demand across a range of roles including trades, civil engineering and quantity surveyors. A recent DFHERIS report estimates that an additional 50,000 people will be required across all skill levels over the period 2023-2030 to deliver Government targets for housing and retrofitting alone. Significant investment in the apprenticeship system in Ireland in recent years will go some way to meeting these demands.

The range of apprenticeships available has expanded significantly in recent years, with 73 programmes now being offered in key growth areas of the economy, such as financial services, sales, ICT and hospitality. The apprenticeship population has also grown to almost 27,000 apprentices being employed by 9,000 employers in Ireland.

SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

So, what is likely to drive demand for jobs in the future?

High on the list are technology changes and the green transition. Technology is becoming an increasingly important component of every job in the economy, and we need to adapt and work alongside it. Adapting to sustainable practices and reaching our ambitious climate-action targets will require change across all sectors; this is leading to new roles such as sustainability specialists, renewable energy engineers and solar energy installers, along with changes within current job roles.

We are already seeing jobs evolving as a result of these developments, particularly in areas such as construction (with the adoption of modern methods of construction and the transition to a zero-carbon economy), finance (digitalisation and sustainable finance becoming increasingly important), transport and logistics (with both automation and sustainable practices, such as electric vehicles), and manufacturing operatives (with increased automation).

This will create new and evolving job roles, with upskilling and reskilling expected to be essential across the workforce to ensure skills remain relevant. Any graduate entering the jobs market now must be prepared to upskill and reskill throughout their career, otherwise they risk being left behind.

In this ever-changing skills environment, Ireland will need to ensure its workforce is highly skilled and adaptable to ensure continued growth and prosperity for all of its citizens.

Joan McNaboe is the Research Manager in the Skills & Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS. Joan has been involved in the production of numerous reports, including the National Skills Bulletin, Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply and the Vacancy Overview Report.



ACTIVE*CONSENT

Moving towards a Consent Culture in Irish Second-Level Schools

Siobhan O'Higgins & Gavin Alcon-Friel

In the past ten years, there has been a massive shift in our understandings of sexual violence and harassment. Research conducted at the national level tells us that the nature of our young peoples' intimate encounters is often not great. The Central Statistics Office's release of the Sexual Violence Survey 2023, found that while under the age of 17, (i.e. under the legal age for sexual consent), 20% of the Irish population had experienced sexual non-contact (or sexual abuse without physical contact), 17% experienced unwanted sexual touching and 4-5% experienced attempted or completed unwanted sexual intercourse.

Two years earlier, research by the Rape Crisis Network Ireland highlighted that 80% of adolescents had been subjected to some form of sexual harassment; 24% reported this was physical or extreme forms. From this same report, many adolescents expressed a desire for there to be new ways to highlight what sexual harassment and violence look, sound and feel like, to better understand and prevent it from happening or being perpetuated.

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Many parents feel they do not have sufficient understanding of the context in which their children maybe starting to explore their sexuality and some of the influences that their children encounter both on- and off-line.

Reflecting this need for more relevant information on the whole area of intimate and sexual relationships within the Irish education system, the new NCCA SPHE curricula for Junior Cycle and Leaving Cert aim to develop this awareness, alongside an understanding of how to form and sustain healthy, positive relationships. In particular, this focuses on the development of a consent skillset and culture – which includes a framework for understanding all human relationships, not solely sexual or intimate ones, on the basis of respect, equity and dignity. The wider aim is to promote these principles into wider Irish society and so combat sexual harassment and violence.

For this to happen, young people need skills to facilitate this development. Research with young people has found that adolescents do have an awareness of the importance of consent and tend to see agreement, permission, boundaries, comfort and confidence, as being key.

“

How real and raw it was. Though being quite a sensitive play, it made it feel so much better speaking about the importance of sexual consent.

Parent



I enjoyed analysing different situations and discussing them to understand consent better.

Male student, 17

However, they also noted barriers to communicating consent which included discomfort, fear, insecurity, and not having the right skillset (e.g. language) or knowledge of *how to* consent to something, or *how to* know if someone else consents to something.

On top of this, social factors exist that, if left unchallenged or unacknowledged, can indirectly affect youthful decisions; specifically, notions on social norms, social expectations, creating both internal and external peer pressures to act in certain ways (MacNeela et al., 2021).

One thing emerges consistently from the research is that secondary school pupils have a willingness to learn these essential social skills through trusted, consistent sources: namely their teachers and parents. Developing the knowledge and skills to equip children and young people with this information can be daunting if we don't know (as we see it) the 'right' way to address all the issues.

The *Active* Consent Programme*, based in the University of Galway, has been working with teachers, parents and school aged children to develop relevant, engaging, and effective resources for secondary schools, alongside strategies for training, support and conversations for teachers and parents.

Evidence of the value, relevance and efficacy of the programme's resources is reflected in feedback data which shows marked improvements in secondary school pupils' understanding of sexual consent and their confidence in detecting and/or preventing sexual violence. Although this is only one element of the new SPHE curriculum, such knowledge creates confidence and has the potential to reduce the vulnerability of our children, at key developmental stages. This is knowledge that will grow and develop with them into adulthood to support their ability to form healthier, safer and more positive intimate and interpersonal relationships.

One aspect of the *Active* Consent Programme*, that make it unique, is its interdisciplinary basis: practitioners and experts from psychology, health promotion, public advocacy and



It was realistic because people will say they're fine with the whole consent thing but wouldn't actually know how/when to ask for sex.

Female student, 16



Thanks so much for your presentation today! This will be a great resource for us and so beneficial for our students.

Teacher

Active Consent* also trains teachers to facilitate in-person workshops that explore the concept of consent, sexual violence and harassment, and how to apply this knowledge within exploratory vignettes of non-consensual encounters with varying shades of grey. This resource facilitates the development a consent skillset through open dialogue between pupils and teachers.

Pupils are also informed on relevant laws that protect their bodily rights, including the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2021, and the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 2023.

Since 2019, thousands of pupils who have taken part in this workshop clearly exhibit better understanding of effective sexual consent behaviours, improved knowledge and awareness of the topic and confidence in communication. Trainings for these workshops, as well as all relevant materials needed to deliver them, are available year-round for teachers wanting to integrate them into their teaching.



I loved it, I'm really happy that schools are teaching this to students and young people because this is so important to learn about. It's an excellent opportunity and programme

Gender no-conforming, 16



Great material. Provocative for discussion. Strong sense of individual rights to consent.

Teacher

Based in the programme's ethos of using storytelling as a universal learning tool, a live performance of a play devised, with the input of secondary school pupils, entitled *How I Learned About Consent*, has grown out of our original play created for Third-Level students. The play explores the light and dark aspects of modern sexuality, using a variety of theatrical storytelling techniques from the natural to the abstract, allowing pupils to experience these stories vicariously.

Through these experiences, pupils become better able to identify sexual violence and harassment, no matter how covert, and feel more confident in making decisions about their own sexuality, in their own time. First piloted with 16 schools in 2022, secondary school pupils attending the play demonstrated similar positive attitudinal changes as those found in teens following the workshops.

Now currently under its most recent development cycle with theatre makers in Galway, *Active* Consent* plans to take the school play to as many parts of Ireland as possible within the first 3 months of 2024.

Within Irish second level, the changes introduced to the SPHE

curriculum serve as a transition point for the development of a healthier and more respectful Ireland. Although this change will take time, patience and practice, the constant push to not only highlight abuse and harassment as unacceptable, but to promote healthier and more positive alternatives, will bring about wider social change, thus reducing negative behaviours.

To learn more about the *Active* Consent Programme*, or if you would like to use the programme's resources within your school community, or bring the play to your local community in 2024,

visit www.consenthub.ie or

E: activeconsent@universityofgalway.ie.

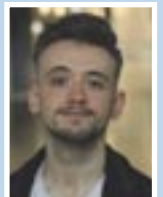


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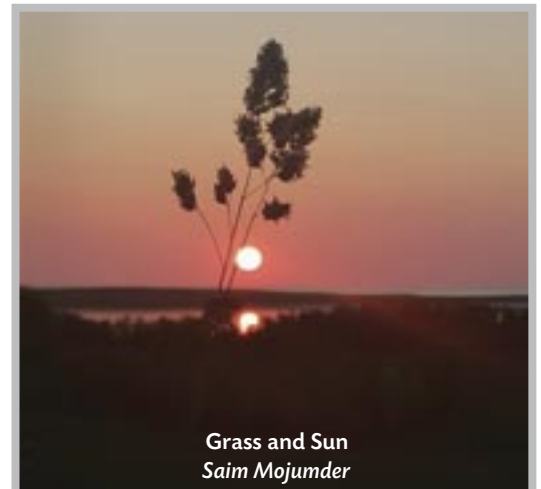
Dr Siobhan O'Higgins has been working in the field of sexual health promotion with young people, parents and teachers since 1990, when her children were not getting the information they needed from school. Now a grandmother and co-lead on the *Active* Consent Programme*, Siobhan leads on the research and resource creation for schools.



Gavin Friel leads on the drama side of the *Active* Consent Programme*. He studied both Psychology and Theatre & Drama studies and is a researcher and actor. His current focus is on organising the new tour of the school play for 2024.

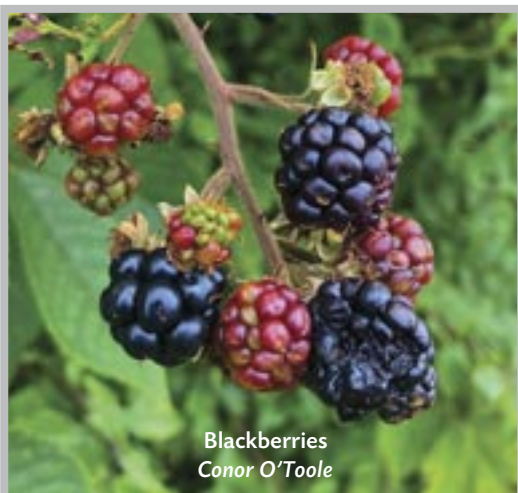


Duckdive
Gioele Gagliardi



Grass and Sun
Saim Mojumder

Photography Club
St Gerald's College,
Castlebar, Mayo



Blackberries
Conor O'Toole



Sunset
John O'Brien

TEENAGE VAPING: a major problem in our schools

Professor Des Cox



It will come as no surprise to anyone reading this that vaping among teenagers is a significant problem in our schools. The impact of this habit is increasingly being seen by doctors and other healthcare professionals and is a worrying trend that needs urgent attention.

The Faculty of Paediatrics at the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland has been looking at this problem and the impact on the health of teenagers and, in a new report, has made recommendations to the Government to immediately ban disposable vapes and to ban the sale of flavoured vapes.

This would be an important first step in tackling this significant problem and I would strongly urge school leaders and parents to support our recommendations and to also make recommendations to local TDs and representatives to take legislative action on vaping to protect children and young adults.

The government is playing catch-up with the vaping manufacturers who have driven the narrative on vaping for a number of years now. School leaders, teachers, parents, youth groups, healthcare professionals and government representatives all need to work together to come up with solutions to curtail the surge of teenage vaping in Ireland.

WHAT ARE VAPES?

Vapes or e-cigarettes are battery operated devices that heat a liquid until it becomes a vapour, which is inhaled. Typically, e-liquids contain nicotine, different flavourings, and propylene glycol. Vaping devices are either disposable, which are single use only, or rechargeable, which last a lot longer. Vapes were initially developed as stop-smoking aid but they have now become a recreational product popular among teenagers.

HOW COMMON IS VAPING IN IRELAND?

Vaping has increased at an alarming rate among teenagers and young adults in Ireland. The European Schools Project for Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) survey 2019 showed that almost 4 in 10 Irish 16-year-olds had tried vaping and 15% currently use them. More worrying is the dramatic rise in the use of disposable vapes in recent years. An Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) UK survey data revealed a 9-fold increase from 2021 to 2023 in their use (7.7% to 69%) among 11-17 year-old vapers.

A recent survey from Northern Ireland revealed that 86% of 11-16 year-olds that use e-cigarettes stated that they use disposable vapes.

I am sure that these numbers are not shocking to anybody working in a secondary school who will have witnessed first-hand this explosion in vaping among teenagers over the past few years. We are now at a tipping point where a whole new generation of teenagers are at risk of nicotine addiction and its negative health effects.

WHY HAS VAPING BECOME SO POPULAR?

Vaping companies have successfully used the marketing playbook of Big Tobacco to entice young people into taking up vaping. They have achieved this in a number of ways.

Firstly, vaping companies have a strong presence on social media and regularly use influencers to promote their products. If the vaping manufacturers are targeting smokers, then why are they promoting their products on Tiktok?

Secondly, a research study from the Netherlands reported that there are now over 20,000 different e-liquids with 250 flavour types. There is now substantial evidence that flavours attract young people to vaping and make them perceive vaping to be a harmless activity. Finally, vapes are easily accessed and are available for sale at most petrol stations and convenience stores across Ireland.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF VAPING?

A common factoid often quoted by vaping companies is that vaping is 95% safer than tobacco. Although it is correct to say that vaping is safer than tobacco smoking, there is no scientific basis to back up this figure. Many international bodies including the World Health Organisation (WHO) have stated that vapes are harmful to health.

Nicotine, which is highly addictive, is the major psychoactive component of vaping solution. Exposure of children and adolescents to nicotine can lead to long-term negative impacts on brain development, as well as addiction. Many teenagers who vape experience poor concentration, anxiety, mood disorders and sleep disturbance.

Some of these symptoms would be very apparent in the classroom setting. Aerosols in most vapes contain toxic substances that can damage the heart and lungs if inhaled over long periods of time. Another worrying health effect is that there is now strong evidence that e-cigarette use leads to tobacco smoking.

A recent study by the Health Research Board in Ireland concluded that teenager vapers were 3-5 times more likely to take up tobacco smoking when compared with non-vapers. In my own clinical practice, I have seen teenagers present with increased asthma symptoms and breathing issues secondary to vaping.

It is imperative that teenagers are made aware of the health risks that vaping pose and that people should only use vapes if they are trying to quit smoking.

HOW DO WE TACKLE TEENAGE VAPING?

The government is in the concluding stages of passing legislation which bans the sale of vapes to anyone under the age of 18. While this long overdue piece of legislation will help decrease the number of children vaping, the law itself does not go far enough. Further restrictions on the advertising, marketing and the point-of sale displays of vaping products need to be introduced.

The Faculty of Paediatrics at the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland (RCPI) has recently called for the ban of disposable vapes. Disposable vapes are also an environmental hazard. They contain a lithium battery, plastic, and copper wiring so their design is such that recycling will always be labour intensive and expensive, which is why it makes sense to ban them outright.

We have also called for a complete ban on the sale of all vape flavourings apart from tobacco flavours to decrease the attraction of these products to young people.

The government will shortly commence a consultation process which will consider the introduction of these legislative measures. This is welcome and will go a long way to curb teenage vaping.

It's important that secondary schools have a voice in the development of this new legislation. For schools, this is a



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rapidly evolving public health issue - it can be difficult to keep up to date with the latest information on vaping. There are now several resources available nationally through the HSE to give school leaders, teachers and their students information on vaping.



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We recommended that schools should have strict policies banning the use of vaping on their premises. This can be difficult to enforce as vaping devices are small and easy to conceal; and vaping in enclosed spaces does not always set off standard smoke alarms.

In addition to each school having a ban on vaping, teenagers need to be given information on why vaping is bad for them and for the environment.

The HSE, in collaboration with the Department of Education, has recently developed new units of learning on vaping on the Junior Cycle SPHE course. Parents also need to be part of the solution - there are other projects in development including parent information evenings and new public information sheets on the quit.ie website.



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As well as sharing information with teenagers, it's important to allow them to ask questions and have open conversations about their perceptions and beliefs on vaping to guide them in their decision making.

For schools which wish to refer teenagers for help quitting vapes, the Tobacco Free Ireland (TFI) programme has updated its resources to be specifically tailored for young people. The programme "QUIT4YOUTH" involves a seven-week course offering behavioural support for young people who want to quit smoking and/or vaping.



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Given the extent of the problem in Ireland, we believe the HSE should be funded to develop a mass media campaign on vaping targeted at young people. Our children and young adults deserve to be protected from the potential long-term harm to their health posed by vaping.

It is essential to maintain the pressure for legislative change and also to increase awareness and education around the harms in schools.

Professor Des Cox is a member of the Faculty of Paediatrics at the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland and former Head of the RCPI Policy Group on Tobacco. He is Head of the respiratory department at CHI at Crumlin, where he has been a consultant in paediatric medicine since 2012.



SciFest: Nurturing Young Minds in Science and Technology

Sheila Porter
Clare Atkinson



The SciFest National Final in November showcased the exceptional accomplishments in STEM of second-level students from across Ireland. At the event Jack Shannon, a sixth-year student from Clongowes Wood College, Clane, Kildare, emerged as the recipient of the prestigious SciFest STEM Champion 2023 Award. The National Final is the culmination of the SciFest 2023 programme which started back at the beginning of the 2022-2023 academic year.

SciFest traces its roots back to 2006 when it was established as a regional STEM fair by science teacher, Sheila Porter. Over the years, it has evolved into a significant platform for nurturing STEM talent with local and regional events across the country and throughout the school year, leading to the highly anticipated SciFest National Final. Participation in SciFest continues to grow; it is now the largest second level STEM fair in Ireland with 12,000 students participating in the current year. The programme's success can be attributed to its commitment to promoting scientific literacy, encouraging curiosity and supporting the development of critical 21st century skills. The programme's guiding ethos is inclusivity and, to that end, all events are free to enter and at local and regional levels all students are accepted, irrespective of their background, gender or circumstances.



SciFest STEM Champion 2023, Jack Shannon with teacher Yvonne Nolan and Sheila Porter, SciFest Founder and CEO



Intel Technology Award winner, Kamaya Gogna with Tracey Nolan, Intel Ireland

The local strand of the programme (SciFest@School) involves schools hosting their own internal SciFest STEM fairs with support from the SciFest organisation. This support includes awards and certificates for the students, a teacher's pack and a SciFest representative helping with judging on the day of the event. At the regional level (SciFest@College), 15 third level colleges, supported by SciFest, host one day STEM fairs for second-level students from schools in their locality. A regional fair also takes place in Northern Ireland. These events provide a platform for participants to interact with their peers from other schools, receive feedback from experienced judges, and an opportunity to attend talks, learn about STEM careers and view the college facilities.

In pursuit of its commitment to inclusion and diversity SciFest is currently implementing, with support from the Medtronic Foundation, a special programme designed to foster participation in DEIS schools. In this context, SciFest also collaborates with the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities in TCD and with Teen-Turn, a programme supporting girls from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in STEM. By tailoring initiatives to cater to these specific communities, SciFest not only breaks down barriers to entry but also actively works towards creating a more inclusive scientific landscape. Through these initiatives, SciFest is not just a celebration of achievements in STEM but a testament to the belief that science is for everyone, regardless of background or ability.

The many thousands of students who participated in SciFest over the year were represented at the National Final by winners from the 15 regional events. One of the most striking features of this year's National Final was the exceptionally high standard and the sheer diversity of

projects on display. The breadth of topics covered demonstrated the multifaceted nature of the scientific endeavours undertaken by the next generation of scientists and innovators.

Jack Shannon participated in the National Final as the winner of the SciFest@College event in DCU in May. Jack captivated the judges with his project entitled, "Ireland's Carbon Sinks – Remote Sensing for Monitoring Peatland Restoration". The project involved the application of remote sensing techniques to monitor peatland restoration in Ireland. With a keen focus on two significant peatland sites, Clara bog and Keelbanada bog, Jack utilised multispectral, LiDAR, SAR and InSAR analyses to assess the progress and degradation of these vital ecosystems.

Multispectral analysis, employing readily accessible Copernicus and Sentinel Hub software, proved efficient in identifying changes in vegetation cover and moisture content in both restored and degraded areas. LiDAR analysis can be used for high-resolution elevation data, facilitating the identification of surface subsidence in degraded zones. Additionally, SAR analysis can be used to detect changes in land use and subsidence, while InSAR analysis effectively monitored land height alterations over time.

The InSAR analysis of Clara bog revealed promising restoration efforts on the East side, with a mean land growth velocity of +5.5 mm/year, while the West side indicated ongoing degradation at a mean velocity of -9.4 mm/year. Keelbanada bog's multispectral analysis accurately identified reductions in moisture content and vegetation, indicative of rapid degradation.

Jack concluded that remote sensing techniques encompassing multispectral, LiDAR, SAR and InSAR analyses offer a dependable and cost-effective approach for monitoring peatland restoration and degradation in Ireland. These methodologies supply regular and precise

data on restoration progress and degradation areas, thus enhancing restoration planning and management.

His study underscores the potential of remote sensing techniques for monitoring peatland restoration or degradation at multiple scales, contributing to Ireland's commitment to the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework by facilitating comprehensive assessments of progress towards restoration and carbon sequestration targets.

Jack was presented with the SciFest STEM Champion 2023 award by Sheila Porter. Jack's teacher, Yvonne Nolan, was presented with the SciFest Teacher of Excellence Award in recognition of her commitment to STEM education and student support. In May, Jack will travel with his teacher to Los Angeles, California to represent Ireland on behalf of SciFest at the Regeneration International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) 2024. ISEF is the largest pre-college STEM fair in the world, with some 1600 students from over 60 countries competing for a prize fund of \$9 million. SciFest has participated in ISEF since 2012, and in that time SciFest students have won thirteen major awards at the competition.

Also travelling abroad next year as a result of their success at the National Final will be Meabh O'Sullivan and Sarah Harte from Sacred Heart Secondary School, Convent of Mercy, in Clonakilty. Meabh and Sarah won the Berlin Long Night of Science award for their project Cycle4Charge. Travelling with the students will be their teacher, Claire Holland.

Other prestigious awards at the SciFest National Final 2023 included those from SciFest's Project Partners: Intel, Boston Scientific and Eirgrid. The Intel Technology Award was awarded to second-year student Kamaya Gogna from St Joseph's Secondary School Rush, Dublin. Her project was entitled, "Using Machine Learning to Identify Radiolucencies on Panoramic Dental Radiographs (OPGs)"; her teacher was Kevin Delahunty. The Boston Scientific Medical Devices Grand Award was presented to TY students Emma Greaney





Sean Jordan and Mark Cranley, Coola Post-Primary School, Riverstown, Co. Sligo

and Madison Brouder from Desmond College, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick. The students were mentored by their teacher Donal Enright and their project was "Rehabilitation Nation" which investigated a pathway to recovery from shoulder injuries. The EirGrid Cleaner Climate Grand Award was presented to sixth-year trio Rebecca Cullen, Freyja Cleary and Clementine van Steenberge from Loreto Abbey Secondary School, Dalkey, Dublin. With the support of their teacher, David Cullen, the students investigated generating energy from waves in water.

The SciFest National Final 2023 marked the culmination of months of hard work for the participating students. To mark their achievement in reaching the National Final each student was presented with an Excellence in STEM plaque. Additional special awards were presented in various categories, celebrating excellence, innovation, and creativity in STEM education. These awards included:

SciFest STEM Champion 2023 Award Runner-Up

Yasmine Odugbesan, Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk, Tralee, Co. Kerry, for her project, "A Lycopene Based Sunscreen to Prevent Skin Damage Caused by UV Radiation".

SciFest STEM Outreach Video Award

Leah Newman and Craig Lawlor, St Oliver's Community College, Rathmullan, Drogheda, Co. Louth, for their project, "Can Arthritis Sufferers Benefit from Leverage?"



Berlin Long Night of Science Award winners, Meabh O'Sullivan and Sarah Harte from the Sacred Heart Secondary School, Convent of Mercy, Clonakilty, Co. Cork

SciFest STEM Outreach Video Award Runner-up

Olivia Rocha da Rocha Brito, Mercy College, Chapel Hill, Sligo, for her project, "Investigating Genetics in Glioblastoma".

SciFest Social Sciences Award

Mya Doocey and Mia Galligan, St Joseph's Secondary School, Brews Hill, Navan. Co. Meath, for their project, "P.Eriod: Effect of the Menstrual Cycle on Participation and Performance During Physical Education in Schools and Clubs".

SciFest Life Sciences Award

Ciara Cannon, Abbey Vocational School, The Glebe, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal, for her project, "Using Silicon Nanoparticles to Create a Self-Sustaining Antimicrobial Surface".

Technological Higher Education Association Award

Gabriela Giuliese, Blackrock Educate Together Secondary School, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, for her project, "The Effects of Hard Water on Hair".

Irish Science Teachers' Association Award

Nikishi Polgolla, Our Lady's School, Templeogue Road, Templeogue Village, Ballyboden, Co. Dublin, for her project, "An Investigation into the use of Herbal Plant Extracts that are Effective Against Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria in Skin Infections".

SciFest Junior Scientist of the Future Award

Angelina O'Neill, Presentation College, Headford, Co. Galway, for her project, "Sustainability: Biomaterials and Bioplastics – A Focus Towards a Circular Economy".

SciFest Junior Technologist of the Future Award

Emma Greaney and Madison Brouder, Desmond College, Station Road, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick, for their project, "Rehabilitation Nation".



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SciFest Contact Details:

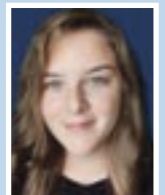
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Sheila Porter has a BSc and Higher Diploma in Education from University College Dublin. As a Biology and Science teacher, recognising the need for more opportunities for students to participate in a STEM fair, she established the SciFest programme in 2006.



Clare Atkinson has a BSc Honours concurrent teaching degree from the University of Limerick. She is currently the SciFest Senior School Liaison Officer with a specific remit to promote STEM and SciFest@School fairs in DEIS schools.



Is your life cover right for you?



Adrian Travers, Manager for Life and Pensions, discusses **3 key reasons** why you should review your life cover today...

Loved ones come first and foremost when we think about future financial security, like your spouse or children, who would be significantly impacted if you weren't there to provide for them. This could also be anyone in your life who would face a financial challenge if you passed away, for example by having to pay off any loans or debts that you have.

As with any insurance policy, it's important to review your life cover on a regular basis to ensure that you've got the right level of protection for your changing needs and to see if you could save money.

1) Your circumstances have changed

Buying a new home or having a child are two big life events that require a life cover change, but there are lots of others. Variations in your personal circumstances or even your lifestyle can mean that the life insurance you and your loved ones require has changed. You should ask yourself:

Has your health status changed?

For example:

- You've given up smoking
- You've been working out and lost weight

- You've been eating healthily and your blood pressure is down as a result

Has your financial status changed?

For example:

- Your income has changed
- You've taken out additional loans

Has your marital status changed?

- If you've gotten married, your spouse needs to be factored into your cover
- If you've gotten divorced, the list of beneficiaries on your policy needs to be updated

Have you taken out other policies?

If you or your partner has subsequently taken out other policies that include an element of life cover, you should review all policies collectively to ensure that you're not over-insured and that you're on the right policy type for your situation; for example single cover, joint cover or dual cover.

2) You've never reviewed your cover

If you own your own home, it's highly likely that when you took out your mortgage protection, you availed of the policy that your mortgage provider

offered you. If so, you should consider the following:

- Most mortgage providers deal with only one insurance company, which may not offer the best rates or terms available on the market
- Since you took out your policy, you've paid several years off your mortgage, so the level of cover you need has naturally decreased over time

3) There are better policies available

There are hundreds of life insurance policies available on the Irish market today and it can be mind boggling to find the right one for you.

The fact is that this is a highly competitive market and life insurance providers are constantly offering new types of cover, at more affordable prices. You should take advantage of what this market has to offer by reviewing your cover today.

Avail of your free life insurance review with Cornmarket today! For more information visit [cornmarket.ie/life-insurance](https://www.cornmarket.ie/life-insurance) or call us on **(01) 420 0998**.

Tonelagee Mountain at the
Wicklow Gap

Photography by Charlie McManus

