

# Leader

QUARTERLY

SUPPORTING OUR UKRAINIAN COLLEAGUES & STUDENTS

**“It was one of those March days  
when the sun shines hot  
and the wind blows cold  
when it is summer in the light  
and winter in the shade”**

*Charles Dickens*  
*from Great Expectations*

**25**  
1998 - 2023  
National Association  
of Principals and  
Deputy Principals  
**NAPD**  
Cumann Náisiúnta Príomhoidí  
agus Príomhoidí  
Tánaisteacha  
YEAR  
ANNIVERSARY

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**Adrian Travers, Manager for Life and Pensions, discusses how investing in an Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) is one of the best decisions you can make while you're working.**

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## FROM THE EDITOR



To commemorate NAPD's 25th anniversary, across the four 2023 editions of *Leader*, each former President will offer a reflective piece. In addition, four Illuminati of the education system will contribute pieces on our education journey since 1998. In this edition Professor Anne Looney, DCU, situates NAPD at the centre of much that has been achieved. She then looks beyond schools to the relationship between schools and society and the implications for leadership. She provides an insightful, even sobering, perspective. We are moving into new and, as yet, uncharted territory. The final paragraphs demand careful reading and deep reflection. The future, beginning now, won't be like the past.

In this edition, we commemorate the life and achievements of former Education Minister, Niamh Bhreathnach, who died on 6 February, with a generous tribute from her Secretary General Don Thornhill. His suggestion, backed up with first hand knowledge, that Niamh should share, with Donogh O'Malley, a place in a pantheon of great Ministers for Education might cause people to reflect on her achievements anew.

On a personal note, the morning she lost her Dáil seat (and Ministry) in 1997, I bumped into her and her husband Tom at the seafront at Blackrock, Dublin. Her seat had been targeted by a group opposed to her introduction of the Relationship and Sexuality Education programme. There was acceptance and disappointment but no bitterness. A shrug of the shoulders and she moved on.

Niamh subsequently became a local Councillor and was appointed by the VEC to my College's Board of Management. Here, she demonstrated humility to align with her intelligence. An outsider would never have guessed her background or achievements. She never suggested superior knowledge. When approached last year to contribute to the Leaving Cert Memories feature in Summer *Leader*, she unhesitatingly agreed and composed a moving personal piece on her 1962 Leaving in Sion Hill, Blackrock.

The recent announcement by the Minister to defer proposed changes to the Leaving Cert examination led to interesting discussion among school leaders around assessment at the recent *Become a Leader of Learning* workshop. Some would leave well enough alone – "it's not perfect but didn't do us any harm". Others demand change. Inter alia, two possible models were discussed, one from each side of the border, that we might learn from.

First introduced in the mid-1990s, all Third Level Institutions in this State now use semesterised/modular assessment. By 1997, three institutions had embraced it, others took longer; Trinity College was the last to come on board in recent years. Academic objectors feared course fragmentation. Some Student Unions felt that exams would dominate to the detriment of sport, student societies and social activities. And yet, I have never met a single student or academic who would turn the clock back. It's now universally unquestioned.

Across the border in Northern Ireland, A Levels run over two years, just like our Leaving Cert. They have two major examination points, one at the end of each year. There doesn't seem to be a problem with the supposed immaturity of boys which we fear here. They also have continuous assessment and to avoid external assistance (family, friends and now ChatGPT) it largely takes place within school time.

To make it work here, resources could be redirected from Junior Cycle (the vast majority of these students do not need State certification). Subject specification will also need to be reconstructed. These are but the bones of two possible models. We can, with a little courage and imagination, begin to euthanise the Murder Machine.

We are deeply grateful to all the contributors to this edition. As ever, observations here are mine alone.

**Barry O'Callaghan**  
Editor

# Leader

Quarterly

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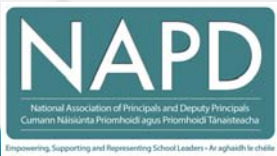
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# Irish Principals and Deputy Principals Health and Wellbeing Survey 2023

**Shay Bannon**  
Lead Facilitator



**P**hase 2 of the Irish Principal and Deputy Principal Health and Wellbeing survey is taking place from **Monday 20 February to Friday 7 April, 2023**.

This research is being conducted in response to concerns that increasing complexity and workload demands of school leadership roles is impacting on the health and well-being of school leaders.

The active participation and involvement of Principals and Deputy Principals in this research is essential. We encourage you to take time from your busy schedules to participate, so that we can build on the data from 2022.

Members who registered to complete the survey in 2022 will receive an

invitation directly from Deakin University and will just need to log in to access the survey.

New participants will be required to register. The research team recommends that the email address that is used should be one that you access regularly and one to which only you have access, since the report that you will receive after undertaking the survey will be personal to you. Use of generic school addresses such as principal@, office@ or info@, should be avoided.

The survey will take less than 45 minutes for new participants and less than 30 minutes for those who completed survey in 2022.

A helpdesk is available every Monday morning (9am to 1pm) during each

week of the survey. The email address for any queries related to the survey is: E: [irelandprincipalsurvey@gmail.com](mailto:irelandprincipalsurvey@gmail.com).

Further information regarding the survey and the registration process has been forwarded to members.

The survey can be accessed on the NAPD website.



SCAN ME

**Shay Bannon**  
is Chair of NAPD's Welfare Committee.



# Presidential Musings

Shane Foley  
President



## SPRINGTIME

Its Spring, the season of regrowth and reinvention. Most schools have completed mock examinations and school leaders will be busy checking on how students have performed. While the mocks are considered by many to be a useful part of students' preparation for state exams, for many they signal increased anxiety levels. As we continue to deal with the aftermath of Covid-19, school leaders are aware of the need to look after student wellbeing and guide them towards June.

Spring is also when we begin planning for the year ahead. Allocations have been provided to schools, allowing us to work on staffing requirements. There will be challenges in the search for teachers. While there is a crisis in teacher recruitment and retention, there is also an onus on us as school leaders, together with our teachers, to promote

**I hope that you had the chance to engage with the Symposium, either in person or on-line and that you will be energised by the work that is being done on behalf of school leaders to realise the true purpose and vision we have for the leadership of our schools**

teaching as a worthwhile profession. We must be part of the solution too.

Spring is also the time for NAPD's annual Symposium, titled *Leading Education – Barriers and Bridges*. This was to provide an opportunity to have a critical look at the barriers that prevent us from delivering on that which is most expected of us – leading learning and teaching – and what needs to happen to allow us to do this.

I hope that you had the chance to engage with the Symposium, either in person or on-line and that you will be energised by the work that is being done on behalf of school leaders to realise the true purpose and vision that we have for the leadership of our schools.

The Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education published by the Teaching Council in 2011 recognised the role of School Leadership and the role of the Principal as follows:

- Effective school leadership, within a collaborative school culture, is essential for the continuing professional development of teachers. In particular, the instructional leadership aspect of the Principal's role should be the central and core element of his/her work and should also include provision for CPD for the school.
- The current administrative workload of Principals, and particularly teaching Principals, should be addressed so that they can be facilitated in developing the school

**Despite the welcome stretch in the evenings, many of us will fail to take advantage of this opportunity to get out and about and take care of our wellbeing.**

as a learning community. The move to a model of more distributed leadership within schools would facilitate this.

We in the leadership of NAPD believe that it is timely that we achieve this for our members, that school leaders are given a realistic chance to deliver what is expected of them and not be timebound by the enormity of the administrative burdens that have blighted the landscape of what school leadership should be all about.

## DEAKIN RESEARCH

The second phase of the Health and Wellbeing Survey is now available online. Most will be aware of the findings from Phase 1, which have been extensively reported on. The results from Phase 1 are deeply concerning in terms of our leaders' wellbeing.

Despite the welcome stretch in the evenings, many of us will fail to take advantage of this opportunity to get out and about and take care of our wellbeing. In this context, a little time spent participating in this research will be a solid investment in our wellbeing. Please take the time to complete the survey, it's springtime – the season for regrowth, reinvention, and rejuvenation – for all.

## Ar aghaidh le chéile

**Shane Foley,**  
*President*



## NAPD National Symposium, Dublin – 28 February 2023

*(Left to right):*

Harold Hislop, *Rapporteur*

Tom Collins, *Past President, Maynooth University*

Caitlin Faye Maniti, *ISSU*

Patricia Mannix McNamara, *University of Limerick*

Shane Foley, *President NAPD*

Katriona O'Sullivan, *Maynooth University*

Zachary Walker, *University College London*

Paul Crone, *Director NAPD*

*A full report of the Symposium will be in the Summer Leader*

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# DIRECTOR'S DESK



PAUL  
CRONE

It has been great to get out to the regions, to get out to schools, to meet with school leaders, to chat, to connect, to discuss and to debate the issues that are impacting on Principals and Deputies on a daily basis. That is the part of this job that I love – we call it professional collaborative dialogue and we all know it really is problem solving, problem sharing and troubleshooting. It is so important that we connect and prioritise our own support networks. I am hearing the passion and the frustration equally.

I remember agreeing one day to be interviewed as part of a TY project for a radio show that they were doing and recording for a project in their media studies class. It was being broadcast widely among all 96 TY students and I never thought to ask what they wanted to talk to me about, how long they wanted to talk to me, and never thought that I should prepare anything for the interview. I was confident walking into the room

that these 15- and 16-year-old students wouldn't be able to ask me anything awkward.

Well, picture a staff meeting at 4:30pm on Friday, 4th of June. They had lots to quiz me on. Determined not to show weakness I ploughed through questions such as – *How would I rate the quality of teachers in this school? What criteria did we use to hire teachers? Why could I not insist and manage the school so that all teachers did things the same? How come only some teachers used the digital devices?* I rattled through, trying to remember why I had moved to 1-hour classes from the 40 minutes, glancing at my watch and praying for the bell. They kept me for the full hour, thanked me politely and skipped off leaving me a nervous wreck.

After this experience, I reflected on the issues that were important to students and realised they were all related to activities and relationships in the classroom. Teaching and Learning. They never asked me about the extension, our CCTV policy, safety statement or financial compliance. It was the land I needed and prompted the biggest question of my career – how do I actually lead Teaching and Learning? This is what the students needed me to do, this is what the school needed me to do and this is the biggest conflict in the daily lives of all Principals and Deputies. How do we do the job we applied for?

The *Looking at our Schools* framework helps to give us an idea of what we should be doing. Sharing and collaborating with colleagues stimulates our creativity and enthusiasm, yet we are continually brought back down to earth with a crash with the administrative burden.

At Conference 2022 we highlighted the sustainability of our role and in Symposium 2023 we brought the education stakeholders on that journey, as we explored the *Barriers and Bridges* to successful school leadership.

We are currently collecting data from the second year of the *Health and Wellbeing Survey*. We continue to advocate strongly on this issue and we will continue until we deliver for school leaders.

There is an urgent need for a School Administrative Officer to remove the non-LAOS administrative burden from school leaders. This, in turn, raises the question what will we do then? We would lead and not just manage, we would have the time to influence, time to build our team, time to prioritise the issues that impact in the greatest way on students, time to work with teachers and students to build our learning community and time to build the collaborative culture in our schools that connects students, which places their school at the centre of their community. The job of leading is much more difficult than managing and that is a challenge we would dearly love to embrace.

I would have relished having more time to lead in my school and I have no doubt that if had that time, I would have answered the questions from the TY students more competently and confidently. I hope they didn't realise, as I spoke to them, the lack of confidence I felt around my answers. However, I do hope they could see my honest desire to do my best for them. As school leaders that is what we do.

NAPD understands this and we will continue to walk with you, since together we are stronger.

**Ar aghaidh le chéile.**

**Paul Crone, Director**



# NAPD Covers

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# DEPUTY DIRECTOR PAUL BYRNE

*“There is always in February some one day, at least, when one smells the yet distant, but surely coming, summer” -*

Gertrude Jekyll VMH British Horticulturist



February has passed and now March is here. The distant smell of summer heralds preparations for the State Examinations and planning for the 2023/24 school year. Allocations have arrived and applications for curricular concessions are under way.

The NAPD Education Symposium was successfully held and planning for Conference 2023 is under way. The Galmont Hotel in Galway will be the venue, from 11 to 13 October.

Phase 2 of the Irish Principal and Deputy Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey 2023 is open until 7 April. This research is commissioned in partnership with IPPN in response to wellbeing and workload concerns driven by the increasing demands on school leaders.

Your participation in this research is essential. Please take time from your busy schedules to complete this survey to allow us to build on the 2022 data. For yourself, you can assess your own wellbeing against that of peers both nationally and internationally.

Survey can be accessed on the NAPD website.



The Welfare Committee is a busy and productive group developing, assessing, updating, and uploading useful guidance and policy documents to the VUG (Very Useful Guides) on the NAPD website. This committee also provides for targeted

CPD and facilitates research such as the Health and Wellbeing Survey.

The VUG is available on the NAPD website.



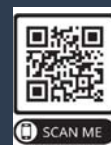
The Regional Ambassadors have visited over 50 schools to date. These visits gather valuable insights into the needs of Principals and Deputies. We are currently collating this feedback to inform the work of NAPD. We are deeply indebted to the Regional Ambassadors and the Welfare Committee for the valuable work they do under the guidance of Shay Bannon.

The Confidential Support Service, operating since 2019, is an important support for members. Following a call or an email you will be put in contact with our support personnel, all of whom are experienced former school leaders who have been trained for this service. To access ring 01 6627025, select option 2. Alternatively email support@napd.ie

ARAG Legal Advice and Indemnity is a benefit of NAPD membership. The policy provides €150,000 indemnity for legal expenses and confidential 24/7 phone advice. The policy also provides a confidential counselling service for members and their immediate family who permanently

reside with them. The counselling service is only available to family members who are 18 or over or between 16 and 18 and in full-time employment. Legal Advice and Indemnity Insurance is available at 01 670 7474; Confidential Counselling Service is available at 01 881 8047. Current membership is required to avail of these services.

The ESHA Biennial 2023 Conference will be held in Dubrovnik from 24 to 27 October. The Conference is now open for bookings on the ESHA website.



F. Scott Fitzgerald in the Great Gatsby said, we all look forward to summer ... *“and so, with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer”.*

Stay safe, stay well and stay in contact.

Ar aghaidh le chéile

Paul Byrne, NAPD Deputy Director



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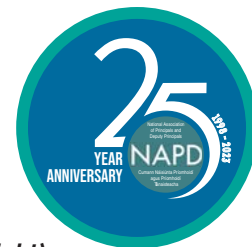
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# Collins Barracks, Dublin – September 1998

Michael McCann



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).

The first thing that strikes me when looking again, after many years, at this photograph of the first Executive Committee of NAPD on that historic evening in Collins Barracks in Dublin in September 1998 is how much younger we all look, – hardly surprising, given the time lapse. Then my eye was drawn to the gender balance, the preponderance of men in suits, only four women on an Executive of sixteen.

I turned then to the Winter 2022 edition of Leader and the picture of the current Executive, which features eleven women in a group of twenty two. A change which reflects much more accurately the gender composition of the school leadership today.

I doubt the various acronyms in the caption will mean much to today's members – SSPAI (Secondary School Principals Association of Ireland), APVC (Association of Principals and Vice-Principals of Community and Comprehensive Schools), APVSCC (Association of Principals of Vocational Schools and Community Colleges), ISA (Irish Schoolmasters Association), VPPA (Vice-Principals of Voluntary

Secondary Schools) and ESHA (European Secondary Heads Association).

Still less, I think, can the vast majority of the current membership fully appreciate the intensive negotiations that went into the welding of these bodies together into a coherent whole. Not only did they represent school leaders in the different sectors, but they were quite differently constituted. SSPAI and APVC for example, were completely independent bodies, although they differed in that SSPAI consisted of Principals only, whereas APVC included Vice-Principals and Principals. APVSCC and VPPA were sub-committees of the two teacher unions – 'wholly owned subsidiaries' of these unions was how one SSPAI member described them. This plethora of differently constituted organisations meant there was little hope of making progress in dealing with the DES, and indeed, teacher unions and management bodies.

This is not the place to go into detail of how this came about. Suffice it to say that in February 1997 a meeting between representatives of SSPAI and APVC agreed to form a working group

to look into the question of representation for school leaders. This working group expanded to include the APVSCC, and the other groups and intense negotiations followed over the next year, culminating in the September 1998 launch by Minister Martin. By April 1998 sufficient progress had been made to give serious thought to a name for the new organisation. I well recall a late-night session in a hotel in Tullamore where, as Derek West put it, after much 'lexicographical manoeuvring' various names, some grandiose and indeed esoteric, were suggested before, allegedly on the suggestion of Michael Naughton, the more prosaic but more matter-of-fact NAPD was agreed and the motto, *Ar Aghaidh le Chéile* adopted.

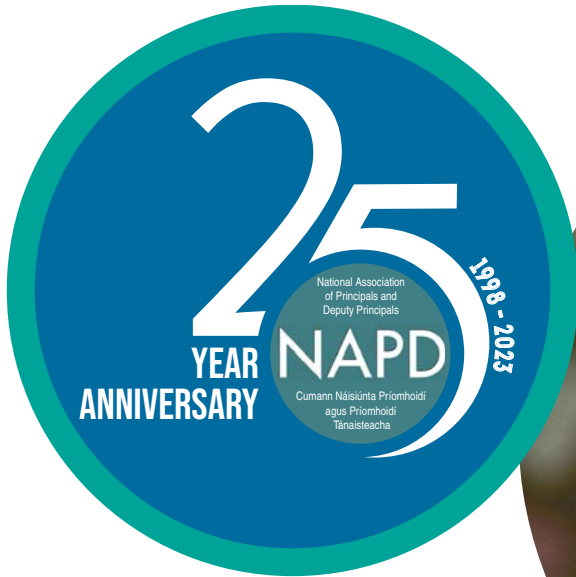
**Michael McCann**

retired as Principal of Presentation Secondary School, Galway in 2006. He was also a Founder Member and NAPD President 2002-2003.



# SHAY BANNON

President 1998-2000



Fiche cúig bliain ag fás – and yet it seems only like yesterday we were planning for the launch of a new professional organisation to represent Principals and Vice-Principals from all second level schools. It is hard to believe that in 1997, there were six associations attempting to look after the interests of Principals and Vice-Principals. Such an arrangement was unsatisfactory and this, combined with a growing feeling amongst school leaders that as long as the post-primary sectors were served by separate organisations, there was little hope of making headway in representing their concerns and having their voices heard.

Following a process of negotiation and many meetings between the various organisations, a consensus developed that a united organisation was required to represent the concerns of school leaders. From these discussions emerged the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD).

I was always impressed by the quality of people I worked with when NAPD was being set up. Yes, we

encountered a few characters on the journey (and where would life be without them?) but the majority of those we met were supportive, motivated and willing to contribute significantly to the birth of the new organisation.

This commitment helped to keep us motivated when challenged by those who wanted to prevent a new association from coming into existence. Great credit must go to the

then for Minister for Education and Science, Micheál Martin, and his officials (particularly John Dennehy) for supporting the establishment of NAPD. The Minister and DES were of the view that "the establishment of one Association helped to recognise the role and status of Principals and Deputy Principals as partners in education".

The only request made by the DES following the launch of NAPD in Collins Barracks in 1998 was that the Association would keep a low profile and not get involved in too many headline-grabbing issues in the initial stages of our development. By always operating in a quiet and non-confrontational manner, much has been achieved.

It is important to acknowledge the support, friendship and camaraderie that existed among those responsible

for the establishment of NAPD and also the central role that Tomás Ó Séaghdha played in bringing all the various parties together. Change and an openness to close down established organisation is never easy, especially when it involves creating something new and untested.

The members of the interim and first Executives showed great courage and leadership when establishing NAPD. We were blessed by the quality of those involved, as they brought many different talents and strengths to the discussions and debates. Remember too that the first Director was not appointed until February 1999.

**“ I feel honoured and grateful that I was given the opportunity to be the first President of NAPD. The role was challenging, stimulating, frustrating, demanding and even stressful at times but also extremely rewarding and fulfilling ”**

I feel honoured and grateful that I was given the opportunity to be the first President of NAPD. The role was challenging, stimulating, frustrating, demanding and even stressful at times but also extremely rewarding and

fulfilling. I also made many lasting friendships on the journey, something that I have always treasured.

It is important to reflect positively on the contribution the organisation has made to Irish education over the years, due in no small way to the dedication and commitment of our three Directors, Mary McGlynn, Clive Byrne and Paul Crone, Deputy Director, Paul Byrne, to the work of the various Executive committees and subcommittees and to the committed office staff.

I would like to think that NAPD has contributed significantly to the many important improvements to the educational system over the years. The active involvement of NAPD in the creation of the Centre for School Leadership was a welcome and important development, offering hope for the future of leadership in Ireland. School leaders have travelled on a 25-year journey and the willingness we have shown to embrace change has resulted in a much-improved educational experience for students.

Finally, being a school leader is hugely rewarding and but it is also demanding and challenging. It is my hope that NAPD will continue to prioritise, into the future, the well-being and welfare needs of our leaders.



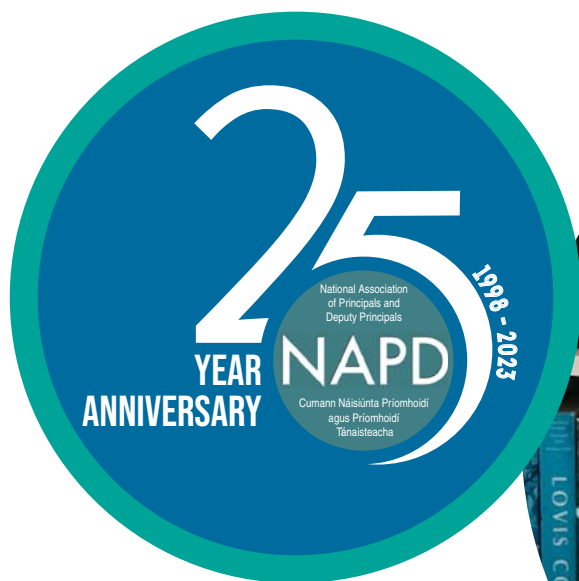
*Shay Bannon with Minister for Education, Micheál Martin, in Collins Barracks in 1998.*

**Shay** retired as Principal from Ardscoil na mBráithre, Clonmel in 2013.



# DEREK WEST

President 2003-2004



Twenty-five years gone by and NAPD is gaining age and honour on the Irish second-level education scene. In 2003 I was elected President of the Association.

When I recalled that time, in the 2018 Conference Programme, I singled out the two women who had supported me and helped me through that year – Past-President, Mary Hanley and the first Director of NAPD, Mary McGlynn. I still honour them for the inspiration and assistance that they gave me then.

From the viewpoint of today, I remember, too, the excitement of being in at the very start of something that was going to make a real difference to the education system and to the standing of Principals and Deputies. In truth, I played a very small part, but it did help NAPD to accumulate, year by year, into a respected, major organization.

I remember the countless meetings, in the bedrooms of the Ashling Hotel, the beds shoved to one side, the coffee and biscuits wheeled in. I was

representing the APCC and I me it people from at least five other organizations – Principals and Vice-Principals from the whole variety of Secondary Schools in the country. I particularly remember the excitement when Mary McGlynn brought ESHA to the table. It was a whirlwind of meetings and greetings, by which a national organisation took shape and by which one voice could be presented to the Department, instead of myriad factions.

By 1998, the pieces were in place. In

September we were ready for Micheál Martin, then the Minister for Education, to launch the new entity at Collins Barracks. It was a tremendous occasion, the culmination of years of careful negotiation.

**“ I was bitten by the NAPD bug, so when I retired from the Executive and from my school, I took on the editing of publications and kept at that until 18 months ago. I had long cherished writing and the journalist’s trade ”**



Five years later I was President, meeting teacher unions, Department officials, the NCCA and main players in second-level education, along with some of the most distinguished school leaders, who formed part of our Executive. Again, there was meeting after meeting, culminating every month in a whole day in a windowless room in a Portlaoise hotel, as the Executive met.

It was hugely time-consuming – to be a member of that Executive was to rely heavily on those at home and at work – wives, husbands, partners, Vice-Principals, Principals, teachers – to keep the school and the family running smoothly, while we dealt with the matters of national importance. All very heady stuff.

An additional duty I assumed was the Chair of the Arts and Culture Committee, and, in particular, the Creative Engagement scheme, which offered schools the chance to collaborate with an artist on a project

with a group of students – be it poetry or art or sculpture or beautification of the campus. I am happy to say that it's still thriving under the leadership of Dermot Carney and Kay O'Brien.

The highlight of the NAPD year was the Conference, which involved lengthy planning and the President's speech. The 2004 Conference was held in Killarney and Mary Hanafin was the Minister. I spent a large portion of the summer before, preparing my speech. John Coolahan had some kind words to say about it, but in truth it was the longest President's speech ever, and it may have been a tad boring. The membership was too polite to admit this at the time and I received the usual standing ovation, if only because they had all been sitting for so long.

I was bitten by the NAPD bug, so when I retired from the Executive and from my school, I took on the editing of publications and kept at that until 18 months ago. I had long cherished writing and the journalist's trade. I

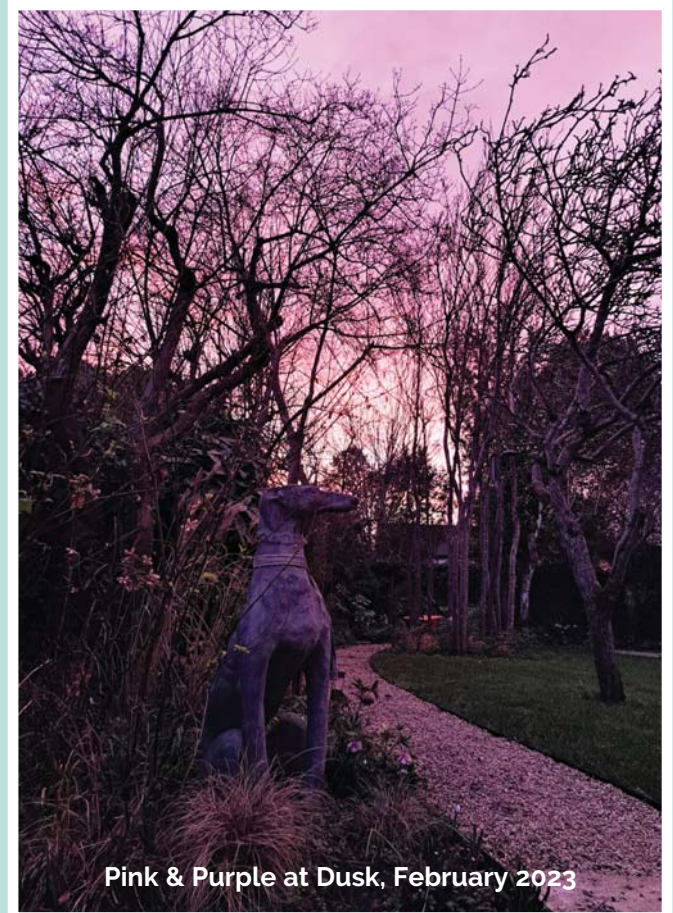
written Disk-Date with Derek while still a schoolboy. I had also penned articles for 'Irish Sport' and acted as a theatre critic for The Irish Times.

In 2006, I was ready for proofs and layout and corrections and all that, so that editing Executive Report and Leader and Conference Programmes and several books was a pleasurable task, which prolonged my active life among teachers, Principals and Deputies and Department officials et al, for quite some time to come.

**Derek** was Principal of Newpark Comprehensive School, Dublin . He retired in August 2006.



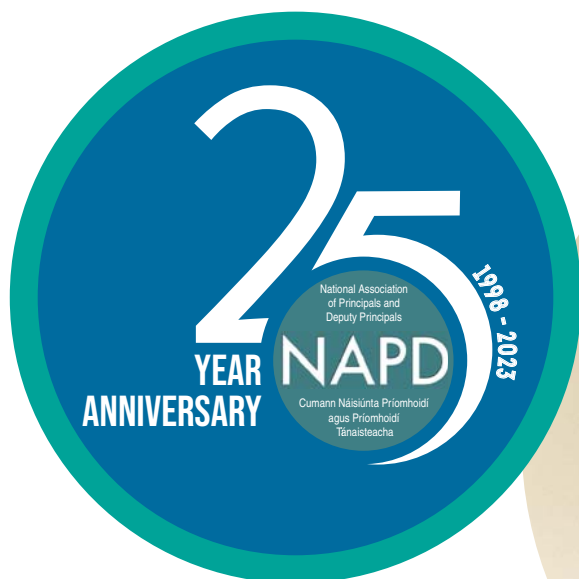
January 2023 Surfing, Bundoran.  
*Dermot Carney*



Pink & Purple at Dusk, February 2023

# ÁINE O'NEILL

President 2007-2008



My involvement in NAPD began in 1998 when I attended a meeting in response to an invitation every Vice-Principal in VEC & Community Colleges received from Rory O'Sullivan. NAPD was being formed to create a single voice for all Principals and Vice-Principals. But Vice-Principals in our sector were not members of any representative body, so we needed to establish one – and quickly! From this meeting the “Association of Vice-Principals in Vocational Schools and Community Colleges (ADPVSCC)” was born. One meeting later we were wound up as we joined NAPD.

I was honoured to be a member of the Executive for two lengthy periods before and after my election as President for 2008-2009 in Lyrath, Kilkenny. I met, and became friends with, many wonderful school leaders at home and abroad.

My year as President was very busy, as it was and still is, for every President. I remember especially the retirement of Mary McGlynn as Director and Clive Byrne taking up the post. The transition was seamless, even if they had very

different styles. Both were highly professional, organised people who were a great support to me and to all the Presidents. I wish them both long and healthy retirements.

My most vivid memories of that time are of the meetings with the Department and the various education bodies. They were always interesting and occasionally challenging. TUI, under Jim Dorney, and the IVEA (now ETBI) consistently found our existence 'puzzling', maintaining the needs of

“ The continuing focus on training and upskilling led to the development of the Centre for School Leadership, which provides, among other things, mentoring for newly appointed Principals at both Primary and Post Primary level ”

Principals and Deputies were met by them. Having made it clear that we were surplus to needs they would then settle down to constructive discussion. One of the areas frequently

discussed was the need for training and upskilling of Principals and Deputies, amply provided by NAPD at Annual Conference and Regional meetings. It is most rewarding to see how ETBI now provide training for Principals and Deputies in their sector. I wonder from where they got the idea?

The continuing focus on training and upskilling led to the development of the Centre for School Leadership, which provides, among other things, mentoring for newly appointed Principals at both Primary and Post Primary level. Ably led by former President Mary Nihill and supported by NAPD and IPPN, this is a very welcome

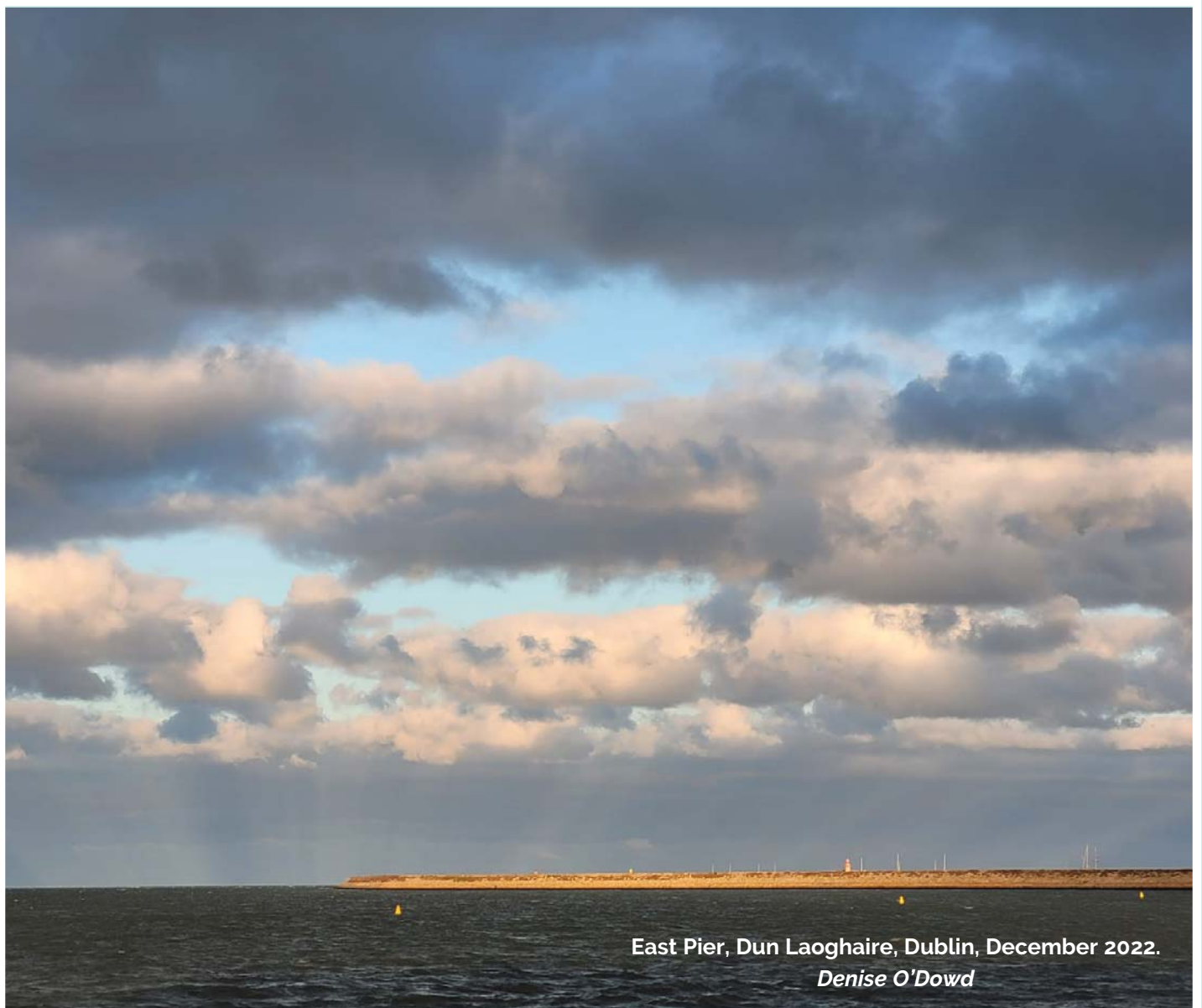
development in meeting the needs of school leaders.

2008 was also the year that saw the beginning of the cutbacks in education, due to the collapse in our economy, from which we are still recovering. We little thought that so much worse was ahead of us than a cut in the PTR, abolition of all grants except Emergency Works and increases in the cost of school transport and exam fees. I am glad that much has been restored and that some of the supports provided to schools during the Covid pandemic remain.

I am delighted that this outstanding

organisation has reached its twenty fifth anniversary and is stronger than ever. On my own behalf and that of all Deputies and Principals who benefit greatly from it, I would like to highlight one achievement in particular: Thank you NAPD for our Exam Aide.

**Áine** was Principal of St Fergal's College, Rathdowney, Co. Laois. She retired in August 2018.

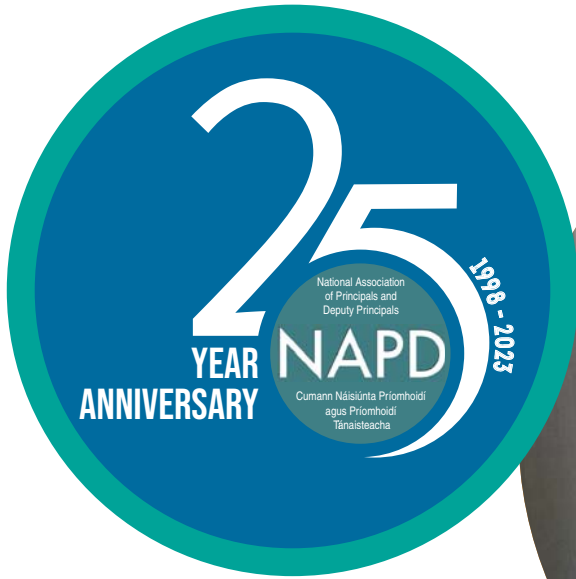


East Pier, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, December 2022.

*Denise O'Dowd*

# DÓNAL Ó BUACHALLA

President 2011-2012



Comhghairdeas le Cumann Náisiúnta Príomhoidí agus Príomhoidí Tánaisteacha ar cheiliúradh 25 bliain “faoi bhláth”. Is mór an ionchur i saol oideachasúil na tíre atá déanta le linn na tréimhse seo agus i mo shaol phearsanta oideachasúil. Mar eagraíocht táimid tar éis dul ó neart go neart lenár nguth le cloisint nuair a bhíonn aon díospóid reatha ar an oideachas. Sin ceann do na buanna is mó a bhaineann leis an eagraíocht seo .... go dtugtar cluas éisteachta dáiríre dúinn. Nuair atá ciall ceannaithe ag teastáil in aon chomhráití oideachasúla, tugann an NAPD é.

From a personal perspective I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the colleagues with whom I have interacted with over many years of involvement with NAPD. I count myself lucky that my former Príomhoide Pádraig Ó Cinsealach advised me to make sure to attend NAPD when I was appointed Deputy Principal in Coachford College in 2003. Elections on both regional committee and National Executive followed with the culmination of spending four (yes four!) years on the President's committee.

I remember the constitutional crisis created when I moved sectors in 2010. I was nominated for President by the ETB sector in 2010. However, I moved to Gaelcholáiste Mhuire A.G. sa Mhainistir Thuaidh that summer. Hence the crisis; I had to withdraw as Vice-President as I was no longer in the ETB sector. In stepped the voluntary secondary sector whom I am grateful for then nominating me for 2011. Crisis over!

These four years were some of the

busiest but also some of the most rewarding of my career; travelling to all parts of the country and further afield, meeting with colleagues passionate about Teaching and Learning; colleagues with the same daily strife but always looking to do their best for the students in their care and the schools that they are leading. The

“Another strength is the involvement of both Principal and Deputy Principal. This (to the best of my knowledge) was unique 25 years ago. Other organisations still have yet to follow”

sense of camaraderie within NAPD and the appreciation of the work of NAPD was evident wherever I attended an NAPD event - genuine appreciation of the work of the National Executive but most especially the efforts of Director, Clive Byrne.

NAPD has been very lucky to have had not one but two inspirational Directors since its foundation. Mary McGlynn laid the foundation blocks of what is now the present NAPD, bringing six different organisations together and leading the organisation through the initial choppy waters of merging organisations with different voices and perspectives into one unified voice. Clive Byrne then built on these solid foundations. Personally, I think that Clive will in time be seen to have been

a transformational leader in Irish Educational circles. Forthright and steadfast in his views but never one to shirk from telling it as it should. The strength of NAPD has been built on the leadership of these two passionate educationalists.

Another strength is the involvement of both Principal and Deputy Principal. This (to the best of my knowledge) was unique 25 years ago. Other organisations still have yet to follow. An effective school must have an effective senior management team. Strength is in unity. The involvement of the Deputy Principal in NAPD strengthens the role of the Deputy Principal in senior management teams in our schools. NAPD should be congratulated for this.

Is grúpa cairde proifisiúnta é an NAPD. Cairde atá sásta comhairle a thabhairt dá gcéile, ceiliúradh lena gcéile, tacú lena gcéile agus a bheith ann dá chéile tríd na dea agus droch laethanta.

Tá súil agam go leanfaidh an NAPD ag obair "Ar Aghaidh le chéile" don chéad 25 bliain eile.

**Dónal** is  
Principal of  
Gaelcholáiste  
Mhuire A.G.,  
An Mhainistir  
Thuaidh,  
Corcaigh.

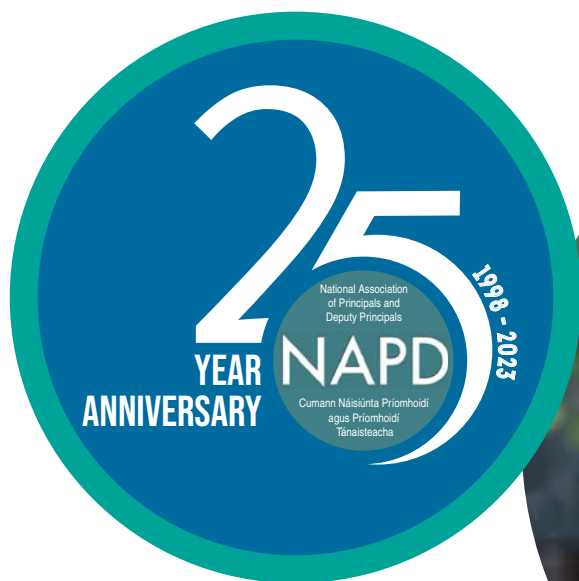


Mount Ngauruhoe, active volcano North Island New Zealand, February 2023.

*Mike Hughes*

# PAUL BYRNE

President 2015-2016



My first contact with NAPD was in September 2010 at a regional meeting in Donegal, where I learned that NAPD represented Principals and Deputy Principals and that it held a Conference each year. The following month, I attended my first Conference and was impressed at the warm welcome the “newbies” received, the interest shown by everyone I met and the willingness of people to share experiences and advice. It’s said that first impressions last – and NAPD made a great first impression.

A short number of years later, I was privileged, as President, to welcome many newly appointed Principals and Deputies to the Association.

People often ask about the benefit of being involved in NAPD - I can easily answer that. Less easy is the question of the benefit of being President. I always looked at the role of President as serving the members to the best of my ability. My motivation was to do my best to follow in the footsteps of the previous Presidents and maintain their high standards. I had taken over from

Mary Nihill, who had followed Pádraig Flanagan and Kay O’ Brien.

I was delighted that the National Executive and Director Clive Byrne had placed their faith in me. Mentoring is a large part of the work carried out by NAPD, in both formal and non-formal settings. Within the triumvirate of Presidents, this is very much the case. Each sitting President mentors the incoming President, while being in turn mentored by the outgoing President. In this way the experience gained by one President is passed on to the next

and, with the support of the Executive, the duties of the Presidential office are carried out in full co-operation between all three Presidents.

The work done on behalf of the members by the National Executive through the advocacy of the

“ So, what have I gained from my time as President of NAPD? The short answer is that I have had the pleasure to meet and befriend some of the most fantastic people involved in education in our time ”

Presidents and the Director has had a significant impact on the shaping of education policy and planning over the last 25 years. NAPD has worked closely with all the stakeholders and is represented on the governing boards in a wide-range of educational and welfare bodies, both government and non-government.

NAPD, in partnership with our sister association, the IPPN, and the DE were instrumental in the formation of the Centre for School Leadership and are actively involved in its governance. NAPD and IPPN work closely in collaboration on issues which affect both memberships.

At an international level, NAPD is a highly respected school leadership organisation, so much so that ESHA (European School Heads Organisation) elected Clive Byrne, as its President for four years. NAPD has contributed significantly to ESHA General Assembly projects such as ESLplus, Open Schools for Open Societies, SP@CE, inclusive education, school leadership coaching and mentoring. ESHA seeks to connect school leaders, researchers and policy makers with

the aim to learn from each other and improve education. Each NAPD member is a member of ESHA and is also a member of ICP (The International Confederation of Principals). I have the pleasure of representing NAPD on both the ESHA General Assembly and the ICP Council.

So, what did I gain from my time as President of NAPD? The short answer is that I have had the pleasure to meet and befriend some of the most fantastic people involved in education in our time. I have grown a huge network of educational colleagues both nationally and internationally. I was privileged to observe great educational practices both at home and abroad, which have had a positive influence on my leadership skills.

My time with NAPD, ESHA and ICP colleagues has given me a self-confidence which I did not possess before becoming involved with NAPD.


During my time as President, the Association grew both in numbers and influence. It expanded services to members and prepared strategically for the future. I enjoyed the challenge

of being part of a team responsible for setting up a national substitute teacher database resulting in *SubTeacher.ie*, the Confidential Support Service, the Regional Ambassadors and the legal indemnity insurance with ARAG – a game changer for members.

I am happy that, considering the unsettled industrial relations at the time, I handed over the Presidency to my successor in good shape.

At the young age of 25, NAPD is a mature, well-defined Association, with a clear vision. May it continue to prosper and thrive.

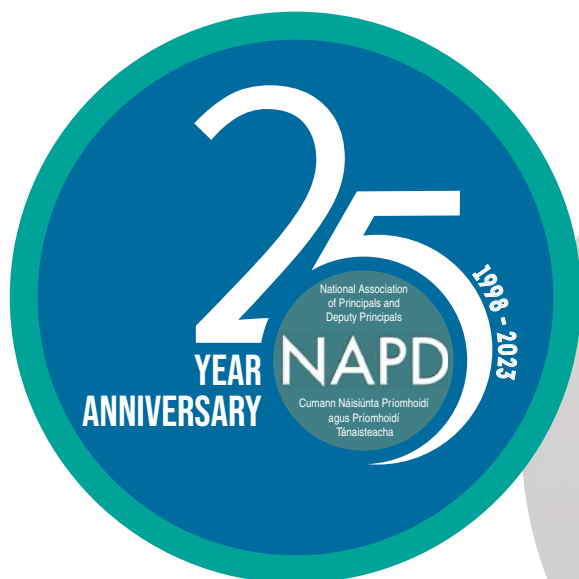
**Paul Byrne** is Deputy Director of NAPD. He was Deputy Principal of Carrick on Shannon Community School.



Early morning Mullingar train station, February 2023.  
*Dermot Carney*

# ALAN MONGEY

President 2019-2020



Encouraged by John Fahy of Holy Rosary College in Mountbellew, I attended my first NAPD meeting in 2013. I was appointed as Principal to Athenry Vocational School and at that time not many Galway VEC Principals attended the meetings. What also encouraged me, was that NAPD represented Principals and Deputies across all sectors. The collegiality and help shown by each person at meetings and regional annual conferences, not just on the topics of the day, but the late-night sing songs showed me this was a great Association to be part of.

I didn't think when appointed as a regional representative that I would land in the role of President so quickly (and what a year to take up the mantle – more later). I enjoyed my time on national Executive and in particular the chance to contribute to the many discussions on a whole host of issues that affected Principals, Deputies, students and schools at the time.

Again, I enjoyed the collegiality, expression of views, support and sharing of experiences. I learnt so

much from fellow Executive members, from Clive, Paul Byrne, Tim and Paul Crone in later years. I know that that experience has made me a better school leader.

Three months into the role of President COVID hit. I had just attended my first regional conference and returned to school with a view to settling into the role and preparing to visit other regions around the country. Instead, we moved to online meetings at Executive level, regional level and in

discussions with other bodies such as the Department of Education.

Life changed dramatically for everyone during that first year of COVID. I was, and continue to be, amazed at what we did as an education system during that time. The move to distance learning by all schools was simply amazing and I have no doubt that the development of collegiality and sharing of practice in NAPD over previous years helped significantly in this regard.

I watched as school leaders helped and supported each other, offered advice and freely gave of all the resources they had to help make the transition to distance learning easier. I have always believed in the potential of ICT to support and enhance learning, the opportunities it affords to enhance collaborative practice in school and to make our lives easier.



“ 2020 was I believe the most extraordinary year ever in the history of Irish Education and school leaders were the shining light in all of that. It is they that implemented new practices and led their school communities through this entire pandemic ”

So, for all of that was bad about COVID I think that it did accelerate our journey and more school leaders caught a glimpse of its potential.

For me, the development of an online meeting for regional chairs and

secretaries on a weekly basis during school closures, to hear the voice of members about the challenges, as well as keeping members informed around what was happening, really showed what NAPD was about.

2020 was I believe the most extraordinary year ever in the history of Irish Education and school leaders were the shining light in all of that. It is they that implemented new practices and led their school communities through this entire pandemic.

The changes were huge, from moving to distance learning overnight, implementing predicted and calculated grades to re-opening and then keeping open schools. No other profession I believe had to lead such monumental change and practice in such a short period of time. And for that I think we can all be extremely proud.

It was a great honour for me to serve as President of NAPD, to work with fantastic people on Executive and in

regions, to have had the opportunity to work with and learn from Clive, Tim and Paul in so many ways over the years. I enjoyed being chased by Derek for articles and for *The President's Thoughts*, which were written at the kitchen table. The way in which past and future Presidents work together allowed me to work with amazing people in Mary Keane, Kieran Golden, Michael Cregan and Rachel O'Connor.

Heading into the future, the Association is in great hands under the guidance of Director Paul Crone. Finally, I wish Paul Byrne all the best in his retirement as Deputy Director.

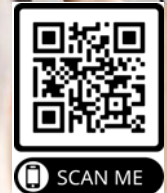
**Alan Mongey**

is Principal of Coláiste Bhaile Chláir, Claregalway, Galway.



## “Leading Quality Teaching and Learning in the FET College of the Future: The Role of the Principal and Deputy Principal”

**Tuesday 14 March, start 2pm  
& Wednesday 15 March, finish 1pm**  
Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise, Co. Laois



# Annual Conference 2023

Programme and Registration details on NAPD website.

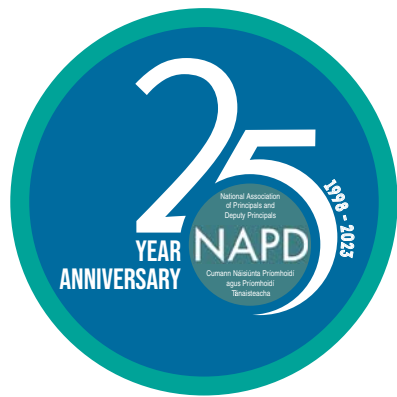


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# Flying Without Wings – 25 years of NAPD

Anne Looney

We have come a long way. That's what struck me in recent weeks after a round of interviewing for DCU Institute of Education Teacher Fellows. This scheme invites applications from teachers who are interested in spending two years with us in the DCU Institute of Education, supporting our student teachers, particularly on school placement, while also pursuing professional development and/or further studies of their own. It's a popular programme and shortlisting for interview was as challenging as ever. For me, those interviews served as a window on just how far we have come as school system in the 25 years since

NAPD first set out on its mission of re-defining the Principalship of a second level school – the *Príomh-Oide* – as complex leadership work. This vision of Principal as leader of an organisation, *in* a system, *for* those who learn and work within and with it, has been a driving force in moving post-primary education from where it was a quarter of a century ago.

Over the course of three days of Teacher Fellow interviews I met teachers who described collaborative practice in planning, teaching and evaluating – not as innovation, but as routine. I met teachers who shared insights they had gleaned from observing the lessons of colleagues; and others who presented the outcomes of innovations they had developed, implemented and evaluated in their subjects, with specific groups of learners, or across the whole school. Now, I am aware that this sample of the profession was shaped by an interest in the DCU teacher fellowships. But what struck me was the contrast to my own experience interviewing teachers for posts as education officers in the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment at the turn of the century.

These candidates were also innovators and collaborators, but their innovation and collaboration happened *outside* the classroom and usually, outside the school, through professional networks, subject associations or education centres. 25 years ago, Irish post-primary classrooms were largely closed settings, and professional practice in post-primary schools was characterised by solitariness and a shared wariness of observation by colleagues, by leadership and, most definitely, by inspectors.

The change has been incremental, and the path from isolated to collaborative practice has been neither straight nor direct. And I know that there remain schools where the private routines of 25 years ago remain. But as evidenced in the reports on School Self Evaluation, these are fewer and further between. The evolution of professional practice from private

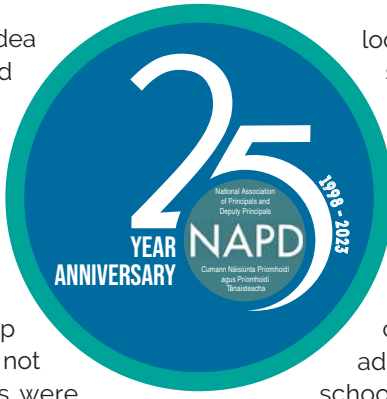
to collaborative is clear and the process continues to develop as more teachers engage in sophisticated forms of collaboration such as lesson study or the Junior Cycle SLAR meetings.

While there have been many other changes in second level education in the last quarter of a century, this shift in professional culture has been the most significant in my view. Many organisations have contributed to this change – the PDST and JCT working directly with teachers have obviously been key, as have (we like to think!) the Higher Education Institutions who provide post-graduate studies to increasing numbers of teachers across the system. But from my perspective, these changes in culture, practice and expectations are an achievement of leadership in the first instance. And it is not a coincidence that these shifts have taken place in post-primary schools as the NAPD has gone from strength to strength in supporting school leaders, advancing the cause of school leadership, contributing to system change and generating a new narrative of leadership in post-primary education.

That new narrative has not been unique to Ireland. 25 years ago, the world of education was excited by the growing body of research on 'school effectiveness'. Research in the UK by John McBeath, Pam Sammons, Peter Mortimore and others, supported by new methodological breakthroughs in educational research, began to generate lists of characteristics of schools where learners were more likely to succeed, irrespective of the socio-economic characteristics of the the students. And the quality of leadership was on every one of those lists. An intense spotlight began to shine on the school leadership role and the person of the school leader, powered by this new realisation about the critical impact of school leaders beyond the efficient administration of the organisation.

I joined the full-time staff of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in 1997, having worked there on a part-time basis since 1994. I became CEO of the new statutory agency in 2001. I was also undertaking doctoral studies at the then Institute of Education in London in that period, so I had a front row seat on the growth of school effectiveness studies (I was taught by both Pam Sammons and Peter Mortimore) and on the impact of that research on conceptualisations of school leadership in Ireland. In developing curriculum and assessment, NCCA routinely consulted with teachers about the substance of the change and with management bodies about any resourcing implications. The process and challenge of leading change in schools – now a critical factor in NCCA's deliberations –

was not a focus at that time. Indeed, as the idea of a National Association for Principals and Deputy Principals began to emerge, following on from the establishing of the Irish Primary Principals Network in 1994, there was some unease among the established 'partners'. As part of the process of establishing the NCCA on a statutory basis, the late Sean Cromien was tasked with reviewing the composition of the Council. The new school leadership organisations lobbied for inclusion, but were not successful; management bodies and unions were both confident that the interests of school leadership in developments in curriculum and assessment in schools could be addressed under their auspices.



The process of leading a change process in school was never discussed. Similarly, I recall conversations with Department officials who worked with NCCA in which the official welcome for the NAPD was tempered by a belief that the NAPD wouldn't last because a shared agreed platform would not be possible, and a concern that even a temporary existence could be destabilising for the system. And the last thing the 'system' needed at the start of the century, according to what are commonly known as 'informed sources' at the time, was a touch of instability. The boat needed no rocking - just as much plain sailing as possible.

We have indeed come a long way since then. Through its voices at regional and national level, thought-provoking publications and Symposia, the iconic national Conference each year and its international contribution with IPPN to the International Congress of Principals, the NAPD has done its fair share of 'rocking' as needed. And as demonstrated in particular during the pandemic, it has also done significant work in keeping the ship afloat. What was a new voice 25 years ago is now established, expected and influential.

That new voice has invited other voices in turn. NAPD has played an important role in encouraging and supporting the voice of students in schools and in the wider system. This support for including the perspectives of students has been key to enabling student representatives to secure their place in deliberative processes, and in encouraging schools to engage with their students as a matter of routine. We take this for granted now in Ireland; but 25 years ago, the concept of student voice was underdeveloped and as a result, students were largely unheard of in school or system issues.

Nowadays, Ireland is seen as a global leader in the inclusion of student voice; this is one of several issues on the agenda of the many visiting delegations that make Ireland their destination of choice for a study visit on 'successful school systems'. We are not complacent; we may well have come a long way, but the journey is not over and the development of the system continues as challenges remain. But on the occasion of its silver jubilee, it is important to acknowledge and celebrate the role of NAPD in contributing to the reputation of Ireland's school system as one of the most highly regarded in the world.

In the second part of this reflection, I want to move beyond the work of NAPD in leading system and school change and

look beyond schools to the relationship between schools and society and the implications for leadership. This school-society relationship has developed in some interesting ways over the last 25 years. It is always a complex and dynamic connection, shaped by history, culture, domestic and social expectations, national and international economic forces, psychological and sociological research and conceptualisations of childhood and adolescence. Further, the status of teachers, school leaders, and the teaching profession are inextricably linked to this school-society relationship.

The changes in Irish society in the last quarter of a century have been reflected in our schools; but they have also been reflected in that school-society relationship in a number of ways. I want to focus on one in particular. I like to call it the *Joe Duffy Phenomenon* (JDP). 25 years ago, this was a relatively straightforward process. An issue was discussed on Joe Duffy (or any other radio or TV programme, but JDP applies in all cases!) raised in the Dáil by the end of the week and a campaign to get schools to 'address' it would build ahead of steam over the weekend. Litter. Drugs. Breastfeeding. Joyriding. Unplanned pregnancy. Obesity. Take your pick, but whatever the problem was, schools were the solution.

And if the issue was getting worse, schools *were* the problem. At several NAPD events earlier this century, I cited Larry Cuban, the great American educationalist who noted that when society had an itch, schools got scratched. The US version of the JDP, perhaps? This phenomenon was not unique to Ireland and the US; in most developed education systems, the idea that schools (and teachers, and school leaders) could save or fix society was hard-wired into school-society relationships. For those who led schools, the increasing list of expectations generated its own pressures and inevitable push-back ranging from relatively mild irritation - 'schools can't do what parents won't - to ideological objections - 'the curriculum is full'. But as we moved into the second decade of this century, a subtle shift occurred. School leaders found themselves acting less as gatekeepers protecting their colleagues and students from the deluge of packs, programmes and initiatives and more as civic leaders.

Schools began to be seen as spaces where students did not just *learn* about democracy and communities, but got to practice how to be a community and how to engage in

“ **The idea of the school as a civic space where students can practice democracy and community is relatively unproblematic in a society characterized by high levels of social cohesion** ”

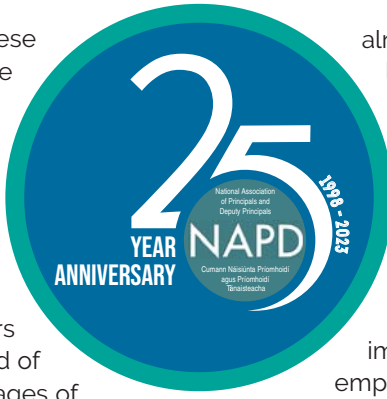
democratic dialogue, as opportunities for these kinds of engagement became increasingly rare outside schools. School leaders found themselves (and still find themselves) patrolling the often contested borders between the civic life of the school community and the sometimes chaotic life of communities – real and virtual – beyond the school. The most obvious manifestation of this is the significant role that school leaders play when a community experiences any kind of trauma. We have become used to seeing images of Principals outside their schools, addressing the media, reassuring families that care and support is being provided as needed within the walls of the school.

But now, we have moved into new and, as yet, uncharted territory. Ireland's most iconic educational image of 2023 so far is of a solitary young man, standing outside a school gate, with a shoulder bag slung across his coat. This image has travelled across the world, a true meme, digitally repositioned across a range of settings already on tee-shirts and mugs. Not in the photograph, but in all our minds, is the school leader on the other side of that gate. Gatekeeping. The metaphor becomes the action. The events that gave rise to that photograph are complex; but the rise of populism, in all its forms, outside and inside our schools is, in my mind, the single biggest challenge for school leaders. Plain sailing is no longer an option in the stormy seas of populism, whether from the right, or from the left, or from directions we find hard to identify.

There are multiple definitions of populism<sup>1</sup> but they almost all associate it with a set of phenomena we can readily recognize now in Irish society; rapid social change; the inability of elected local or national governments to respond to complex problems (such as climate change) or deliver services at scale (such as health or housing); economic inequality; migration; and the emergence of symbolic frontiers between 'us' and 'them'.

The aggregation of individual or group unfulfilled demands into collective anger manifests itself in a range of actions now seen across the developed world; from groups in street protests, to silent individual protests outside schools; from the 'cancelling' of a range of school text-books, to state-level scrutiny of university courses; from unbridled hostility on social media, to physical assaults; and from the election of leaders on the extreme right, to the election of leaders on the extreme left.

The idea of the school as a civic space where students can practice democracy and community is relatively unproblematic in a society characterized by high levels of social cohesion. But what happens when the communities outside school move beyond contestation; when social cohesion begins to fray around the edges? School leaders find that their 'patrolling' is no longer confined to the border between the civic space of the school and chaotic communities outside, but may be increasingly focused within the school as the polarization happening outside school becomes reflected in the classrooms and corridors. And in the staffroom. The emergence of populism in Ireland has



already shaken the JDP. And I would suggest, at least a few more classrooms and schools beyond the school that finds itself the focus of current media attention at the time of writing.

Looking At Our Schools (2022) is an inherently optimistic document. It reflects how far we have come as a school system, foregrounding the agency of learners, the importance of well-being, collaborative practice, empowering leadership and the development of leadership capacity. LAOS is much-admired by those aforementioned visiting delegations, particularly those from systems that feature a less supportive approach to school inspection and evaluation. However, for our contemporary school system, and for contemporary school leaders, looking at our schools now makes little sense without looking beyond them.

LAOS is silent on what effective leadership practice looks like in these new populist contexts. Perhaps we need a further edition. LBOS – Looking Beyond Our Schools, to guide school leaders in these new uncharted waters. A challenge for NAPD perhaps? A theme for a future Symposium? Timely for an organization founded in 1998 under suspicion that it might rock the boat.

The other group founded in 1998, also under suspicion, although for more aesthetic reasons, was Westlife. For the next phase of its development, perhaps NAPD might consider adopting one of their songs as an anthem for school leaders everywhere. Flying. Without. Wings.

We have come a long way as a system. We can track these developments and changes and map our journey. But in the last five years we find ourselves in uncharted territories. We have moved beyond our own educational maps.

<sup>1</sup> Rovira Kaltwasser, C., Taggart, P., Espejo Ochoa, P. & Ostiguy, P. (2017) Populism: An overview of the concept and the state of the art, in: C. Rovira Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, P. Ochoa Espejo & P. Ostiguy (Eds) *The Oxford handbook of populism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

**Anne Looney** is the Executive Dean of Dublin City University's Institute of Education. From 2001 until 2016 she was the CEO of Ireland's National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, responsible for curriculum and assessment for early years,



primary and post-primary education in Ireland. She was Interim CEO at the Higher Education Authority until March 2017. She is the current president of the International Professional Development Association. In 2021 she became the first woman to be appointed to the management committee of the GAA.

# LEADING FOR CREATIVITY: Nurturing creative pedagogy and practices in our schools

Dr Deirdre McGillicuddy  
UCD School of Education



**“Creativity is an expression of the self ... I can’t imagine childhood without creativity and imagination ... it’s how children express themselves”**  
(Female teacher, primary school, CreatEd study).

Albert Einstein once said “it is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge”. Education plays a vital role in nurturing creativity, self-expression, critical thinking and innovation in our children and young people. Indeed, we witnessed the importance of creativity in overcoming some the challenges and barriers to support the pivot of schooling from face-to-face to at-distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

Creativity has been defined as the ability to produce new ideas and work through a sequence of thoughts and actions that result in novel approaches and production. E. Paul Torrance, often referred to as the father of creativity, identifies four components of creativity:

- Fluency – having many relevant ideas
- Flexibility – having different types of ideas
- Originality – having novel ideas
- Elaboration – ability to elaborate on an idea

More recently Sir Ken Robinson defined creativity as “the

process of having original ideas that have value”. He argues that while imagination is the root of creativity, creativity is the putting to work of imagination.

## WHY CREATIVITY AND EDUCATION?

Creativity is increasingly playing a critical role in our economic, personal and civic lives. While innovation is integral to how we live our lives, creativity contributes positively to our wellbeing and to the good-functioning of democratic societies. Education role-models and embeds creativity in our schools through pedagogies and practices to develop the skills and competencies required for our children and young people to be creative and innovative citizens, contributing to continuous re/shaping of our society.

Such skills will be critical to “fostering innovation” (Goal 9, SDGs) in our increasingly complex and interdependent globalized societies. Prof Andy Hargreaves, advocate for educational change worldwide, argues that “high performing organisations have cultures of creativity and risk. They encourage workers to innovate and play”. Indeed, playfulness is the ultimate expression of creativity.

## CREATIVITY IN IRISH SCHOOLS

The CreatEd study explored the role of creativity in education in the Irish context. In-depth, qualitative, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 11 participants working across primary and post-primary schools to identify their definitions, experiences and perceptions of creativity within their own practices and within their schools. A key objective of this research was to identify the challenges and opportunities for nurturing creativity in our education system.

For the purpose of this article the role of creativity for educational transformation will be discussed. Evident from the findings was the critical role school culture and leadership plays in supporting and nurturing creativity for educational transformation both in our schools and across the education.

## CREATIVITY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

All participants believed that creativity can contribute positively to school improvement. Creativity facilitates the pushing of boundaries, to “do the stuff nobody else is doing”, to take risks and employ new approaches and practices to enhance teaching and learning in school.

Participants emphasized the importance of trust, agency and empowerment in supporting creative practices in schools. Confident and secure leadership was identified as playing an integral role in nurturing the optimal conditions where creativity could flourish and thrive. However, there was a tension between pushing boundaries and “not going too wild.” The absence of guidelines on creative practices and approaches in schools resulted in a fear of getting it wrong, which was especially pertinent when “keeping the inspector happy”.

## SCHOOL CULTURE & LEADING FOR CREATIVITY

School culture and leadership was identified as critical to nurturing creativity and facilitating transformational possibilities in our schools. The approach taken by school leaders was especially important with more controlling cultures identified as more limiting for creative practices and approaches.

In contrast, comfort and safety were identified as especially important to creating dynamic spaces promoting collaboration and contributing to more creative learning environments. Participants also emphasised the important role of professional learning communities as sites for sharing creative practices and approaches. Evident from this research was the broad ranging definitions of what creativity looks like in schools, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of valuing teacher individuality to expressing and approaching creative practices in teaching and learning. Of particular note was the identification of the tension for school leaders in ensuring that school is “running smoothly” and not “going on fire”.

For participants, creativity was potentially perceived as a threat to ensuring schools run smoothly, requiring of leaders to be courageous in promoting risk taking, encouraging vulnerability, and in supporting failure as teachers engage in and through creative approaches.



**I suppose schools have to be creative ... because again if you come into a school with a vacuum of creativity, you can feel it and you can see it, and you can see that that that kind of creativity is being sapped out of teachers, for whatever reason, and there's loads of reasons why that can happen.**

*Male teacher,  
post-primary school, CreatEd study*

## VALUING CREATIVITY AS EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

Findings from the CreatEd study highlight the important role of leadership in nurturing creativity in our schools. However, this cannot be undertaken within a vacuum of shared understanding and definition of creativity as educational



purpose and practice. Creativity proffers possibilities to address the complex challenges of our education system including responding to societal challenges (such as migration and climate change), promoting inclusive learning environments (including meeting Additional Learning Needs and providing space for pupil/student voice) and enhancing teaching and learning experiences through critical and creative pedagogies which nurture wellbeing and enhance engagement in school.

## TEACHING AS CREATIVE ENDEAVOUR

Teaching is a dynamic undertaking in creativity and innovation, embedded within the complex reality of the relational and realised through safe spaces, where risk-taking, vulnerability and wellbeing are nurtured in a supportive and meaningful way.

The power of teaching as creative endeavour lies in the transformative possibilities for children, students, educators/teachers, schools/institutions, communities and our broader society.

A female primary school Principal in the CreatEd study stated:

**Creativity is a form of higher order thinking – it's stepping outside the norm; it's coming up with innovative ideas that may be a process of positive change for school.**

## FACILITATING CREATIVITY IN SCHOOLS AND ACROSS THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Several recommendations were identified from the CreatEd study to facilitate and support creativity in schools and across the education system.

### FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

1. Leading professional conversations – Provide space and time to open up professional conversations and explore possibilities for encouraging creative practices in your school.
2. Nurture and grow a Community of Practice – Establish a Community of Practice to encourage staff to share their approaches to, and experiences of, creative practices in their teaching.
3. Identify possibilities for cross-pollination – Identify opportunities and encourage staff to come together, to collaborate and cross-pollinate creative approaches

across subject areas adopting a cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning in school.

4. Cultivating creative cultures – Identify and support the specific contextual needs for your school to nurture a supportive culture to facilitate creative practices and approaches.
5. Co-create with children and young people – provide a space for children/young people to contribute to informing your approach to nurturing creative practices in your school.

### FOR POLICY MAKERS

1. Framework for creativity in education – provide a framework to guide schools on best practice to creative pedagogical approaches in our schools and across the continuum of education.
2. A lexicon for creativity – provide educators and leaders with a lexicon for creativity to guide and frame a universal definition and language in facilitating professional conversations across our education system, including Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development
3. Recognise and acknowledge creative practices – identify opportunities for schools and educators to share and be acknowledged for their creative practices within the education system
4. Encourage teacher/educator agency – at the heart of creativity is teacher/educator agency and, as such, it is vital to ensure it is facilitated and supported through progressive, adaptive and pragmatic policies which directly impact school practices and cultures.
5. Embed creativity across curricular reform – identify possibilities and opportunities to embed creativity through curricular reform across the continuum of education, particularly at Senior Cycle, where creativity is especially crucial for preparing young people to respond to challenges in our increasing complex world.

**Dr Deirdre McGillicuddy** is Assistant Professor in UCD School of Education and is a Froebelian educator with over 20 years' experience working across the Irish education system. Deirdre is passionate about the emancipatory power of education for those most marginalised within our society and education system. She has particular interest in children's voice/rights in education stemming from her time working in a DEIS primary school and is especially interested in creative pedagogies as a rights-based approach to education.



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# THE LEADER PROFILE

## Professor Emer Smyth

by John Walshe



Schools, teachers and students benefit enormously from research. But there are few Irish academics who have made such a valuable contribution to educational research as Dubliner Emer Smyth.

She has played a key role in multiple projects over the years that have given us deeper insights into what makes schools tick. Studies such as *Do Schools Differ?* have strengthened our understanding of how schooling contexts and teacher-student relationships impact student outcomes.

She led the *Post-Primary Longitudinal Study (PPLS)*, which followed a cohort of young people from starting in second-level education onwards. It was the first of its kind in Ireland and yielded insights into important processes such as the transition to second-level education; the factors influencing examination performance; the impact of ability grouping; gender and social differentiation in educational outcomes.

In this author's view, University Departments of Education have not been research-active enough to help guide policy development in Ireland until recently, although they are improving. The heavy lifting was done mostly by the ESRI,

the Education Research Centre in Drumcondra and a handful of other organisations.

In her extensive work Prof Smyth has increasingly adopted a broader view of education, looking at the way in which out-of-school activities influence within-school learning and the impact of school processes on broader wellbeing, including socioemotional difficulties, anti-social behaviour and health behaviour.

She has used data from the landmark *Growing up in Ireland (GUI)* ongoing research to write reports and journal articles on youth mental health in the wake of the pandemic, the transition into primary school, arts and cultural participation among children and young people, among other topics.

For example, she told the joint Oireachtas Committee on Education last year that data from the same research revealed a very significant increase in the proportion of young men and women suffering from depression. The Covid disruption to Higher Education played a part in this, with over half of students finding it hard to study during the pandemic. Mental health difficulties were reduced where



**“She is convinced, however, that reforms have to be made at Leaving Certificate level: “Fundamentally we need to bite the bullet and move away from a largely exam focused system ... ”**

students had regular contact with, and support from, their institutions. These results highlight the importance of accelerated rollout of high-quality broadband, and support for Higher Education Institutions incorporating remote learning, feedback and assessment into existing courses, she said.

The earlier *Post Primary Longitudinal Study*, which she had led, added impetus to the calls for changes to the Junior Cycle just over a decade ago. As she remarked “we always knew that the transition to second level schooling was one of turbulence but that was muddying the waters a bit. It was second year that was most crucial. We started to see some groups that were gearing up and becoming more involved in school and expecting to do more, while others were disengaging. That second year was important as a predictor of later outcomes. We saw the kind of dynamic emerging with some groups, particularly disadvantaged young boys, ‘acting out’ and then been ‘given out to’ and that was leading to disengagement and in some cases early leaving from school”.

Reforms were eventually agreed which were much less radical than those initially proposed by Minister Ruairi Quinn, but have they dealt with the issues raised in the ESRI report such as disengagement of boys? “The jury is still out” says Professor Smyth, who points out that the intervention of Covid makes the current evaluation of the reforms more difficult.

Although the introduction of short courses was seen as one of the most innovative aspects of the reforms, she has some concerns about unintended consequences. Research, especially from Scotland, shows that some groups of students are taking less-demanding courses than students in more middle-class schools, where they tend to be more instrumental. These lesser demanding courses do not give the same level of preparation for subsequent study.

She is convinced, however, that reforms have to be made at Leaving Certificate level: “Fundamentally we need to bite the bullet and move away from a largely exam focused system. This is not without its challenges, but there is a role for teacher assessment. If we are worried about bias then ‘moderation’ could be utilised for teacher feedback and assessment. Higher Education uses teacher assessment all the time as we don’t have national standardised exams at that level”.

“The current mode of largely written assessment is driving

teaching and learning in a narrow way. It is rewarding a particular set of skills to the point where we see students cutting back on things like sports, physical education, cultural activities, and volunteering. This is not the kind of balance we would want”.

Like many others, she was surprised by some of the comments made by OECD expert Andreas Schleicher in the last issue of *Leader* where he suggested that teacher student relationships were much better in Asia and that there was far less exam stress than in Ireland. “I looked up the OECD data. Korea has higher levels of exam related stress than the OECD average” she responds.

A lot of the stress associated with the Leaving Certificate is generated by the students themselves which, she says, is understandable given the narrow focus of the largely written examination system.

“The pressure is greatest when you have a particular type of middle-class students. They have become more instrumental around exam preparation and the take-up of grinds. They become more intolerant in Senior Cycle than their parents. It’s difficult to say ‘don’t fret’ as it is a high -stakes exam and they know it. Reform is the key”.

**Prof. Emer Smyth** is from Dublin and studied Sociology in University College Dublin. She became involved in educational research under the mentorship of the late Damian Hannan and has been working in the ESRI for 29 years. She is also an adjunct professor at Trinity College Dublin.



An award-winning journalist, **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 NUI Galway and UCC, John was born in Galway city. He is currently a consultant and commentator on educational issues.

Response to the “*Leader Profile*” interview  
by John Walshe with Andreas Schleicher  
in *Leader Quarterly*, Winter 2022

by Áine Hyland



*“The Irish school system has helped most people to succeed and has created a high level of equity with very strong outcomes”.* These are the words of Andreas Schleicher in his interview with John Walshe in the Winter 2022 edition of *Leader Quarterly*.

Andreas Schleicher is probably one of the most influential educators in the world. Whether one agrees or disagrees with him, one must recognize that his influence with policy makers throughout the OECD is unrivalled. A German born mathematician and statistician, he is an expert on global education systems and is head of the OECD’s Directorate of Education and Skills. He was the mastermind behind Pisa and other assessment tools for comparing education systems across the world.

He is the author of a number of books and reports on education, most notably *World Class: How to Build a 21st Century School System* (2018) – a book which has been praised by educationists and economists as diverse as Howard Gardner (of *Multiple Intelligences* fame), Michael Fullan (guru of *Educational Change*), Klaus Schwab (founder of the World Economic Forum) and Ulli-Pekka Heinonen (former Minister for Education in Finland).

Schleicher’s interview in *Leader* is particularly relevant at the current time when Senior Cycle reform is one of the top items on Minister Foley’s agenda – a reform agenda about which students and teachers have expressed serious misgivings. Schleicher provides a strong endorsement of the Irish school system and its curriculum. He praises the current Leaving Certificate and urges caution when it comes to reforming it.

Recognising that the Leaving Certificate is a high stakes exam he states *“that it (i.e. the Leaving Cert) is part of the secret of the success of Ireland. By setting a very high bar you get people to think that hard work is valued in education”.* He is cautious about complementing the current examination by some element of teacher judgement, reminding the reader of what happened during the pandemic with grade inflation. He states that *“the more judgment you bring in to this the more you will end up with social regression”.* And he concludes that *“the strongest performing and most equitable education systems do have something like Ireland which has a clear set-up and goal posts”.*

Schleicher favours an externally assessed Leaving Cert, stating that

*“having something from outside the system that is accepted by society is really important”, adding: “We see this across the world ... If you do not have a trustworthy currency your education system will unravel very quickly. Look to the places like the US where employers don’t give a damn about what High School certificate you have and where universities set their own entrance tests”.*

He supports the current Points System for selection for Higher Education. In this regard, he states that *“meritocracy and fairness are really important”, adding: “as long as there is a need for selection the points system is probably the most meritocratic way of making sure the best places go to the most talented people, not to the wealthiest, which is often the case in other countries”.*

Even Irish commentators such as Tom Collins who believes that the points race is *“far from being a level playing field”* (Irish Times 31/01/2023) have not suggested that the points system be abolished. Collins has called for *“a ring-fencing of places for underrepresented groups in high-points disciplines”* – a recommendations which was made as far back as 1999 in the *Report of the Commission on the Points System*.

There is however, a jarring note in Schleicher’s *Leader* interview. Those of us who are familiar with Irish schools will baulk at his suggestion that Irish teachers are less supportive of their students than teachers in some Asian countries. In response to the claims that the Leaving Cert in Ireland causes too much stress for students, Schleicher replied: *“If you get rid of the test you won’t necessarily see lower anxiety. If you want to lower anxiety you need to strengthen the student teacher relationship”.*

He refers to countries *“where life is tough and school is tough”* but where there is strong resilience among students because of strong relationships with teachers. He suggests that relationships between teachers and students in countries such as China or Japan or Korea are better than those in Ireland because *“teachers (in those countries) spend a lot more time with students outside the classroom”.*

I am astounded by this assertion. From my knowledge of education in China, I am bewildered as to how Schleicher comes to this conclusion. Of course it is well known that those who can afford to pay for extra tuition in China after school (and significant numbers of them do) spend more time studying (often with their own classroom teachers) than students in Western countries.

But where is his evidence that this leads to “better relationships” between students and teachers? And what about those students whose families can’t afford to pay for extra tuition? And what does Schleicher know about the relationship between Irish students and their teachers? Available evidence indicates that relationships that exist between teachers and their students in Ireland are generally positive. In his recently published report the Chief Inspector states that *“Good or very good levels of students enjoyment and motivation were evident to inspectors in 80% of the lessons observed during announced inspections in post-primary schools”* (Chief Inspector’s report 2016-2020, 2022, p. 139).

And evidence from the ESRI’s *Growing up in Ireland* research confirms the good relationships that generally exist between students and their teachers, especially in schools in less advantaged areas (Emer Smyth, *Growing up in Ireland, Report 5, 2017*).

Schleicher argues strongly for better integration between the world of work and higher education, stating that *“in the future, great places of work are going to be great places of learning, and great places at anticipating changing labour demands”.* He *“notes a lack of willingness by Irish universities to engage with the future of work”.* While this may have been true in the past, there is considerable evidence nowadays of closer co-operation between Higher Education and the world of work.

For example, under Pillar 3 of the HEA’s Human Capital Initiative which specifically targets future skills needs, programmes are jointly provided by Higher Education providers and employers. As well as providing state-of-the-art courses for the workforce of the future, they provide upskilling for existing workers. Many of these courses are flexibly delivered, so that learners can continue in employment while adding to their skills and qualifications.

Having said that, Schleicher’s interview in *Leader* and his many publications and podcasts, are a wake-up call for educationists at this significant juncture in the world of teaching, learning and assessment. Easy access to information and data via the internet has been with us for some time and has created a challenge to teachers and students alike.

The more recent development and availability of AI-led programmes such as ChatGPT (November 2022) are more dramatic, disruptive and challenging, and require us to re-think what and how we teach, and how we assess our students’ learning, especially in Senior Cycle and in Further and Higher Education. ChatGPT can write an essay that is almost impossible to distinguish from an essay written by a human, on almost any topic, in a matter of minutes.

As Schleicher wrote more than a decade ago: *“The dilemma for educators is that routine cognitive skills, the skills that are easiest to teach and easiest to test, are also the skills that are easiest to digitize, automate or outsource. There is no question that state-of-the-art skills in particular disciplines will always remain important. However, educational success is no longer about reproducing content knowledge, but about extrapolating from what we know and applying that knowledge to novel situations.* (Schleicher, *The Case for 21st Century Learning, 2011*).

That is the challenge that those charged with advising and deciding on curriculum and assessment at all levels of the education system need to address. The future is now – let’s embrace it with determination and confidence.

**Áine Hyland is Emeritus Professor of Education and former Vice-President of University College Cork.**



# Students on 420 points are locked out of veterinary, teaching and nursing. How is that fair?

**Surely it is time to ringfence places for under-represented groups in high-point disciplines in a way that reflects their representation in wider society.**

**TOM COLLINS**

Notwithstanding our achievements in increasing higher education participation, there is a stubborn persistence of intergenerational socioeconomic immobility in Ireland.

When the Higher Education Authority (HEA) was established 50 years ago it was, inter alia, accorded the following functions: furthering the development of higher education; promoting an appreciation of the value of higher education and research; democratisation of the structures of higher education; promoting equality of opportunity in access to higher education; and co-ordinating State investment in higher education.

One cannot but be impressed by the high-mindedness of these aspirations. It is evident that in the darkest periods of the Ireland of the early 1970s, policymakers believed in the intrinsic merits of higher education as inherently enriching of culture and society.

As things turned out, Ireland would have a very successful engagement with higher education in the decades following from the 1970s to the present. Most notable has been the growth in participation. From just above 20,000 students in 1974-1975, the numbers have grown to more than 200,000 – of which about 169,000 are undergraduates and 31,000 are postgraduate. Furthermore, 60 per cent of women and about 53 per cent of men aged 25-34 hold

third-level qualifications, while women account for about 55 per cent of new entrants to higher education, having accounted for just 45 per cent in the early 1980s.

There is, therefore, much that Ireland can be proud of in terms of its achievements in higher education over the past five decades. Participation has increased massively; Ireland has now one of the highest education attainment rates in the OECD. The universities are key players in the Irish research, development and innovation agenda and in the attractiveness of Ireland for FDI.

Notwithstanding the country's achievements in widening and increasing higher education participation, there is a stubborn persistence of intergenerational socioeconomic immobility in Ireland. Those born in the higher socioeconomic groups in the country tend, mainly through their attainment in education, to retain and consolidate their birth positions; those born into lower socioeconomic groups tend, also by virtue of their educational attainment, to remain in their birth positions. While the rising tide may lift all boats, it doesn't change the relative size of the boats.

To the extent that inherited status becomes redefined as achieved status – be it high or low – educational attainment

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**A lottery would be the fairest way of allocating places in higher education, in that prior education attainment could be ignored in such a process.**

becomes the legitimating mechanism both for the haves and the have nots – those who win believe they have done so on their own merit and those who don't, believe they have received their just deserts.

This is what the philosopher Michael Sandel refers to as the "tyranny of the meritocracy". This is the political doctrine that everyone is given the opportunity to be the best they can be – and having been given that opportunity, they must accept the validity and fairness of the outcome.

This is the core subtext of the proposition that the points race is a level playing field.

To the extent that the points system fails to adjust for starting out advantages and disadvantages in the life chances of children, the proposition is not only inaccurate but is also insidious.

Recently, Leaving Cert parents were addressing the next great national ritual: the CAO application deadline of January 31st.

In doing so, they might have reflected on how, in pre-CAO days, the Irish merchant classes transformed themselves into the Irish professional classes through sending their children to university. Since the early 1970s with the introduction of the apparently meritocratic, level playing field of points, these same professional classes have largely maintained their grip on the higher level courses – medicine and law in particular, while ostensibly such programmes are equally accessible to all.

A lottery would be the fairest way of allocating places in higher education, in that prior education attainment could be ignored in such a process.

It is now apparent that a higher education entry system predicated on early life educational attainment will always disadvantage those who are most deprived in society. These encounter the greatest obstacles to success in early life education. And while the access rates of the most deprived into higher education have significantly improved, they still face significant barriers in accessing high-point courses and disciplines.

The median point score in 2021 was 420. These students beneath the median score are ineligible for a wide range of courses including medicine, veterinary, pharmacy, primary



teaching and possibly general nursing, among others. Those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and ethnic minorities – travellers in particular – find it next to impossible to meet these entry requirements. If university education is the gateway to professional membership, then the democratisation of these professions requires the democratisation of entry to those key programmes.

Ultimately the surest way of doing that is to replace the reliance on early life educational attainment as the core fundamental of allocating higher education places with an alternative mechanism. Certainly, a lottery would be the fairest way of allocating places in higher education in that prior education attainment could be ignored in such a process.

On the assumption that there would be little public appetite for such an approach, we need to find other ways of ensuring that those essentially locked out of high-point courses by virtue of socioeconomic or ethnic background gain entry to such courses. Surely it is time to ringfence places for underrepresented groups in these high-point disciplines – for example, in all courses above the median point level – such that these groups are represented in such disciplines at a level which reflects their representation in the wider society.

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**Prof. Tom Collins** is President Emeritus and former Professor of Education at Maynooth University. He was Chair of the NCCA between 2006 and 2012. In 2016 he led the development on a national framework of student engagement in Irish Higher Education Institutions on behalf of the Higher Education Authority. In 2019 he was the founding chair of TU Dublin, Ireland's first Technological University.



# THE CARNEY ANGLE



# The Artificial Intelligence tsunami has begun to hit education

**Dermot Carney**

New computers, millions of times faster than present day supercomputers, are coming at you. They are Quantum Computers. Apple, Google, Microsoft have been left in the wake of this revolution so far and are racing to catch up. IBM is the now the world leader. Artificial Intelligence is developing fast in, and from, these machines. They use *Qubits*, sub atomic particles, which can perform multiple operations simultaneously, unlike the single unit *bits* of current classical computers.

It has been described as the next industrial revolution.

One small but significant manifestation of this for education was the launch in California of ChatGPT, the Artificial Intelligent bot, a few months ago. At the click of a mouse, it can instantly produce a piece of work on any topic with references included. It does all the complex research in a fraction of a second.

Some Stanford University students reportedly used it on their autumn 2022 final exams a few weeks after its release.

ChatGPT can already beat Turnitin, the anti-plagiarism programme, giving education institutions a worrying problem when examining work produced by students. The problem is that ChatGPT produces original work.

Turnitin are now trying to produce Chat detecting programmes. Chat however has the ability to replicate itself in new

variants as Turnitin and other current anti-cheat programmes try to catch up.

So, what do we do? Some initial thoughts:

- ChatGPT and AI needs robust regulation.
- The Government and specifically the Department of Education must designate an AI task force immediately to address the AI tsunami before it hits. It will also affect every Department of government.
- For now, each school leader should try Chat GPT for themselves to find out about it. At the moment it is free on OpenAI.
- In the near future, assignments might have to be handwritten and also orally examined.
- Schools might have to invest in text-only computers, which are not linked to the internet in order to produce written work.

- Specific courses should be developed in education for working with ChatGPT and other AI programmes.
- The State Examination Commission should address this challenge as a matter of urgency. Anti plagiarism programmes don't work effectively as AI produces original work.
- A Viva Voce may need to be incorporated for all examinations.
- The introduction of the revised Leaving Cert should be put on hold.
- On the other hand, ChatGPT can revolutionise personalised education and this must be examined.

Pat Gelsinger, Intel CEO, said, in a recent interview with Time magazine, that when built and used responsibly AI will create prosperity and enrich lives.

It is important that everyone start getting involved now in addressing what is coming, given the impact that these technologies are going to have.

**Dermot Carney** is Arts Officer for NAPD. He was Principal in St Ciaran's CS, Kells, Co Meath from 2000 to 2010. He was Head of the Art Dept. in Greendale CS from 1975 to 1990. Dermot also works as a visual artist.



# NIAMH BHREATHNACH

## A Tribute

by Don Thornhill



The tributes paid to Niamh Bhreathnach following the announcement of her death were well deserved and appropriate. She should share with Donogh O' Malley a place in a pantheon of great Ministers for Education.

His swashbuckling and somewhat populist personality was not her style - and times were different. He recognised and, with bold strokes, addressed the pent-up demand and need for free access to post primary schools and third level student grants, building on initiatives taken during the ministries of his predecessors, Paddy Hillery and George Colley. His contribution, during a short time in office, was immediately recognised. The need and opportunities for increased access had long been there, but reform had been very modest. The provision of free access to second level education, subsidised school transport and the consequential opening of access to Third Level were brilliant in their simplicity and impact.

The challenges facing Niamh when she took office in 1993 were different. Education provision, participation and access had improved, but there was much to do. There wasn't any low hanging fruit but rather the challenges of undertaking painstaking reform (and the expenditure of energy and political capital that this entailed) while simultaneously addressing the barriers to wider participation in education.

She had two transcending priorities.

The first was to provide access and progression opportunities to all levels of education for children, pupils and students who were disadvantaged - and to establish and improve

programmes to address and ameliorate education disadvantage in its various forms. She was also intent on promoting curricula relevant to a modern society. She encountered much opposition, temporising and scepticism at the time, particularly in regard to the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme. Her determined leadership and persistence have been correctly lauded in the aftermath of her death.

Her second priority was to provide an appropriate structural foundation for education policy, legislation, administration and management. Prior to her taking up office the State did not have a comprehensive legislative framework for delivering and steering education at first and second level. The third level sector was also fragmented, without overarching legislation. She saw the need for a wide-ranging Education Act, which would set the framework for government policy at first and second levels and also empower the partners and stakeholders in education - parents, teachers, patrons, and students. Her key goals were a comprehensive White Paper and an Education Act.

The negotiation landscape was very siloed, with many interests, not surprisingly, focused on protecting their own "territories". Prior to Niamh's term of office, negotiations on issues such as school governance had tended to be conducted by the Minister and Department bilaterally with each sectoral interest. In such a situation the participants understandably held firmly to their opening positions and looked to the Minister and Department to come up with



accommodating compromises. This was particularly evident during the countrywide, and widely attended, seminars which had been initiated by her predecessor, the late Séamus Brennan, following the publication of his 1992 Green Paper on Education.

She transcended the impasse by setting up the National Education Convention in late 1993 as an independent multilateral framework for debating policy priorities, as well as identifying and developing understanding around key future directions of education policy. The Convention, and its subsequent report edited by John Coolahan, were resounding successes in clarifying the directions for reform and establishing momentum and a high level of consensus.

They laid the basis for the subsequent White Paper "*Charting our Education Future*" and the drafting of an Education Bill. What is less well known was the scepticism of her Cabinet colleagues about the wisdom of bringing together all the (often contending) stakeholders under the same roof. It required considerable courage on Niamh's part to embark on this historic step – which she visibly reinforced by attending all the public sessions of the Convention.

On the legislative front she also progressed the enactment of the Universities Act 1997, which put all the universities on similar footings, created new universities, promoted reforms in governance, management and appointment processes. The legislation also required the universities to set up quality assurance processes and laid the groundwork for subsequent developments in the sector. Her democratic instincts are reflected in the provisions in that legislation for the protection of academic freedom and the balances struck between institutional autonomy and accountability for public expenditure. The time, energy and political capital spent in progressing this legislation through the Dáil and Seanad (which was slowed down by the absence of a Government majority in the Seanad) and the change of Government in 1997 meant that she had left office by the time her big legislative priority, the Education Act 1998, was enacted. Her immediate successor, Micheál Martin, followed through with the main provisions of the Bill drafted under her oversight.

The policy initiative for which she is most widely remembered is the abolition of tuition fees for third level undergraduate education. She was very aware of the policy complexity surrounding this initiative. On one side of the argument, she understood that the cost of third level education was becoming prohibitive for many families – particularly those living outside the "university cities". The third level grants scheme was uneven in the support it provided. It was widely seen to be inequitable in its exclusion of middle-income PAYE taxpaying families. Her attempt to reform this scheme encountered robust opposition.

Meanwhile, many families were making increased use of the income tax legislation to covenant income to their children for the payment of fees. The impact of the covenanting provisions was seriously inequitable. The higher the income the greater the benefit. The group who needed financial relief most could only benefit marginally from covenanting. The

cost of the covenants to the Exchequer was growing exponentially. It was only a matter of time before the Department of Finance would be successful in its efforts to abolish the scheme.

Niamh also fully understood the arguments against free fees – particularly the view that they would be potentially regressive in that poorer taxpayers would bear some of the cost of funding the enhanced private gains of better off students, as well as the concerns of university leaders and communities about reduced institutional autonomy arising from increased dependence on the Exchequer for funding.

The pressure to act was compelling. Decisive leadership was needed, not least because of the strongly likelihood that the covenanting legislation would be amended. She was successful in carrying the argument for free tuition through Government.

She was a terrific Minister to work with. She had great clarity of vision and idealism, which was invaluable in developing and implementing policy. In Government Departments there can be shocks, challenges, operational errors, maladministration and mistakes. The Education Sector and the Department were particularly vulnerable. I recall events such as the loss of exam papers and scripts in the Examinations Branch in Athlone – which created opportunities for political controversies – many of which should not, in a reasonable world, be directly attributed to the Minister. However, she accepted the legal doctrine of Ministerial responsibility and bravely supported measures for operational and administrative reform.

At a personal level she had tremendous energy and warmth. I recall many instances of her personal kindness to myself and others. She could be demanding, at times a stern critic but was always fair and generous, as well as being scrupulous in sharing credit with officials. She was a good listener and she had a terrific sense of humour and sense of the ridiculous.

She was of course exceptionally brave. She was abruptly propelled onto the national stage and the public gaze without having a 'parliamentary apprenticeship' – but she met the challenges with great vigour and a profound sense of responsibility.

I am confident that when the history of Irish Education is reviewed and updated (as it should continually be) her commitment and record of reform will be given appropriate recognition.

**Don Thornhill** was Secretary General of the Department of Education from 1993 to 1998. A former career civil servant, he currently is the non-executive chair of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority.





# ANALYSING EDUCATION

By Sean McDonagh

ASPECTS OF  
POPULATION AND  
EDUCATION IN  
AUSTRALIA



The Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is a complex measure of a society's progress and relative position. In 2022 when Switzerland was judged to have the highest HDI internationally, both Ireland and Australia were ranked in the top 10 countries – with Ireland ranked at eighth and Australia fifth globally.

Ireland has strong historic links with Australia dating back to the late eighteenth century when Europeans began to settle there. Up to 10% of the population of Australia can claim some Irish ancestry. In recent times young Irish backpackers have sought seasonal work in agriculture and hospitality in Australia while Irish graduates have sought more long-term employment there.

This note, for discussion, looks at aspects of Population and Education in Australia.



## POPULATION

The population of Australia in 2022 was 26,134,134. This was an increase of 10.9% from the 2015 population of 23,932,502 and an increase of 18.0% from the 2,2154,679 population in 2010.

The median age was 37.9 in 2022, up from 36.8 in 2010. Life expectancy for those born in 2020 is 83.9 (boys 81.2, girls 85.3). The Irish figure is 82.8.

The fertility rate in 2022 was 1.62 – probably pandemic affected. This was below the replacement rate of 2.1 and down from 1.83 in 2020. Net migration is the driver of Australian population growth.

### Population by State/Territory

Table 1 shows the population of the six States, which with Territories form the Commonwealth of Australia.

**Table 1: Population of States/Territories, 2021, '000, %**

<b>New South Wales</b>	8,095	31%	<b>South Australia</b>	1,80	7%
<b>Victoria</b>	6,560	25%	<b>Tasmania</b>	570	2%
<b>Queensland</b>	5,265	20%	<b>Australian Capital Territory</b>	453	2%
<b>Western Australia</b>	2,762	11%	<b>Northern Territory</b>	249	1%

New South Wales (NSW), with the largest State population, has a population greater than the whole of Ireland, while Victoria and Queensland both have populations exceeding the Republic of Ireland. These three States account for over 76% of the Australian population, which is largely located in the south-east of the country.

### Population by City

Sydney, the largest city, has a population of over 4.6m and Melbourne has over 4.2m. With Brisbane (2.2m), Perth (1.9m) and Adelaide (1.2m) these five cities have over 14m inhabitants. The eight capital cities account for 68% of Australian population, which is strongly urbanised. The Australian Educational System caters for a large urban population and then for inner and outer regions and remote students. Australia's low population density of 3.4 per km<sup>2</sup> contrasts with Ireland's density of 72.0 per km<sup>2</sup>.

### Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islanders) Population

In the 2021 census 812,728 people self-identified as Aboriginal. This represents 3.1% of the population. Their life expectancy was lower than that of the general population – 71.6 years for males and 75.6 for females. Of the Aboriginal people, 34.2% live in NSW and 29.2% in Queensland – strongly located in cities. In the Northern Territory, which has a small population, Aboriginals form 25% of the population.

## Foreign-Born Population

In 2021, 7.5m of the Australian population were born overseas, representing 29.1% of the total population. The largest national group was English-born who accounted for 967,000 or 3.6% of the total population. The top five countries were, in order, (with average age in parenthesis) England (58), India (36), China (40), New Zealand (45) and the Philippines (41). The top countries providing immigrants to Australia are now (in order) China, India, UK, Philippines and Vietnam.

A 2023 OECD report *Productivity and Migration in Australia* states that "Australia has the highest share of migrants in the OECD, after Luxembourg". The OECD average migrant population is 14%. It further states "Australia has one of the highest educated migrant populations among OECD countries. Almost 60% of the migrant population in Australia has attained tertiary education, compared to 40% of the native population and around 40% of migrants in other OECD countries".



## EDUCATION SYSTEM

Education and Training - and its administration and financing - is the responsibility of the Australian and State and Territory Governments. School education has a similar structure across Australia, with minor variations between States and Territories.

After Kindergarten, School Education lasts 13 years. Its levels are:

- **Primary Education** lasts either 7 or 8 years, comprising a Foundation Year and either 6 or 7 years in school. The Primary curriculum focusses on developing English Language and Literacy, Maths and Numeracy Skills and studies of society, health and creative activities. ICT and PE are also covered.
- **Secondary School** covers Year 7 or 8 to Year 10. The earlier time includes a general course undertaken by all students. In later years students take a core group of subjects and electives. Core subjects include English, Mathematics, Science and the Environment, ICT and PE. Some subjects are offered at Advanced Level.
- **Senior Secondary School** covers Years 11 and 12. It offers several types of courses which prepare for future study, employment and adult life. The Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authority (ACACA) in each State is responsible for issuing the Senior Secondary Certificate for that State. Each ACACA provides a range of subjects for its Senior Certificate of Education, which may adopt - or adapt - the 16 senior secondary Australian Curriculum subjects from ACARA.

Students in Australia earn a **Senior Secondary Certificate of Education** and other records of achievement when they complete Senior Secondary education. Appropriate Certificates can earn their Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

Education in Australia is compulsory from age 6. It is mandatory to complete year 10 and to participate in full-time education, training or employment until at least 17 years old.

## School Types

There are over 9,500 schools in Australia. They fall into three types: Government, Independent and Catholic.

- **Government (or Public) Schools** are a State or Territory responsibility. Students attend them at no cost or minimal cost. In 2021 Government schools attracted about 65% of school attendance.
- **Independent (or Private) Schools** are not run by State or Federal Government and are self-funding. Such schools can select their students and charge fees. Some have boarding facilities. Independent Schools attract about 15% of school students.
- **Catholic Schools** are funded by the State and Federal Government and may have low fees. In 2021 such schools catered for about 20% of school students.



In 2021 the retention rate to year 12 was 83.1% (female 87.6%, male 78.7%). The retention rate of Aboriginal students was 59.0%. Independent Schools had the highest retention rate (94.7%), followed by Catholic Schools (81.5%) and Government Schools (80.0%).

In Australia, co-education dominates and the number of single-sex schools is declining. In New South Wales, of 877 Secondary Schools 737 (84%) are coeducational, 75 (9%) are female and 65 (7%) males. Victoria has 509 Secondary Schools with 457 (90%) coeducational, 30 (6%) female and 22 (4%) male.

Australia has gender gaps – in favour of females - which are large by international standards in such educational achievements as completion of Year 12 at school or degree graduation rates. For example, Education at a Glance informs us that Tertiary Attainment in the age group 25-44 in 2018 in Australia was 44% for males and 59% for females.

## PISA

In Australia, the National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. NAPLAN tests four areas – Reading, Writing, Language Conventions (Spelling, Grammar, Punctuation) and Numeracy.

The international PISA tests for 15-year-olds enable international comparisons of achievement and its distribution linked to student characteristics. Included in the tests are tests in Reading, Mathematics and Science, with one of these in turn as the major test in the PISA three-year cycle. In 2018 Reading was the major test.

Table 2 gives the Australian average results in the PISA 2018 tests with, for comparison, the OECD averages, the Irish achievement in that year, the NSW and Victoria results and the Australian results of 2009.

**Table 2: PISA Average Achievement 2018, 2009**

	READING	SCIENCE	MATHEMATICS
Australia 2018	503	503	491
OECD 2018	487	489	489
Ireland 2018	518	496	500
NSW 2018	493	496	489
Victoria 2018	511	507	496
Australia 2009	515	527	514

Australian average achievement in Reading, Mathematics and Science, as revealed by the triannual PISA tests, has experienced a pattern of long-term decline. The average achievement of an Australian 15-year-old in Reading in 2018 was almost one year of schooling behind when compared to a 15-year-old in 2000.

**Australia is ranked third in the world - after the US and UK - for the number of international students it attracts. Their fees and maintenance costs make a major contribution to the Australian economy.**

Mathematics in 2018 was more than a year behind Mathematics in 2003 and Science was almost a year behind 2006. The decline in performance occurred across all socio-economic backgrounds, with the largest decline amongst the highest quartile. Professor Masters CEO of the Australian Council for Educational Research attributes these findings to “a deficit in higher-order thinking rather than fundamental literacy and numeracy skills”. The Australian results of 2009 are included in the table above to illustrate the decline. The NSW and Victoria of 2018 results illustrate results variety by State.

The PISA tests enable a comparison of school sectors – Government, Catholic and Independent. Students in Independent Schools performed higher than those in Catholic Schools who, in turn, performed higher than those in Government Schools. However, after adjusting for socio-economic background, there was no difference in Reading and Science. In Mathematics, after that adjustment, Government Schools achieved higher than Catholic Schools – for the first time.

Non-indigenous students outperformed their indigenous peers by the equivalent of more than two years of schooling. The National Indigenous Australian Agency is promoting initiatives to improve Aboriginal educational outcomes at all levels.

After adjusting for socio-economic background, the difference in performance in PISA 2018 between immigrant and non-immigrant Australians – in favour of immigrants – is one of the largest amongst all participating countries.



## HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION

### Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) was established in 1995 and, like the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), has 10 levels.

The AQF provides recognition and accreditation for quality learning and work experience. It promotes progression, enabling movement from one level of study to a higher level and from one institution to another. It is of particular importance in the promotion of quality Vocational Education and Training (VET).

### Vocational Education and Training (VET)

VET in Australia enables learners to acquire, in flexible ways, skills relevant to the future jobs market. VET is available at a variety of levels – facilitated by AQF – and through a variety of providers and with the collaboration of many employers. VET promotes Knowledge and Skills and the application of Knowledge and Skills. In 2021 over 600,000 were attending Vocational Education.

Initial training skills are provided by Certificate I, II, III and IV qualifications. More advanced programmes lead to Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas. Apprenticeships and Traineeships are predominantly male (75%). (In Ireland the QQI recognises Australian Certificates III and IV as at Levels 4 and 5 respectively in the Irish NFQ and Diplomas and Advanced Australian Diplomas as at NFQ Level 6.)

VET has a variety of providers including Training and Further Education Institutes (TAFEs) and Recognised Training Organisations (RTOs), of which there are over 5,000. The cooperation of providers and employers enable Traineeships and Apprenticeships. Some Senior Secondary students can include some vocational studies and, indeed, some can commence apprenticeships combining formal learning with relevant work experience.

**Undergraduate Admission:** Undergraduate admission for Australians is usually based on a student’s Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR). The ATAR is calculated based on the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education courses of study. The ATAR measures a student’s ranking relative to the student applicant cohort. Other undergraduate admission pathways include VET qualifications at Certificate III and IV and the International Baccalaureate.

Degrees in Arts, Business and Science are typically three years in duration.

**Ranking of Universities:** Many Australian Universities earn high rankings in the various annual World University Rankings. Typically, 38 Australian Universities are included in global ranking lists.

The QS 2023 Rankings included five Australian Universities in its top 50 – Australian National University (30), University of Melbourne (33), University of Sydney (41), University of NSW (45) and the University of Queensland (50). It included 7 in the top 100 and 14 in the top 200.

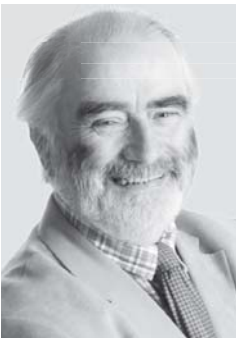
The World Rankings 2022 ranked the University of Melbourne the highest at 33. It ranked 6 Australian Universities in the top 100 and 10 in the top 200.

Australia is ranked third in the world – after the US and UK – for the number of international students it attracts. Their fees and maintenance costs make a major contribution to the Australian economy. Some Australian Universities have overseas campuses. The top providers to Australia of International Students are (in order) China, India, Nepal, Vietnam and Indonesia.

The Government of Australia has announced a “University Accord”, designed to build a long-term plan by the end of 2023 for the country’s Higher Education System. Included in its aims is an examination of how Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training can and should work together.

**Nobel Prizes:** Nobel Prizes are awarded for outstanding global contributions to the Sciences, to Literature and to Economics. The list of Nobel Prize winners includes 15 with Australian connections. Of these, 8 earned prizes in “Physiology or Medicine”. These included Elizabeth Blackburn (2009) – the only female on the Australia list.

An interesting case was the award of Prizes in 1915 to a father and son. English-born William Bragg, educated at Cambridge, was Professor for a period at the University of Adelaide. His Australian-born son, Laurance, also studied at Cambridge. They both were awarded the Nobel Prize in 1915 in Physics. Laurance, who was then aged 25, is still the youngest recipient of a Nobel Prize.



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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# Prepare your students for a career in Tech with Choose Tech

Michelle Lambert



Technology is always evolving and tech careers are considered one of the fastest-growing professions with the demand for ICT professionals continuously increasing throughout Ireland. Right now, there is so much opportunity for young people within the ICT sector and the routes to a tech career are changing with more options available, including pre-tech and tech apprenticeships.

Since 1999, Fastrack to Information Technology has been a representative organisation of the technology sector committed to growing Ireland's tech talent pipeline. Our aim is to create a wider access to tech skills training leading to exciting career paths and quality employment opportunities for all those who have a curiosity and passion for technology.

We are also the National Co-ordinator of three innovative ICT Tech Apprenticeships at NQF Level 6: Network Engineering, Software Development and Cyber Security, with Dev Ops, Cloud Computing and AI currently in development.

A Tech Apprenticeship programme adopts a learning-by-doing format of ICT skills development. Over a two-year period, the programme combines off-the-job skills training with on-the-job application for a well-rounded learning experience - plus you earn and learn. The opportunities are endless as more and more companies look to the apprenticeship model as a talent strategy.

For some young people, tech has not always been considered a viable career option due to a lack of proper tech education and skills, belief they are not good enough themselves or just not having the right support network to encourage them to try it. For young people to understand the opportunities available to them within the tech sector, they need to be given the right tools and support at the at the right time.

Through the FIT school resource programme, Choose Tech, with the support of the educator, we are reaching Senior Cycle students at an earlier juncture to guide and inspire them to consider tech as a career option and to build awareness around industry recognised pathways such as a Pre-Tech or Tech Apprenticeship.







## WHAT IS CHOOSE TECH?

Choose Tech is a free online programme, that seeks to engage students (4th, 5th, 6th year & LCA), particularly young females, to get involved with tech and onto a micro-credential pathway giving them the confidence to take the next step towards a career in tech. The programme delivers a framework for the provision of upskilling opportunities for young people with the support from educators to kick-start their career in technology.

See [www.fit.ie/resources/choosetech](http://www.fit.ie/resources/choosetech) for details.

## WHAT DOES THE PROGRAMME INVOLVE?

- 70+ bite-size modules – these fun, online modules give students a taster of the roles and opportunities with the tech sector. Students earn digital badges, Bronze, Silver & Gold awards, achieve certificates of recognition and most importantly find topics that most interest them with tech
- FIT Career Pathway Workshops – learning sessions covering tech roles, apprenticeships and how to get started (video/in classroom)
- Near Peer Tech Engagements – breakdown the barrier about working in tech by hearing from tech professionals and find out what different tech roles involve and the skills needed (online/in-classroom)
- Information Packs – starter packs contain Career Roadmap poster, Educators Guide, career guidance leaflets and Tech Apprenticeship brochures

## HOW CAN CHOOSE TECH HELP?

- Special Achievement Task completion for LCA students
- Integrate as part of the School Completion programme (extra curricula or afterschool clubs)
- CPD for Educators
- Mapping Choose Tech modules to curricula and incorporating them into schemes of work (IT, Computing, Science, Maths, PHSE, English, Safeguarding, Biology, Art, Design, Geography)
- GAISCE Award (Challenge partner)
- Become a Choose Tech Ambassador – Educators
- Your school can become a FIT TECH Ambassador

*Students from Loreto Crumlin with Choose Tech Ambassador Ciara Shorthall. This was a success story – students requested Computer Science for their Senior Cycle, having completed the Choose Tech programme.*



- Career guidance and 3rd Level pathway options (pre-tech and tech apprenticeships)
- Back office support for teachers to track students' progress
- Support and Guidance from the FIT Choose Tech team

## HOW TO REGISTER

If you would like to get started with Choose Tech or require more information, email Michelle or Jessica at [choosetech@fit.ie](mailto:choosetech@fit.ie)



**Michelle Lambert** is the School Liaison Officer with Fastrack to Information Technology (FIT). She delivers the Choose Tech programme to DEIS schools & Youth Reach nationwide.



## Rory O'Sullivan – a Tribute

Principal of Killester and Marino Colleges of Further Education retired in December 2022

**Ger Looney, former NAPD President, former Principal St John's College, and former Chair of the FETCI Committee**

Pre NAPD-FET days, Rory was part of a small group of Principals from across the country who came together to support each other in the delivery of Further Education through the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme (VPTP) and to seek recognition for the sector.

This group was essentially the first FE committee to represent the sector. It comprised Rory, Barry O'Callaghan, Fred Meaney (RIP), Carol Hanney, Michael Condren, Jimmy Brick, Mick Fitzgerald, Colm McEvoy, Dan Condren, Willie McAuliffe and myself.

We looked to mainland Europe and saw that Further/Vocational Education and Training services were delivered in an integrated way – Further Education and Training (FET)/Vocational Education and Training (VET) operated as a single sector. We realised that this recognition was needed in Ireland and through the NAPD-FET committee we engaged with the policy makers and wrote position papers to advocate for a separate FET sector in Ireland.

The establishment of SOLAS in 2013 and the re-alignment of provision since then finally delivered the fourth pillar of the Irish Education system – Further Education and Training (FET).

Over time, the FE Committee became a formalised sub-committee of NAPD, with a seat at the Executive. The committee became a recognised and valued stakeholder with national agencies such as the DE, QQI, HEI, FÁS, and later SOLAS and DFHERIS.

Rory was incredibly proactive supporting the committee's efforts to formalize the voice of FET nationally. We were on a whirlwind of planning annual conferences, seeking workshop opportunities at national events and planning delegation meetings to the Department and other stakeholders. We applied learnings from foreign visits, which helped us all develop our course offerings and student supports in our Colleges.

We have all travelled some of the way and contributed in our time, but Rory has taken the full journey. The development of FET, through its PLC stage, can be traced over the last 30

years and Rory has been ever present through this full cycle as a leader and tireless campaigner.

**Ann Marie Lacy, Director Cavan Institute**

My first encounter with Rory was at the NAPD Conference in October 2006 and that was the beginning of what was to become a lasting friendship, both professionally and personally. Rory proved to be a wonderful mentor to me. Coming from post primary Principalship, I found myself with more questions than answers as I transitioned to the evolving landscape of Further Education.

Rory has many admirable qualities which have endeared him to us all. He is hard working, reliable, professional, a team player and someone who has brought a warm sincerity and sense of humor to his work on the NAPD FET subcommittee, now FETCI. Rory's interest and support of the evolving new FET sector is unquestionable. His doctoral research traces in great detail the evolution of Further Education in Ireland going back as far as the late nineteenth century.

Rory has made a significant contribution to FET. His ability to articulate and document issues relevant to FET is unquestionable. He has been an avid contributor to the evolution of the FET sector in Ireland through articles published in Education Matters. His sincerity and sense of humor will be missed. It is our fervent hope that Rory will long remain a part of the FETCI team's ongoing work.

**Cecilia Munro, Principal Ballyfermot College of Further Education**

A key attribute of Rory's is that he shares his knowledge in such a manner that makes you feel included. He draws you into the dialogue and loves nothing better than a constructive debate.

Behind Rory, is his wife Mary, who has encouraged and supported him to be the best person he could be. Mary was central to supporting Rory in his doctoral research. Rory received his Doctorate 2018.

Rory has many interests outside of FET. He plays classical, acoustic and electric guitar and he recently rejoined the "Dolce Choir" in Raheny.



*Finally, a doctor*



*Rory with Mary, the real boss!*



*Not a party unless you have a cake!*



*Rory cooking!*

He is a proud Kerry man, regularly visiting the Kingdom with his dad. Despite growing up and living in Dublin he was a proud Munster supporter and he regularly togged out in the "red" to see Munster play.

Rory is a lover of all things Italian – the language, the wine and the food. During lock down he took up Italian language classes.

### What some of his colleagues have to say about him:

- I will be forever grateful for the welcome, advice and support Rory gave me.

**Noreen Reilly, Principal,  
Waterford College of Further Education**

- When I think of Rory, I remember what a tremendous advocate he was for the elevation of the FET sector within the Irish education system. As chair of the FETCI committee he worked tirelessly to keep us up to date on important national and international developments within the sector.

**Davy McDonnell, Principal,  
Drogheda Institute of Further Education**

- Rory has been a pleasure to work with, an incredible font of knowledge, incredibly passionate educator and leader with a fantastic sense of humour!

**Rachel O'Connor, Former NAPD President and Principal of  
Ramsgate Community School, Wexford**

- From CDET to NAPD, Rory's infectious enthusiasm, dogged determination and no-nonsense mantra has always delivered for his students, his colleagues and his profession. It has been my pleasure to have worked so closely with Rory and I am deeply indebted to him for so generously sharing his expertise and experience with me. Rory, enjoy nonretirement – Mi hai aiutato a stare meglio".

**Paul Crone, Director, (NAPD)**

- A sincere thanks to Rory for welcoming me so openly into FETCI, for sharing his insight and experience, for his invaluable advice in times of need, and for the support and kindness shown to me. I'm looking forward to following Rory's ongoing journey and future endeavours.

**Paula McCarthy, Principal, St Johns College, Cork**

- Rory was known as a champion for students with additional needs, understanding the unique challenges faced by these students and working tirelessly to ensure they received the support and accommodations they needed to succeed

**Michael Foley, Principal,  
Dundrum College of Further Education, Dublin**

- A true colleague and friend, forever going the extra mile, always with a smile.

**Geraldine Gibbons, Principal, Galway Technical Institute**

- As a member of the National Executive for several years, I witnessed first-hand Rory's expertise in the FET area. He educated Executive members on how the FET sector worked and created the vision required to achieve a world class FET structure in this country.

**Sorcha Nic Dhonnacha, Principal,  
Templemichael College, Longford**

### Career snapshot in reverse

**2021-2023:** Principal,  
Killester and Marino College of Further Education

**2001-2021:** Principal,  
Killester College of Further Education

**1995-2001:** Deputy Principal,  
Ballsbridge College of Further Education

**1991-1995:** Admissions Officer (A-Post),  
Coláiste Íde College of Further Education

**1986-1991:** Teacher,  
Whitehall College of Further Education

# What is the HPAT Exam?

Betty McLaughlin

The Health Professions Admission Test (HPAT) is an assessment/admissions test that students wishing to study undergraduate Medicine must undertake.

This exam measures several things including logical reasoning, problem solving skills and non-verbal reasoning, as well as the ability to understand the thoughts, behaviours and/or intentions of people. HPAT is offered once annually in February.

HPAT remains a heated topic of debate. Introduced in Ireland in 2009, its prime goal was to dilute the effects of the 'points race' where previous students required an almost perfect Leaving Certificate (LC) in order to gain entry to medical school. Another reason was to improve the gender balance of students entering medicine courses, which was tipped in favour of girls more than boys achieving the necessary CAO points in their (LC).

In addition, the Universities felt that certain qualities such as problem solving, interpersonal understanding and analytical skills, which are deemed necessary for the Medical profession, were not adequately assessed in the LC.

HPAT, taken in conjunction the LC, aimed to broaden nationwide access to Medicine by testing non-academic skill sets.

Another part of the thinking behind it was to eliminate a student's ability to select 'easy' subjects in a subsequent exam period and use a combination of subjects from multiple exam years to gain entry into a Medical course in Ireland. While this was welcomed by Third Level Colleges, many questioned the validity of the introduction of what seemed to be a standardised aptitude test.

According to the promoters of the HPAT, it is an exam that cannot be prepared for. It was intended to create an environment where the more suitable candidates score

higher and the best future doctors are identified. ACER, the designers of the HPAT, claimed intense study would not improve a student's score.

However, the existence of expensive HPAT preparatory courses, costing hundreds of Euro, undermines this claim. "Surely a test cannot be studied for if it contains no learnable content"? asked Professor Dean Wright, UCD.

A review by five Irish Medical faculties in 2011 found that 80% of students who repeated the HPAT improved their score. Additional low-cost practice test materials were subsequently made available by ACER in response to the report. It also found that 40% of successful applicants got a place in Medical school with the help of an improved HPAT score.

In 2010 in particular, 111 of 434 students who received places not only repeated the HPAT but were also already registered with another third-level course at time of acceptance. This trend resulted in a high drop-out rate in some Medicine-associated courses such as Biomedical Science, at a substantial cost to the exchequer. A 2014 investigation into similarities between official exam paper questions and preparatory exam questions supplied by a HPAT preparation company led to seven questions being removed from that year's scoring process. This suggests that instead of 'levelling the playing field', HPAT had become a barrier against students who came from more disadvantaged backgrounds. In fact, less than 4% of applicants to Irish Medical degree programmes come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The basic relevance of the test has been questioned. Quinn et al 2010 found that, based on their performance in a mock HPAT test, several currently practicing consultants would have been excluded from entry into a Medicine course. This further undermines the effectiveness of the HPAT to identify those most suitable for a medical career.

There is also a school of thought among Guidance Counsellors, that if a student can achieve maximum points 625, a perfect score, that they should be able to access any course of their own choosing.

Many want the HPAT to be abandoned altogether at undergraduate level. Dr Tomas Ó Ruairc argued that the selection of better doctors is more appropriate at a later stage in the Medical career pathway and suggested changing the "debate from choosing correctly at the time of entry to choosing correctly at postgraduate level". The Quinn et al study made a similar observation. A less radical, but my no means ideal, solution would be to allocate a high fixed percentage of all available places to first-sit students. This would weaken the influence of preparatory courses on entry into Irish undergraduate Medicine courses.

Another option might be to emulate some North American systems and conduct sets of mini-interview as a screening process. In this way, non-cognitive skills such as professionalism, interpersonal skills, and ethical/moral judgement could be examined.

According to Professor Dean Wright of UCD, "The HPAT places an emphasis on problem solving, critical thinking and interpersonal skills, all of which are important aspects of medical practice. It does not, however, properly identify those most suitable for a career in medicine - its true role is as a hurdle within a bottle-necked system and yet another obstacle for those with a passion for medicine to overcome".

In a time where the public's expectations of standards of healthcare are increasing, it is important that the evolution of our selection criteria for all medical professions should be under constant review.

HPAT, between exam fees and preparation course, has the potential to favour those who can best afford, thus widening the ever-expanding divide in education between the haves and the have-nots



## HPAT QUICK GUIDE

HPAT consists of 3 Aptitude Tests: Logical Reasoning, Interpersonal Understanding and Non-Verbal Reasoning. The exam is paper-based, with a multiple-choice format:

- Section 1 comprises a variety of question types including scientific case studies, graphs, diagrammatic puzzles and more.
- Section 2 provides a series of text passages, narratives and dialogues. Students must draw conclusions about

the thoughts and feelings of characters in the passages.

- Section 3 involves finding patterns in a series of shapes

The HPAT score is a weighted sum of the three section scores. Sections 1 and 2 are each weighted at 40%, with section 3 weighted at 20%.

A student's LC points are combined with their HPAT score. The maximum HPAT score possible is 300. Students must first achieve a minimum of 480 CAO points in the same sitting of the LC. The maximum adjusted LC points is 565.

Therefore, a student with 475 CAO points won't be considered, no matter what HPAT score they get. A student with 530 CAO points and a HPAT score of 200 gets 730 HPAT "points". A student with 625 CAO points and a HPAT score of 200 gets 765 HPAT "points" (565 max + 200).

The maximum HPAT "points" is 865 (565 + 300)

The duration of the test is 2½ hours. Applicants to UL also have to complete an additional one hour written English component. HPAT scores are valid for one year only – a 2023 HPAT score is valid for 2023 admission only.

## COURSES THAT REQUIRE HPAT

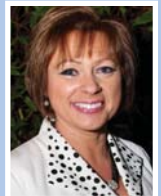
- National University of Ireland, Galway – Undergraduate Medicine
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Undergraduate Medicine
- Trinity College Dublin – Undergraduate Medicine
- University College Cork – Undergraduate Medicine
- University College Dublin – Undergraduate Medicine
- University of Limerick – MSc Occupational Therapy
- University of Limerick – MSc Speech and Language Therapy

Do you have what it takes to be a doctor?  
– test yourself!



SCAN ME

**Betty McLaughlin** was a Guidance Counsellor in Coláiste Mhuire Mullingar for 14 years. She is a former President and CEO of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) and is currently a chartered member. She was a mentor and supervisor in University of Limerick for post-graduate students and trainee Guidance Counsellors from 2003 to 2014. She is also a former Wellbeing Team Leader for JCT. Currently she is an Education Consultant and Team Leader with YSI, DCU Alpha.



# MÁIRE NÍ BHRÓITHE

## See Beyond Borders Cambodia - Summer 2022



In July 2019, my husband and I decided to spend 4 days in Cambodia on our way home from a holiday in Vietnam. A friend told me to look out for a 'Colm Byrne' from Dublin – she said he lived somewhere in Cambodia! Two nights later in a small restaurant in Siem Reap we were served by a man from Northern Ireland. I asked "Do you happen know a 'Colm' here in Cambodia"? He smiled and said "of course, I do – would you like to meet him"?

The rest is history.

The following day Colm brought us by tuk-tuk to the offices of *See Beyond Borders* (SBB), a charity that aims to improve the early years of primary education in Cambodia, through empowering the teaching profession. Colm, formerly a Dublin primary teacher had spent over 10 years living in Cambodia. He produced some stark statistics about Cambodian education.

Between 1975 to 1979, the Pol Pot Regime murdered 90% of Cambodian teachers. It is estimated that between 1.5 to 2 million Cambodians died of starvation, execution or overwork. Their bodies were buried in mass graves that became known as 'killing fields'. Former doctors, teachers and other professionals were stripped of their possessions and forced to toil in the fields as part of a re-education process and a return to an agricultural society. The education system was destroyed.



Today, on average, a Cambodian child spends 4.7 years in school in total. 79% of teachers have no graduate qualifications and less than 3% of all children reach minimum standards.

We promised to return to Cambodia and to do what we could to help SBB. We kept in touch with Colm and he arrived in Ireland with a delegation from the Cambodian Ministry of Education in 2020. They met with various groups of educators, visited schools, met the Centre for School Leadership, the Inspectorate and spent time in National College of Ireland and DCU.

We had hoped to spend some time in 2020 in Cambodia assisting in whatever way we could. This was not to be with Covid's intervention. Last summer, we made a return trip to Cambodia to learn more about the Cambodian education system. It became clear that the situation had deteriorated since 2019 - Covid had a devastating impact on Cambodian

education. The country experienced the highest rate of school closure in southeast Asia. SBB had to cut down on their work and they are currently working in just 27 schools. They are focusing on literacy, numeracy and digital learning projects with students in the first three years of schooling.

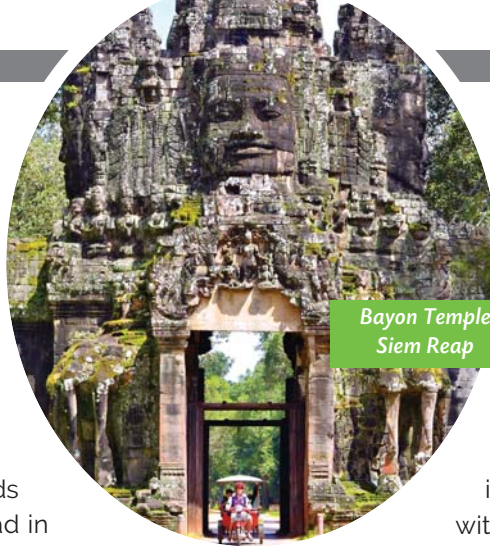
We visited schools and watched teachers work with up to 40 five-year-olds in dark classrooms at desks like we had in the 1960s. All their shoes remained outside the door. While there were small fans on ceilings, it was very warm in what was essentially as an outdoor classroom. We watched children run enthusiastically to the back of a classroom, roll out a thin mat and sit on it while they recited the Khmer words that appeared on the screen. Indeed, all around the schools, I could constantly hear children chanting. I was fascinated by the school bell – a large cylinder which was hit by a hammer at the end of break.

Schools are open from 7.00am to 11.00am for students, six days a week. All children wear a uniform of white shirt and blue skirt/trousers - exactly the same in every school that we visited. In one school it appeared that the teachers were also wearing a uniform. It turned out that there is a colour associated with every day of the week and that the teachers, (mainly women) wore blouses of the 'designated day' colour.

In Cambodia, 80% of the Principals are male, even though they only make up 24% of the teaching population. I had the pleasure of meeting one Principal. Through an interpreter he indicated that he had a major role in monitoring teachers. He monitored their attendance, their punctuality, their report writing and visited their classes to look at their teaching skills. He said that he would allocate marks to teachers based on the above criteria.

Teachers earn just \$350 (US) a month. Many have a second job to improve their financial situation. Teachers drive to school daily on their motorbikes - I saw no cars in the school yards. Many teachers are unqualified, while others have done a 2-year programme, which had low entry requirements. Very few have opportunities to engage in quality professional learning. The work of SBB is to support teachers develop and improve their teaching skills. They have a mentoring programme for all teachers in the 27 schools. This involves training 35 teachers to work as mentors across all the schools and training 15 master mentors to support those mentors.

Another focus of SBB is to improve the leadership across the schools. This means working with the Principals - there are no Deputies and no middle leaders. There is a clear need to provide leadership training for female teachers to empower and encourage them to consider taking on the



Bayon Temple  
Siem Reap

senior leadership role. SBB run an excellent Change-Makers programme which involve five women working in schools every morning, gaining an understanding about education and partaking in a professional development programme in the afternoons.

Colm Byrne was appointed CEO of SBB in June 2022. We spent two days working with the SBB team and some teachers, looking at progressive pedagogy, exploring what makes a skilful teacher and discussing the future direction of SBB. We felt privileged to be there for those uplifting days.

Cambodia is a wonderful country and its people are warm, friendly and generous. While we were very busy over the few weeks, we had the weekends to ourselves. We loved the Temples of Angkor Wat just outside Siem Reap, had a wonderful ride on The Bamboo Train in Battambang, watched millions of bats leave their bat caves, learned to cook Khmer dishes, learned to speak some Khmer and had some wonderful meals in various restaurants.

In Jack Whitehall's Series "Travel's with my father" (series 1, episode 4) – Jack and his dad stayed in Bambu Hotel in Battambang. We stayed in the same hotel (\$40 a night) and were treated very well by its Irish owner.

I travelled with my IPPN Water Bottle (lost on the bamboo train) and my NAPD notebook and recounted the story of our journey and time in Cambodia on Twitter (See @mairenib for photos and more details).

We continue to support SBB from Ireland and hope to return again to assist with mentoring and leadership programmes. SBB Ireland is a new charity which was launched in Ireland in 2021. Should anyone wish to find out more, they can be contacted on E: [ireland@seebeyondborders.org](mailto:ireland@seebeyondborders.org).



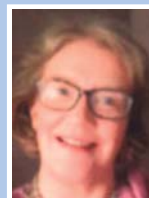
SCAN ME

See Beyond Borders website



SCAN ME

SBB Ireland website



**Máire Ni Bhróithe** is a former Principal of Ratoath College in Meath and a former Deputy Director of the CSL. She currently works in NAPD's mentoring programme. She can be contacted at [mentoring@napd.ie](mailto:mentoring@napd.ie)

# CLARE McGEE



## Courageous leadership required for a brave new world



As the Leaving Cert class of 2023 take their seats for their final year in school, it is against a backdrop of many great challenges. Whether it is an ageing population and changing demographics, fast-paced industrial disruption and revolution, increasing globalisation, the climate emergency or the need to create a fairer society, education and business will have important roles to play. When the Class of 2023 enter the workforce, in two to five years' time, we know it will be a different world from what it is today, with some of the same challenges, but also with others we have not yet foreseen.

Disruption, both positive and negative, is happening at such a fast pace. And that pace of change will only get faster. Think back to the major innovations that have been introduced over the last 15 years: artificial intelligence, cloud computing, smart communication technology, the rise of new influencers new health solutions. All have had a major social impact on how we live, how we work and how we interact with each other. Who knows what the next 15 years will bring? As a result, it is becoming much harder to predict with a high degree of certainty what the jobs and the workplace of the future will be.

And with careers now lasting close to 50 years, most people will probably make multiple career changes and transitions, requiring new skills, new expertise and developing new

social networks at every turn. As a result, we will constantly be on a learning journey, regardless of our initial qualifications.

Business is constantly seeking new ways of attracting and retaining people with talent and skills. The demand for skills is outpacing supply and finding the best talent is going to be increasingly difficult as the world navigates a period of heightened economic uncertainty.

This new economy and the new workplace are anything but conventional.

It will require a shift in conventional thinking and approaches when supporting young people to feel empowered and in control of their choices as they transition from secondary school to their next phase of education.

This is why, as school leaders and business leaders, we must do more together to promote the depth, breadth and range of opportunities that exist beyond school. Given the range of jobs and careers that now exist, it is no longer appropriate to say that there is only one entry ticket to the world of work. The once tight relationship between degree and job is widening, creating a window of opportunity for different forms of education and qualifications to gain valued recognition.

### **EVOLVING LANDSCAPE FOR EDUCATION**

The education system is being called upon again to review and innovate in several fundamental ways, to meet the new demands coming global economic and social change.

The advent of Technological Universities, the rollout of dynamic new apprenticeship programme in high-tech



sectors such as manufacturing, pharmaceutical and finance and the variety of further education programmes with direct employment outcomes are providing greater choice for business to grow their talent pools. In 2022, for the first time, a link on the CAO website allowed school leavers to explore all the potential pathways across Further Education and Higher Education. And now that this is finally a reality, one wonders why it wasn't always this case. Why have we allowed the narrative that a 'university degree leads to a successful career' dominate how society thinks about education and achievement?

Education must be about helping people to find their passion and purpose and not focus solely on a high stake, high points race. Instead of funnelling most school leavers through the same system, we should enable students to flourish by providing a transformative transition from school to further learning which enables all to thrive. The increased student voice that emerged in the last three years, rightfully demanding that their needs be considered, must also be heard and harnessed.

The only way we can help students to make more informed choices is to look up and beyond a rigid curriculum and bring the outside world into the classroom. Senior Cycle reform and new programme for Transition Year offer a great opportunity to bring in business, public organisations, and social enterprises into the classroom to hear how this world is changing, and how they need diversity of people, skills and qualifications to solve the challenges of the future. A new programme for Transition Year should provide space and time for pre-apprenticeship programmes and micro FET programmes so that all students value experiential, work-based learning.

### **BROADENING THE TALENT POOL TO BUILD A STRONGER WORKFORCE**

A degree is an achievement, but with careers stretching to over half a century, a one-time intensive period of study is no longer sufficient to support people throughout their entire career. The reality is that with the pace of technological change, everybody needs to continuously broaden their skills.

In this age of uncertainty, business is focussing on building a more agile workforce that has gained experiences and qualifications from many different routes areas because this diversity leads to more dynamic teams. The more innovative and agile businesses are searching for people with a willingness to continue learning and adapt to build resilience against the future economic and social shocks.

The successful rise of novel Micro-credential programmes is a testament to the demand from people to engage in short bursts of flexible learning that can support their professional and personal development. A culture of lifelong learning, coupled with a dynamic and responsive education system, will help people and businesses seize new opportunities and reap the resulting rewards.

A skilled workforce can only be achieved with high quality and meaningful qualifications. Data from the most recent National Employers Survey, published in 2019, highlights how Irish business value all qualifications available and over 85% of businesses surveyed are very satisfied with the quality Higher Education and Further Education graduates across a range of workplace and personal attributes.

Employers hold in high regard the combination of discipline knowledge with the useful hands-on skills such as time management, teamwork, communication, problem solving and planning that are developed through many Further Education qualifications. It is vital that more is done to promote to young people and parents the benefits of career-focused routes to the workplace through Further Education and Training, new occupational pathways via a Generation Apprenticeship programme with global business, while gaining a high quality qualification, as well as well as the traditional academic through University.

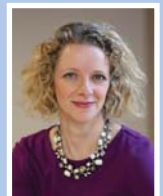
### **CHANGE IS COMING, PEOPLE ARE KEY TO ITS SUCCESS**

It's true that Colleges and Universities will remain an important source of talent, but these traditional institutions are no longer the only path to a career within the talent driven economy. The future of work and the future of education will look very different, driven by the changing labour market and new business culture. Self-employment is rising, as are innovative forms of hybrid working. The disruption from changes in demographics, technology and business models has created an exciting but challenging picture of declining and new industries, new infrastructure and new job roles.

Our education system is responding to this change by providing greater choice and pathways than ever before. It now requires education leaders, teachers and guidance counsellors to apply their positive influence to respond to these changes and take charge to accelerate them.

It is time to lead the change so that young people are supported to pursue the best pathway for their talents and ambitions which the world of work is waiting to embrace.

**Claire McGee** is Head of Education and Innovation Policy for IBEC. Her role is to promote business and industry priorities in supporting the education system to respond to the changing world of work and society and to boost Ireland's capacity for innovation.



She is a board member of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and of the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), in addition to supporting many agency and government initiatives on skills and education.

<https://www.ibec.ie/staff-profile/claire-mcgee>

WILLIAM  
REVILLE



# Global warming calls for action not paralysing anxiety in younger people



There has never been a shortage of people predicting that 'the end is nigh'. The latest manifestation of this phenomenon is the prediction that runaway climate change will soon make the earth unsuitable for human habitation. Such predictions induce severe anxieties in people, particularly younger people, often precipitating a paralysis that inhibits them from tackling the problems they worry about – a lose-lose situation.

Many people now suffer from 'climate anxiety', induced by media predictions of the dire consequences of global warming. A survey of 10000 young people (16 – 25-year-olds) across ten countries as to how concerned they are about climate change was reported in Nature News (22/09/2021).

The results broke down as follows:

- extremely worried (27%)
- very worried (32%)
- moderately worried (25%)
- little worried (11%)
- not worried (5%)

Overall, 45% said that their feelings about climate change seriously impact their daily lives.

Many younger people are now so worried about the future

that they decide not to have children or to have fewer children than they otherwise would have chosen. Others see no point in saving money to meet future needs, such as buying a home, or decide not to continue on to Higher Education, etc. Climate anxiety diverts younger people away from vigorously tackling global warming, demotivating the very people on whom the world depends to eventually overcome this problem.

And, indeed, much remains to be done to tackle global warming effectively. There is so much public emphasis today on removing fossil fuels from electricity-generation by developing renewable wind and solar power that don't emit warming carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), you may think that success here will eliminate all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. But, removing fossil fuel from electricity-generation will only reduce overall CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 55%. The remaining 45% CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are generated by the manufacture, use and disposal of cars, trucks, clothes, electrical/electronic devices and all the other products we use.

To eliminate these emissions, we must switch over to a circular economy.

We now operate a linear economy, characterized in shorthand as 'take, make, waste'. We take raw materials from the earth, make products from them, use the products and throw them away eventually as waste for landfill or incineration. In this linear economy, most decisions are based of profitability. Many products are designed with built-in obsolescence, fail after a short time, are scrapped and new products bought. Many electronic/electrical devices are black-boxes, amenable neither to service nor repair and are scrapped when they become faulty.

The circular economy, on the other hand, starts with product design aimed at keeping resources in use as long as possible, extracting maximum use from these resources, minimizing waste and recovering/regenerating products and materials at the end of a product's long service life. Adopting circular strategies in 5 key areas alone – cement, aluminium, steel, plastics and food – would eliminate emissions equivalent to emissions from all transport.

The current world economy is only 9% circular, but progress is underway. For example, car manufacturers are developing the 'circular car', in which the use of aluminium, carbon-fibre, glass, fabric, rubber, steel, plastics, etc. is efficiently maximized, ideally producing zero material waste and zero pollution during manufacture, use and disposal. The Irish Government has just published a Circular Economy Strategy.

Media coverage of climate change ranges from useful reporting of the scientific facts to doomsday predictions of the ruination of the planet. I have witnessed many doomsday predictions throughout my lifetime. The atomic bomb was developed in the 1940s and, from then until 1989, when the Soviet empire began to crumble, the world trembled in the shadow of the mushroom cloud, symbolising all-out nuclear war between the superpowers and ending in mutually assured destruction. And, even if we managed to avoid nuclear war, ecologists Paul and Anne Ehrlich, in their best-selling 1968 book *The Population Bomb*, predicted hundreds of millions of deaths in worldwide famines during the 1970s/1980s, precipitated by overpopulation.

Thankfully none of these dire scenarios played out. Paul Ehrlich's predictions were simply wrong. Doomsday predictions in human affairs are usually wrong mainly because they take no account of human ingenuity and resourcefulness, qualities that are in almost infinite supply in the global population.

Human ingenuity displays remarkable capacity to overcome adversity and to get things done. Specific examples include:

- Mobilisation of scientific/engineering efforts in the Apollo project (1961 - 1972), culminating in Neil Armstrong stepping onto the Moon in 1969.
- Recent Covid pandemic was investigated more intensely, by more talent and in a shorter time than any other disease in history. A Covid vaccine was developed in 10 months, a feat equivalent to putting a man on the moon.
- Dramatic thinning of Earth's ozone layer noticed in 1985 prompted a huge international effort to reverse this thinning. The ozone layer is now healing and should be fully recovered by the 2060s.

Global warming will remain a serious problem unless we all



take effective action. There are many simple ways we can each reduce CO2 emissions mainly responsible for global warming – cycling and using public transport, switching to electric cars, using petrol/diesel cars only for necessary journeys and driving at moderate speeds, rationing air-travel, eating food produced locally, substituting tap-water for imported bottled water, insulating homes and so on. And we should support politicians to implement the 2021 Climate Act and the Circular Economy Strategy and punish them electorally if they fail to act. I also believe we should lobby for nuclear power to back up wind and solar power when winds don't blow and the sun doesn't shine brightly.

We will undoubtedly have to make much bigger actions/sacrifices to deal with global warming than the simple steps itemized above. But we must get on with things. The Government should introduce special school programmes on how we should deal with global warming in our everyday lives. And, most importantly, these programmes should instil confidence in students who hard work that some sacrifice and human ingenuity have the capacity to win the day.

The truth is that most things in the world are actually improving because humans are good problem-solvers. In a 2018 TED Talk, Steven Pinker, Canadian-born cognitive scientist analysed recent data on war, poverty, pollution, homicide and more, showing that we are doing much better in each of these areas when compared with 30 years ago. In Pinker's words "137,000 people escaped from extreme poverty, yesterday [and] every day for the last 25 years".

I'm not saying we needn't worry about global warming because human cleverness will save us. We have no such guarantee. We must continue to make every effort to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. But we can have well-justified hope that hard work plus human ingenuity will solve this problem. Confidence in our ingenuity will both motivate us to work hard and provide an antidote to despair. We must view global warming as a problem to be solved, not an apocalypse in waiting.



**William Reville** is an Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry at UCC and Science Columnist with The Irish Times.

# Jigsaw Online

**Mary Clare Douglas**

Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health in Ireland, is a free, early intervention and prevention service for young people, age 12-25. There are 14 in-person services throughout Ireland, where young people can access face-to-face appointments.

Jigsaw provides brief intervention of approximately 8 sessions. Young people accessing a Jigsaw service are usually in the mild to moderate range of mental health presentations, in comparison to a CAMHS service, which work with young people and their families with moderate to severe presentations.

While face-to-face is a fantastic option for young people, Jigsaw recognised that in terms of accessibility and inclusivity, in addition to the traditional in-person settings, there was a need to establish a team of clinicians available online to young people.

**Even prior to the pandemic, Jigsaw understood that technology could be used to make mental health supports more accessible, and relevant, to young people. Hence, in June 2020 we launched a range of interactive features on our website [Jigsaw.ie](https://www.jigsaw.ie).**

**Livechat is a live instant web messaging service. Young people initiate contact with us and have a ‘chat’ with a member of the dedicated online team via instant web messaging.**

Since June 2020, there has been a dedicated online clinical team specifically to deliver a national service. The *Jigsaw Live Chat Service* is a free, anonymous, no-referral, no-wait list, text-based service provided by professional clinicians.

The online clinical team comprises the same clinicians that young people would have access to in their traditional in-person services. Clinicians include mental health nurses, psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers and occupational therapists, all with mental health experience and training. They provide support in the form of an instant messaging web text ‘*Live Chat*’ service.

In addition to this 1-1 option, there is a weekly group chat support service. The theme is informed by what help young people are asking for, such as coping with anxiety. A team member facilitates the group and the young people join the group through the anonymous account that they have created.

Additionally, an email service is available at any time.



**In addition to these interactive features, Jigsaw.ie has a wide range of quality multimedia Content. This provides trustworthy information to young people and others interested in youth mental health.**

day or night. All supports are accessed by registering and creating a personal account on the Jigsaw website. The service is accessible on any device such as mobile phone, laptop and iPad. Young people maintain their anonymity by choosing the amount of details they provide when setting up an account. Prior to requesting a chat, a young person will complete a questionnaire, similar to an in-person session, which provides the clinician with some information in relation to their mental health.

The benefits of the service is that it empowers young people to talk specifically about what is on their mind and what they are experiencing in relation to their current mental health.

Young people use the live chat or email service to discuss events occurring in their lives in real time, as a way of regulating their emotions in those moments. They can share what is happening for them, at a time that they wish, at a location they choose, for up to 40-50 minutes – and shorter if they prefer.

They do not require a referral and there is no cost. Young people report that they feel listened to, in a non-judgemental way and that they trust that the adult they are sharing with will support them. Clinicians can also share suitable practical resources and signpost other helpful services.



**On our site, you will also find jigsaw.ie/schoolshub, which hosts a number of classroom resources that can be used by schools to deliver part of their mental health and wellbeing curriculum.**

Young people have shared that often they may not be able to access in person face-to-face appointments due to their rural location, lack of finance to access private services, lack of support in their lives in relation to their mental health and due to anxiety or a perception of stigma. It can be a great first step for a young person where there is an awareness that they may be coping with stress within their lives, yet struggling to verbalise the experience in person.

Our team has observed that young people trusting the service is a first step in accessing support for their mental health, or indeed in addition to, or in between, sessions with a mental health professional.

There is no limit on the number of chats that a young person can request from the service, although, it may not be the same clinician each time. The transcripts of each chat between with the clinician can be viewed within their personal account.

Since December 2022, to supplement the *Live Chat*, *Group Chat* and *Email Service*, the online team has commenced *Brief Intervention Video Calls* for those waiting for an appointment with specific Jigsaw sites.

In addition to the clinical team's resources, there is an abundance of helpful resources for teachers, parents and young people on the jigsaw.ie website.



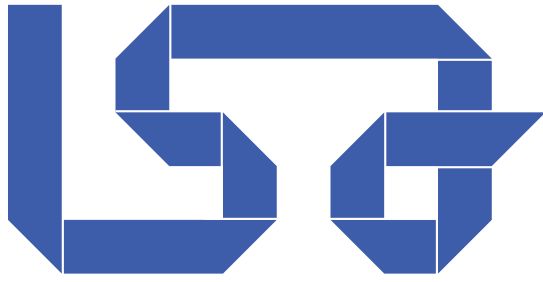
**See the jigsaw website for online services.**



**See the jigsaw website for school staff.**

**Mary Clare Douglas** is the Clinical Manager of Jigsaw's Online Clinical Team. She has over 16 years' postgraduate experience in the area of child and adolescent and adult mental health. She is a registered mental health nurse and accredited Cognitive Behavioural Therapist. Mary Clare has worked in the area of management and leadership for the past 12 years and has experience in hospital and community settings.





# Irish Stammering Association

## What is stammering?

Penny Farrell and Aisling Keogh

**S**tammering (also called stuttering) is a neurological condition used to describe a disruption in the timing and flow of speech when someone is talking. Stammering also includes negative emotions (fear, anxiety, embarrassment) and behaviours (avoidance of speaking and speaking situations). How school staff react to stammering can have a significant impact on the person.

Developmental stammering has a genetic basis. It usually begins in childhood from ages 2-5 years and about 5% of primary children have a stammer. The latest Growing Up in Ireland study (2018) estimates that approximately 1% of the adult population is considered to stammer. This means there is likely to be 1 student who stammers for every 100 students in every school.

Stammering is often thought to be easily recognisable to the listener. However, it is as complex as it is variable. Stammering is not always as obvious as people think. Due to the avoidance of showing stammering, staff may not always realise that a student stammers. Children have reported trying to hide their stammer at school from a young age. This can present as avoiding specific words or situations. In a recent study, all adult participants reported concealing their stammer before the age of 18. The main reason for this was to protect themselves from the stigma associated with stammering. All of these factors - and the associated cognitive load - can have a significant impact on a student's ability to learn.

TRUE	FALSE
Stammering is neurophysiological and is genetic	Being shy or nervous
People who stammer know what they want to say already	Did not attend speech therapy or practise enough
Different factors affect stammering such as: competition to speak, high expectations, time pressures and stigma.	Needs to learn how to breathe properly
Variability – stammering varies day-to-day, situation-to-situation- person-to-person.	They didn't know what to say or were telling a lie

### “OVERCOMING” STAMMERING



*Stammering is neurological and should be considered the same way as dyslexia is – something that is not to be overcome, but understood and accepted.*



*Teachers can play an important role in keeping the school environment safe and supportive for students who stammer, such as supporting a student who stammers to be a confident communicator.*



*I used to think I should pick a job that didn't involve talking but now I know I can be anything I want to be and do anything I want to do ... whether I stammer or not. 5th year student*



## HELPFUL PRACTICES

Listen to what the speaker is saying not how they say it

Assume a person who stammers can be successful in anything they choose to do

Good communication does not equal fluency/ require fluent speech

Understand that stammering fluctuates from day-to-day and week-to-week and in different situations

Assume the student is as competent a communicator as their peers

Ask the student what would help them – advocate for them

Signpost your student to activities and events in the stammering community

Link in with the student to give them the opportunity to share their thoughts concerns and preferences

## UNHELPFUL PRACTICES

Offering advice such as "try again", "take a breath", "think about what you're going to say". Although well-intentioned, this doesn't actually help

Making negative assumptions about your student's communication or knowledge based on their stammer

Thinking that "overcoming" stammering is the only way to be successful

Rushing a student when they are reading and talking

Picking them out to talk without warning

Not taking action to deal with mocking, teasing or bullying

Not exploring accommodations and supporting the student to achieve their potential

Avoiding talking about stammering means it becomes the elephant in the room. Be sensitive but open in talking about stammering with your student

## ACCOMMODATIONS:

- Be aware of, and up to date with, RACE and DARE applications to provide accommodations for students who stammer
- Offer choices to your student in the timing of when they speak (e.g. not waiting last to present)
- Differentiation: Classroom-based presentations could be done in a small group or 1:1 with a teacher. The aim should be to build confidence for the pupil to present more comfortably
- Diversity and inclusion: consider an SPHE class on how to support difference
- Encourage students who stammer to pursue their interests and career aspirations

## GROUPWORK / PRESENTATIONS

- Give consideration to written work
- Offer more time
- Provide smaller group collaboration
- Many students are nervous of presenting. However, research shows this is considerably more stressful when you stammer

## SOURCES OF SUPPORT

The Irish Stammering Association has created a number of supports specifically for teens who stammer. We have a series of workshops addressing the needs of Teens called 'Stammering and...'

ISA has regular support groups for young children and teenagers who stammer as well as parents and families. Upcoming events for young people include our kids 8-12

and teenage support groups, as well as our newly launched gaming club. We have specific talks for teens such as "*Stammering and anxiety*" and "*Stammering and oral exams*". This year ISA also celebrates 10 years of *Walk and Talk* events – an informal opportunity to come along and chat on a weekend stroll. All our events are free to attend and all are welcome. Full details are on on the ISA website.

The ISA also has a number of support groups, Education and Employment Support, as well as offering an outreach service. If you would like the ISA to deliver a talk on how to support someone who stammers to teachers or peer groups, please get in touch.

Our website has all the information and resources you will need. You can also follow us on social media or on our new podcast series

Irish Stammering Association – Home | Facebook

stammeringireland • Instagram photos and videos



SCAN ME



**Aisling Keogh** is ISA's Research Officer and a specialist speech and language therapist working in independent practice.



**Penny Farrell** is ISA's Youth Development Officer and a specialist speech and language therapist working in independent practice.



# INTERNATIONAL Confederation of Principals

## (ICP) Council Meeting Report, Singapore, 2022

Paul Byrne

A meeting of the Council of the International Confederation of Principals (ICP) took place in Singapore from 27 to 30 October, with representatives from 24 countries present. ICP was established in 1990 by Principal Associations from 10 countries – Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, USSR, UK and USA.

ICP, reaching out across all regions of the globe, is non-political and non-sectoral, with members from government and non-government sectors and from both primary and secondary schools. ICP is dedicated to the development, support, and promotion of school leadership globally.

The president of ICP, Professor Peter Kent of ASCAL, opened the council meeting.

In preparation for the meeting the questions listed below, focusing on school leader workload and wellbeing, were shared with the council members:

- Have your school leaders reported an increase in workload over the past 2 years?
- Would your leaders report a change in job satisfaction over this period?
- Have you seen an increase in senior school leaders retiring over the last 2 years?
- Have you seen an increase in school leaders accessing sick leave over this period?
- Is your school system having difficulties recruiting individuals into leadership roles?
- Have you looked outside of the education field to recruit leaders?
- Have you incorporated incentives to attract people to the role?
- Has your school system developed programs to assist school leaders in managing expectations?

Similarly, a set of questions focused on the student voice was shared in advance of the meeting:

- What will – or should – schools of the future look like?
- What do you think students need from schools for the future?
- What have students learned from the last few years?
- What message would you give to future school leaders?

Following Peter Kent's introduction there was a welcome from Dr Shirleen Chee, the President of the Academy of Principals in Singapore who were hosting the event. Dr Chee spoke about the powerful professional development program provided by her organisation, APS. Dr Chee also gave a very detailed description of the Singapore education system where there is significant focus on multiple pathways, student wellbeing and managing teacher workload.

There followed a section on the voices from the regions in relation to framing the future of education and leadership. One lead delegate from each region facilitated a group discussion, laying bare the challenges facing school leaders today. In this section of the meeting some challenges were common across in the discussion groups:

- Teacher shortage, recruitment and retention of teachers is a major issue in all jurisdictions
- Recruitment and retention of school leaders
- The increasing complexity of school leadership
- The need for focused CPD for school leaders
- Overcrowding in classrooms (50 students in some classes in Africa)

Session 2 began with a presentation by Anna Pons on her work with OECD, titled *Reimagining Education*. Anna highlighted section 17 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and how different countries are acting on the



implementation of the conventions. Following her presentation there was a Q&A session and group discussions.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is informed by four core principles:

- Non-discrimination
- The best interests of the child
- The right to life
- Survival and development and respect for the views of the child

The delegates from Ghana school leader's organisation then spoke to the Council, outlining that the Accra Ghana Council 2023 would not be possible due to the financial situation in their country. The Finnish delegation who were to hold the Finnish Lapland Council in 2025 agreed to move their date forward to mid-September 2023. The dates will be circulated when confirmed but the venue is set to be Rovaniemi, in the Finnish Lapland.

Day 2 started with a refresher session from day 1 and a *Graffiti Wall Walk* to examine the thoughts from day 1, outlining the challenges and good practices in each country in attendance.

This was followed by a session on *Student Voice from Across the Globe*, in which ISSU president Caitlin Faye Maniti gave a great input. The issues raised by the students were:

- The need for the teaching of soft skills to be reflected in each country's curriculum
- The need for equity of access to all levels of education in all jurisdictions.
- More cohesive, practical, and accessible mental health supports for students of all ages
- The need for open and honest conversations between all education stakeholders, including capturing the voice of all students including minority groups

There was then a student reflection and input from 5 articulate and engaging students from Singapore, which was followed by a group session on *What Have We Learned from the Students?*

There followed an update on the ICP Strategic Plan given by the executive board members.

Daniel Wisniewski, EFEE General Secretary, gave a presentation on Opportunities for ICP Members to Work with European Federation of Education Employers. Daniel also presented on the EduLead project proposal.

This was followed by the Annual General Meeting including elections.

- ◆ Minutes of previous AGM

- Financial Report. *Sheree Vertigan*
- Executive Reports
- Elections:  
President-Elect, *Mr Leendert-Jan Veldhuyzen (VO – RAAD)*  
Oceania Rep, *Mr Michael Hall (ASPA)*  
Africa Rep, *Mr Alfred Indimuli Kahi (KESSHA)*  
Americas Rep, *Ms Nancy Brady (OPC)*  
Europe Rep, *Ms Maria Doyle (IPPN)*

- General Business

- A Certificate of Commendation was posthumously awarded to Alta van Heerden (RIP) former ICP President who sadly passed away on 24 August 2022. Alta will be sadly missed by the ICP community as a true leader of education in Africa and internationally. The commendation was accepted by her husband Vic who attended via zoom.

Clive Byrne was given a commendation and Certificate of Commendation for his valuable contribution to ICP and world education by Peter Kent. Clive attended by zoom and the presentation was accepted on Clive's behalf by myself.

Sheree Vertigan received lifetime membership of ICP for her work as secretary of ICP over the past eight years.

There were presentation bids by both Singapore and Kenya for the 2024 ICP Conference. Following a vote, Kenya won. The 2024 ICP Conference will take place from 24 to 26 August 2024 in Mombasa, Kenya.

The final session was a *World Café* event in which different groups each discussed one of the questions from:

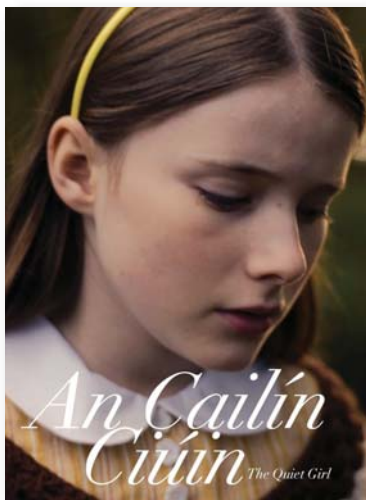
- What are the implications for policy?
- What are the implications for practice?
- What are the implications for research?
- What are the implications for member association?
- What are the implications for the ICP Executive?

The feedback from these discussions and the slides from the various presenters will be made available to the member organisations once collated.

*For more information*



# The Leader Reviews



**Movie Title:** An Cailín Ciúin  
A film by Colm Bairéad

**Date:** 2022

**Reviewer:** Joe Little

**A**n *Cailín Ciúin* opens in the menacing gloom of the home of its nine-year-old child heroine, Cáit (Catherine Clinch). The atmosphere in the isolated farmhouse is dominated by the frequently absent and invariably untruthful father, Da (Michael Patrick). The neglect of Cáit and her three siblings is compounded by the poverty they and their home-making mother (Kate Nic Chonaonaigh) are forced to endure. Both are magnified – if not caused – by Da's drinking, gambling and womanizing.

As Cáit and her sisters prepare to take his lift to school, they discover that their lunch boxes are empty. "She (mother) forgot to make the sandwiches", one of them remarks. Da barks an instruction to grab some bread from the kitchen but, if there is any, Cáit gets none of it. At mid-morning break, hunger forces her to pilfer a cup of milk from a classmate's flask. A pair of pupils chasing past her desk topple it into her lap. A knot of female peers eye her contemptuously as she steals down a corridor – the front of her wet dress gripped tightly – before hopping over the school wall to hide her shame.

Back home in the evening, the mother – metaphorically barefoot and heavily pregnant – is writing to accept her cousin, Eibhlín Ní Chinnsealach's/Eibhlín Kinsella's (Carrie Crowley) offer to take Cáit off her hands for the summer holidays. "Sure, can't they keep her as long as they like", Da tells his wife. "They're your people, aren't they"?

Da brings her to the far-off Kinsella's, indulging all his vices en route. The car radio relays the commentary on a championship hurling match. Da erupts into a bout of cursing when Limerick scores a goal against Waterford, the team he has backed at the bookies. (Research indicates that the goal was scored from a long-distance free puck by Eamonn Cregan in mid-June 1982, placing the film in the same period as Claire Keegan's fine novella, *Foster*, on which it's based.)

The gloom of home pervades Da's car, and this is cleverly conveyed when Da pulls up on the Kinsellas' gravel. We see their barking sheepdog from passenger Cáit's point-of-view in the back seat. A fudged black line, the out-of-focus dark plastic below the car window, bleeds morbidly into frame.

Here, in Gaeltacht na Rinne in West Waterford, the dialogue switches to Irish. This is not a feature of the *Foster* plot. Could it announce an exploration by the filmmaker of the particular importance of "comhbhá" (kinship) in our more Gaelic communities? The brightness of the middle-aged Kinsellas' home life contrasts sharply with what we've witnessed so far, notwithstanding the absence of other children.

The stronger light exposes the grubbiness of Cáit's skin and



the greasiness of her hair. But Eibhlin sets about mending the blemishes with tenderness, most notably with a hundred strokes of a hairbrush. She grooms her guest while singing "A Pháistín Fionn", an ancient paean for a daughter composed anonymously "i nGaeltacht na Rinne sna Déise". It's performed offscreen by Crowley with the sensitivity of near-native of An Rinn.

Despite assuring Cáit that there are no secrets or shame in her and husband Seán's (Andrew Bennett) home, ("Nil náire de dhíth againn anseo"), something's amiss. Seán prefers the television's company to conversing with the two females at the kitchen table. The next morning, Eibhlin invites him to take Cáit with him on his daily round of their farm, but he tells the pair that the work will be "a little (too) hard this week".

Da has carelessly brought Cáit's luggage back home, forcing Eibhlin to improvise by dressing the guest in boy's clothing which, mysteriously, is readily to hand in Cáit's bedroom. Equally mysteriously, its wallpaper features a steam train-themed motif. When Seán relents and brings the girl farming, he panics when she wanders out of his sight and, on finding her, angrily warns her never to wander like that again.

A more controlled but still irritated Seán tells Eibhlin it's not appropriate to be bringing the girl to Sunday Mass again in boys' clothing. She retreats to the bathroom to cry and hours later, when buying Cáit's replacement outfits, she's quietly pleased when the shop assistant tells the child that Eibhlin is a very kind mother to be fitting her out so nicely. On the same trip, when Eibhlin admires an acquaintance's baby in its pram, she reveals under questioning that Cáit is a cousin's child. She's asked if she can "put her working".

"She can turn her hand to anything", is the diplomatic response.

"Isn't she company for you, God help us", remarks the woman with the pram.

A relaxed family routine has finally been established. Seán happily takes Cáit with him around the farm. He invites her to bottle-feed the smaller calves with a diluted formula of powdered milk. Immediately she asks why he deprives them of mother's milk. (Here Bennett is in his milieu, having grown up on a farm in County Limerick. For a non-native speaker his "blas" seems effortless.) He invents a playful challenge, timing her run down the avenue and back to collect the family's mail. The slow-motion close-up images of Cáit in full flight reveal a confident and carefree child, "séideán gaoithe", as gust of wind as Seán calls her.

Clinch masters the chrysalis-like transformation from the undermined and retiring object of Da - who had warned the Kinsellas in her hearing that they should work her hard because she'd eat them out of house and home - to a loving child in the company of fostering adults devoted to each other as a couple and to her.

The *denouement* is triggered at a wake in a neighbour's home. The Kinsellas had helped him unselfishly through his brief illness. Another neighbour, Úna, who nicknames Cáit "An Cailín

Ciúin", offers to walk her home. After pumping her for gossip she addresses her as "óinseach", a female idiot, asking does she not know the Kinsellas' secret. Suffice to say that discovering it deepens the girl's appreciation of her two hosts' intimacies and anxieties. With term-time beckoning, a letter from Cáit's mother heralds the visitor's departure. "Do I have to go back, do I?" she asks. "You can't stay," Eibhlin responds tenderly.

No mother's hug greets Cáit when the Kinsellas deliver her home. Within a minute, a squalling suckling is at the matriarch's breast. Da calls Cáit the Prodigal Child and irritates his wife and the Kinsellas by quizzing her about why she's sneezing. As her hosts depart, Cáit chases the couple's car down her avenue. As Seán returns from unfastening the gate she leaps into his arms greeting him as her father.

Eibhlin can be heard sobbing in the passenger seat, and Cáit, still in Seán's arms, sees Da approaching quickly on foot. She repeats the word "Da", but in this changing context she sounds less assured. In this writer's mind, a phrase echoes from her happier times with Seán, when, after running back with the mail, Cáit tells her foster father: "My mother says men are not worth bothering with". "And she might be right", he responds half seriously.

Incidentally, Waterford won that hurling match by a single point, so Da won his bet. On arriving at the Kinsellas', Cáit confided in them that he had already lost a heifer in a card game. She added that her mother had no money to pay the agricultural contractor who normally cut their hay and she warned that it would enrage Da if Eibhlin sent her cousin the money she required. Da blithely lied to the Kinsellas, boasting that a fine crop had already been harvested.

This beautifully conceived, shot and edited film provides deep insights into the controlling personality of the addict. Like the book that inspired it, it's nuanced yet vivid. Its chief warning is that neglect laced with sarcasm is the most insidious form of abuse.

#### Footnote:

At the age of 9 the reviewer, Joe Little, spent a year in Coláiste na Rinne i gContae Phort Láirge, close to where, at the same age, the film's heroine experiences her happier moments.



**Joe Little** was born in West Belfast and moved to Limerick at the age of eight. There he attended Crescent College Comprehensive. He reported for RTÉ Television's Today Tonight, BBC NI's Spotlight and presented RTÉ Radio's Morning Ireland before serving as the station's Religious and Social Affairs Correspondent from 1994-2019. He is married to Mary and they have three adult children.

**Title:** The 32 – An Anthology of Irish Working-Class Voices

**ISBN:** 978-1-80018-024-6

**Publisher:** Unbound.com

**Date:** July 2021

**Reviewer:** Noel Kelly

Every now and again a book comes your way which speaks to you on a different level, as if it was written for your attention and written in a way that reminds you of where you have travelled from and the experiences you encountered along the way.

Why has this book grabbed my attention? I once lived in a council estate in Clondalkin. My parents had 6 children in a three-bed house. My father worked for Dublin Bus and my mother stayed home to look after us, where she constantly struggled to make ends meet. I attended the local primary and secondary schools.

When I was growing up, I had no realisation that the area I was living in was labelled as 'deprived' or that the schools I attended were 'disadvantaged'. Maybe that's down to my mother's mantra, to her six boys, which was always *'it's how you live and not where you live that matters'*. While in school I had some outstanding teachers, who made school a fantastic place to be.

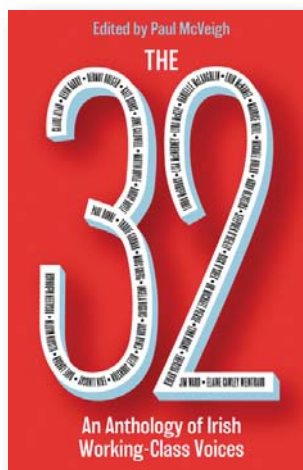
These mentors encouraged me so much that I became the first member of my immediate family to complete the Leaving Certificate, go to College, achieve a degree in Applied Chemistry, continue on to get a Higher Diploma in Education and years later complete a Masters in Educational Leadership. When I completed my Degree, I went back to my former secondary school, Collinstown Park Community College, and worked there for 16 amazing years, alongside the most dedicated and passionate teachers and educational leaders.

Along my educational journey I have encountered many moments and comments that resonate with this book on many levels. Comments such as:

*"You're from Neilstown and you made it to College" or "Hard to believe you're a teacher with that accent!"* and, worst of all, *"Don't think you're something special just because you went to College and got a Degree"*.

Anyway, now you know a bit more about me, it's time to talk about the book. This is not a typical book review – I'm not sure I have the reviewing experience to do so. Rather, I will share why this book meant so much to me.

The 32 – An Anthology of Irish Working-Class Voices was created following the success of Common People, – an



anthology of working-class writers edited by Kit de Waal. Edited by Paul McVeigh, it's a collection of stories from both well-known and new writers, which celebrates working-class voices from across Ireland. 32 refers to the number of contributing writers.

Paul McVeigh describes himself as a working-class boy from Belfast. In his introduction Paul uses some great analogies such as *'leaving a trail of breadcrumbs'*, *'sending the elevator down'*, *'successful working-class artists often travel between two worlds'* and they are *'likely to pull over and offer you a lift'*. These remarks are brought to life in the reading of the 32 stories.

As with any collection, there are some pieces which grab your attention and connect with you and your life story. While the whole of the book was moving and insightful, I found particular resonances to my own life story in:

- Two-Word Terms by broadcaster Rick O'Shea
- The Likes of You by writer and teacher Roddy Doyle
- A Lost Goodbye by Senator Lynne Ruane
- Lost, Found, Remembered by journalist Lyra McKee
- Once You Solve the Mystery, the Story Ends by writer Lisa McLnerney

The background of the contributors to The 32 is eclectic. The book concludes with *The Contributors*, which provides the reader with a brief insight into the background of the 32 writers, whose work and personal experiences bring the book to life.

There is much in this book for the reader, irrespective of the side of the track they were born on and the life experiences they have had. For some readers it will be an enriching journey of discovery into an unfamiliar world. For others, like me, it will be a trip, laden with nostalgia down memory lane. Either way, it won't always be an easy read but it will be challenging and ultimately rewarding.



**Noel Kelly** is Principal of Griffeen Community College, Lucan, Dublin. He has worked with DDLETB since 2001, initially as a Science and Chemistry teacher and then as HSCLE Coordinator in Collinstown Park Community College. In 2016 he was appointed Deputy Principal of Greenhills Community College. In 2018 he became Deputy Principal in Coláiste Pobail Setanta. He tutors on the Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Leadership and Management (Future Leaders) programme in NUI Maynooth.

## Write a Review?

Would you like to write review of a book or movie relevant to education, schools and schooling, management & leadership or anything just interesting...? A long review can be in region of 700 words, a shorter (and snappier) review in the region of 200 words.



# Abbey CBS Tipperary Duo's Historic BT Young Scientist Victory

John Kiely

The Abbey School Tipperary community could not be more proud of Shane O'Connor and Liam Carew's historic success, as overall prize winners at the 2023 BT Young Scientist & Technologists Competition. This prestigious award recognises and celebrates the innovative and ground-breaking research that Shane and Liam conducted over the last three years.



Michael's Boys School, The Monastery N.S. and Mount Bruis N.S. along with extended family, neighbours and friends joined in the celebrations.

Shane and Liam's project, conducted over a period of three years, aimed to evaluate the impact of secondary education on the mental, physical, and social well-being of students. The study was based on the premise that secondary education plays a critical role in shaping the lives of young people and helps to lay the foundation for their future. It aimed to shed light on the various aspects of secondary education that have the most profound impact on students and help to identify areas where improvements can be made.

Their project was titled "Assessing the Impact of Second Level Education on Key Aspects of Adolescents' Life and Development". Students, staff, past and present all over the world, and the wider Tipperary community were overjoyed to see Liam and Shane presented with their winner's trophy in the RDS by Minister for Education Norma Foley TD and managing director of BT Ireland, Shay Walsh.

Monday 16 January will long be remembered for the incredible homecoming given to Liam and Shane. Representatives from the boys' primary schools St.

The study was carried out by conducting a survey of students from our school, an all-boys school and from numerous other single-sex schools, co-ed schools, DEIS schools and schools from the voluntary sector in Ireland. The survey collected data on a range of factors, including students' academic performance, mental health, physical health and social relationships. The results were then analysed to determine the impact of secondary education on these various aspects of students' lives.

The findings of the study were both insightful and concerning. It was found that secondary school education



“The next chapter for Shane and Liam is to represent Ireland at the European Union Contest for Young Scientists, which takes place in Brussels in September. They will also attend the 64th Annual London International Youth Science Forum this summer”



# BT YOUNG SCIENTIST & TECHNOLOGY Exhibition



had a significant impact on students' mental and physical health, as well as their social well-being. One of the key findings was that, whilst inequality is prevalent in DEIS schools, exponential improvements in areas of pastoral care and physical health are quickly closing this gap. To quote directly from the students' research "secondary school is a vital social outlet for students, and this can be seen across our interviews, focus groups and in particular our survey".

In addition to the findings, the study also recommended several ways to improve the secondary education system to better support the well-being of students. These included improving the quality of teacher-student relationships, providing more opportunities for student engagement and creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Shane and Liam's success at the 2023 BT Young Scientist Technologists Competition is a testament to their dedication and hard work over the last three years. It is also a reflection of the support provided by the school to the boys by their teachers Niamh McCarthy and Eavan Ryan.

The impact of the study extends far beyond our school and our local community. Their work will serve as a valuable resource for educators, parents and policy makers, as it provides valuable insights into the impact of secondary education on the lives of young people. By bringing attention to the importance of supporting students' mental and physical health and their social well-being, their research has the potential to make a lasting impact on the Irish second level education system.

The next chapter for Shane and Liam is to represent Ireland at the European Union Contest for Young Scientists, which takes place in Brussels in September. They will also attend the 64th Annual London International Youth Science Forum this summer. We wish the boys the very best as they represent their school, county and country with their amazing research.



**John Kiely** is Principal of The Abbey School in Tipperary. Abbey prides itself on the provision of a balanced holistic education where students of all academic abilities are helped to achieve their potential. This is coupled with a broad extra-curricular programme that reaches out to the varied interests of all its students.





## Winner of the NAPD Award for the Best Overall School in the Republic of Ireland

Daryl Dunne & Helen Teehan

**S**t Joseph's Secondary School Rush, is a CEIST school located in North County Dublin. Founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1961, the school was established to educate the girls in the community. In 1980, the school began to enrol boys.

The school is steeped in our CEIST values and the theme of 'catering for the needs, and celebrating, our community' will run throughout our story from first-time attendees at the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition (BTYSTE) in 2018, to Best Overall School in the Republic of Ireland in 2023.



school. This was the spark that ignited our school's flame for STEM-based competitions, celebrating all victories no matter how small, motivating more and more students to participate in future.

Fast forward to January 2019, we were back in the RDS again, but this time with 7 projects. We introduced 'Young Scientist' as an optional module in our school's Transition

Year programme. Students in this module were given autonomy to explore their own interests. By getting our students to make connections between the Sciences, Mathematics and Coding we have been able to guide them into devising some very interesting and topical projects over the years.

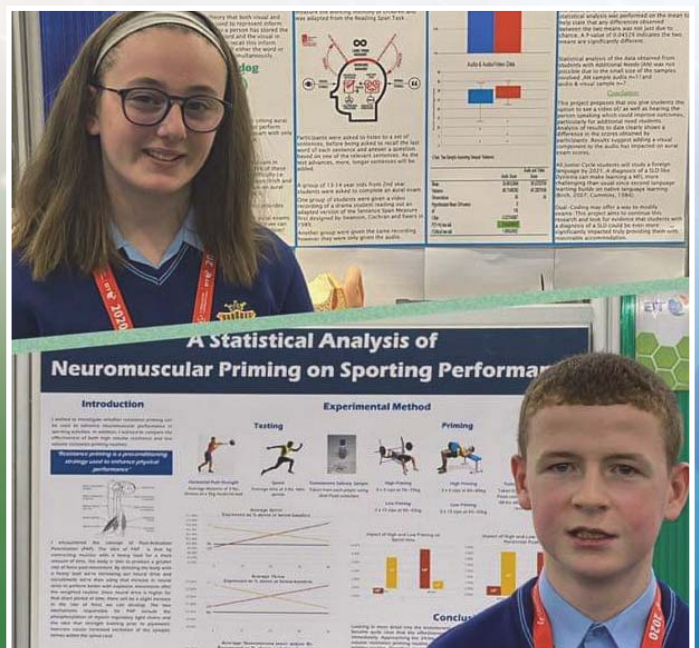
### CELEBRATE EVEN SMALL VICTORIES

In October 2017, our then Principal, Patricia Hayden, was elated with the news that we had our first ever project qualify for the BTYSTE. Elle, Katie and Charly (left-to-right), proudly displayed their project on Chronotypes and Social Jetlag in the RDS in January 2018. We came away that year with no awards but we found reason to celebrate nonetheless.

The group presented their project to their peers, the senior leadership team and members of the staff on their return to

### ON THE MAP:

One of the initial motivational factors our school had for participating in BTYSTE came from wanting to get more female students studying the Sciences at Senior Cycle and





# BT YOUNG SCIENTIST & TECHNOLOGY Exhibition



at 3rd level. Targeting the academic capital of female students through STEM-based competitions, we aimed to provide these students with experiences of Science in the real world, which we hoped would transfer over to their academic interests.

It will be no surprise to hear how excited we were when in 2020 Emma McCann, then in 2nd Year (now 5th Year), became the first ever St Joseph's Secondary School student to take to the stage to accept first place in the Junior Individual Social and Behavioural category. Having claimed our first ever award, we did not have to wait long for a second winner. Niall Rudden, also in 2nd Year at the time (now 5th Year), minutes later picked up second place in the Junior Individual Biological and Ecological category. The night was capped off with the announcement that one of our teachers, Daryl Dunne, won the Educator of Excellence in the Social and Behavioural category. Arriving into the school on the next Monday morning the participating students and their teachers were met with a standing ovation from their peers and colleagues who lined the

school's corridors. We were used to the traditional celebrations, but this time was different, as we brought home some silverware.

At this point the BTYSTE had become a significant date in our school's calendar. Interest in participating in the programme continued to increase the following year. Our TY module had expanded into two classes. An established cohort of dedicated students was back again, having developed their projects further from the previous year's competition and the open-call unearthed a vast amount of budding young scientists. Ultimately, any student who wished to apply was given the opportunity and support. The importance of providing equal opportunity is embedded in our ethos as a school, with our aim being to expose as many of our students as possible to the experience of the BTYSTE.

The 2021 and 2022 BTYSTE went digital, but not even the global COVID-19 pandemic could dampen the enthusiasm of our students. We replaced the A0 posters with slideshows, 3-minute videos were made to show the







# BT YOUNG SCIENTIST & TECHNOLOGY Exhibition



exhibitors our work and the judging was done in classrooms over video conferencing platforms. Over the course of these two years, we celebrated another five category winners, one special award winner, one display award and five highly commended rosettes.

For this year's competition, in 2023, we had eleven projects qualify for display. We were delighted to win 6 major awards and 2 highly commended rosettes;

- Éabha McBride and Layla Nolan won first prize in the Junior Group Technology Category for their project; *Using machine learning and classification algorithms to improve the UV index formula.*
- Kamaya Gogna and Allison Joyce won second prize in the Junior Group Technology Category for their project; *Using machine learning for biome recognition on earth and beyond.*
- Martha Feely and Lily Carrick won first prizes in the Junior Group Biological and Ecological Category for their project; *An investigation into the public's perceptions and fears of avian flu.*
- Aaron Dignam and Ciarán Leddy won the META sponsored Special Award for their project; *GaelTalk – a virtual reality immersive Irish Language learning experience that can promote the practice of the Irish language.*
- Daryl Dunne won the Educator of Excellence in the Technology category, sponsored by Analog Devices.

The icing on the cake was when our school was announced as the 'Best School in the Republic of Ireland', an award sponsored by NAPD. We were elated.

Our motivation to encourage students to enter projects continues to increase as the years pass by, for a number of reasons. First is the fantastic experience BTYSTE gives the students. The critical thinking skills, scientific communication abilities and confidence in presenting that

students develop from participating in BTYSTE is invaluable to them and will serve them for their entire lives. Secondly, the team our school has developed around BTYSTE and the support we have got from the Senior Leadership Team has made growing our school's involvement so easy and rewarding.

Spearheaded by the commitments of teachers Helen Teehan, Danny Murray, Chris O'Connell, Kevin Delahunty, Chloe Ryan and Daryl Dunne, our schools Science, Mathematics and Computer Science Departments have shown a flare for inquiry-based methodologies and collaboration.

Seeing what the team has built is immensely satisfying and the recent tradition of participation in STEM-based competitions in St Joseph's Secondary School Rush is well and truly embedded into our roots. Principal Daragh Nealon and Deputy Principals Darren Byrne, Judi O' Boyle and Ciarán Reade are immensely proud of our BTYSTE journey and of the enthusiasm, commitment and dedication of students, teachers and the entire Science, Mathematics and Computer Science Departments in the school.

**Helen Teehan** has a BSc Hons in Physics and a Higher Diploma in Education from University College Dublin. **Daryl Dunne** has a BSc in Biological & Biomedical Science and a Professional Master in Education from Maynooth University.



Both Helen and Daryl have a Post-graduate Certificate in 21st Century Teaching & Learning from Trinity College, Dublin.





## Young Scientists Move On to Bigger Things

Rhona Togher & Eimear O'Carroll

We both attended Ursuline Convent in Sligo and took an interest in Science and Technology from a young age, but it was Transition Year that really allowed that interest to flourish. We had the opportunity to work on STEM projects outside a traditional classroom setting and that opened up our minds to all the possibilities with Science. It was through TY Science projects that Rhona and I bonded and deepened our friendship.

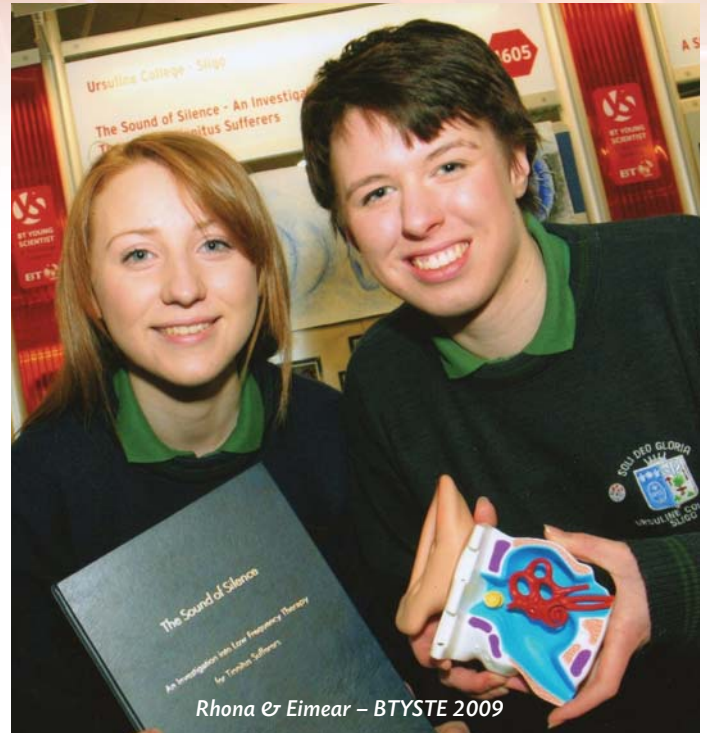
Mr Gilmartin, our Technology teacher, and Mr Carolan, our Physics teacher (and mentor on our Young Scientist projects), were particularly encouraging from TY all the way through Senior Cycle.

In 2008, we first took part in the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition (BTYSTE) with a project about teenagers' ability to localise sound. This was inspired both by our love of Music and interest in Physics. The experience of working on a Science experiment, driven by our own passions and curiosity, was highly motivating.

We received overwhelming support and encouragement from teachers, family, and the judges at the Young Scientist when our project received first place in the Senior Chemical, Physical, and Mathematical Group. BTYSTE also provides an inspiring platform for meeting other students from all over Ireland with similar interests in Science and Technology. Lifelong friendships are forged at BTYSTE.

In January 2009 we returned to the BTYSTE with 'The Sound of Silence', a project testing a new sound therapy for people who suffered from tinnitus. The project won the overall runner up prize and the Health Research Board Award for Medical Innovation. We were taken aback by the huge public response to our project.

Our fascination was sound and noise and its impact on society. In May 2009, one month before sitting the Leaving



Cert, with the support and encouragement of the Local Enterprise Office in Sligo, we founded Restored Hearing (now called Lios) to build technologies which would enable a quieter world.

Inspired to use our knowledge of the physics of sound, we decided to apply this to a real-world problem. Over the summer months, before going on to study physics at UCD and Edinburgh University respectively, the first version of SoundRelief tinnitus sound therapy was created.

*“ We have continued to expand our company by creating new products, using our physics backgrounds to solve various challenges and provide practical and efficient solutions to some of the world's most pressing issues ”*





## BT YOUNG SCIENTIST & TECHNOLOGY Exhibition



As lovers of music, and fans of loud gigs, we had both experienced tinnitus, which is a ringing in the ears. Tinnitus is a really personal and emotional issue for so many people and their families, who were crying out for new treatment options. Further research revealed that tinnitus is a common chronic problem for up to one in ten people worldwide.

The therapy is delivered via an app, making it accessible and affordable, and has gone on to be used in over 80 countries worldwide.

We have continued to expand our company by creating new products, using our Physics backgrounds to solve various challenges and provide practical and efficient solutions to some of Science and Medicine's most pressing challenges.

Working with many people who suffered permanent hearing damage and tinnitus from noisy workplaces, we were inspired to create a new acoustic material to reduce noise pollution. SoundBounce is an advanced acoustic

material that works better than traditional sound-dampening materials, particularly at low frequencies. Low-frequency noise is a significant challenge in engines, vibrations, and airflow products. This advanced material is transforming industries such as aerospace, automotive, construction and power generation. This solution delivers superior noise attenuation without the bulk required by traditional acoustic materials, while remaining cost-effective, thin and non-toxic.

Our business has since grown through successful customer pilots, commercial and technical partnerships and investment. In 2020 Lios partnered with the European Space Agency (ESA) on a joint project to integrate SoundBounce technology into next-generation launch vehicles. As pioneers in advanced acoustic materials, Lios is working with ESA's Future Launchers Preparatory Programme (FLPP) to develop, test and qualify SoundBounce as a new acoustic protection material for launch vehicle fairings.

Current acoustic and vibration materials in launch vehicles are thick and heavy to absorb the high levels of low-frequency noise generated at the launch and separation flight stages. This reduces the volume available for the payload, or cargo, that launch vehicles carry. SoundBounce has the potential to mitigate the effects of this harsh environment and protect the sensitive payload (satellites or delicate instrumentation).

This past year, Lios was honoured with the top prize at SheLovesTech, the world's largest acceleration platform for women in technology. Today Lios has a team of 15 passionate experts in material Science, Physics, licensing, Mathematical modelling, Marketing and Chemistry.

And so, from a spark of curiosity about the world and a BT Young Scientist project, a global business has emerged.



RTÉ at BT YSTE Lios

## The Admissions to School Act – Is it Working?



David Ruddy  
B.L.

There is much public (and deserved) discourse about celebrating the Good Friday Agreement on its 25th anniversary. There are no such plans to mark the 25th anniversary of the Education act. This seminal piece of legislation gave statutory recognition to the role of Patrons, Board of Managements (BoMs), Parent Associations, the Inspectorate and the Principal, to mention but a few. Thereafter, followed the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act 2004. The most recent significant piece of legislation was the Education (Admissions to School) Act 2018. This Act sought to streamline the admission process and to prohibit discrimination in relation to persons with special education needs.

**The Admissions Act has not been fully road tested yet. There are pressure points, as highlighted. Some schools feel that the special education staff are being increasingly diverted to deal with behavioural issues. There is much frustration with the unavailability of vital supports for vulnerable students.**

In 2020, schools responded to the commencement of the 2018 Act with the publication of new admission policies which reflected the thrust of the legislation. A novel feature was the publication of the annual admission notice, which brought a new level of transparency to all schools. Parents could establish the number of places available in any school and the closing date for applications. Parents and students did not need to attend for interview or pay an upfront voluntary contribution. Equally, parents were required to inform schools if they had been offered places in other schools. Schools were afforded the right to share information about placements.

Principals found themselves as the first point of contact in relation to offering – or refusing – applications. In turn, parents could appeal a refusal to the BoM. If unsuccessful with the BoM appeal, there is a second opportunity for parents to take a Section 29 appeal. The Section 29 appeal is paper based and avoids the need for a face-to-face hearing, as was the case previously.

By and large, all the above appears to have been well received by parents and schools alike. The pressure point appears to have revolved around the creation of special classes in some schools. There is increasing evidence to suggest that pre-2018 and after the Act, a very large

number of special classes have been opened, particularly in the primary school sector. The creation of these classes was driven mainly by local demand, often within the school. Whilst most post-primary schools have opened special classes, there is a lot of pent up demand due to the number of feeder primary schools with special classes. The Department of Education is empowered under the Act to designate schools to open special classes in the event the school is reluctant to do so. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and Tusla can now designate schools to accept certain students with complex needs.

Schools that are accommodating students in special classes, some with complex needs, can find the experience to be very rewarding but equally they experience challenges. The school culture changes, in that whole school staff 'buy in' is required. Some school staffs are wary of the unknown and sometimes feel ill-equipped to accommodate this change. Challenging behaviour can often be a characteristic of some students with complex needs. Schools are best placed to deal with these behaviours, when they rehearse challenging scenarios and are clear, in the absence of national guidelines, about what legally is expected of them. In the event of a physical intervention being warranted, staff need to know what are the conditions that merit such an intervention and who is best placed to put the intervention in place. *A Behaviour of*

*Concern Policy*, as an appendix to the code of behaviour and approved by the BoM, can give reassurance and confidence to staff. All students are subject to the *Code of Behaviour*. However, there must be accommodations for students with complex needs.

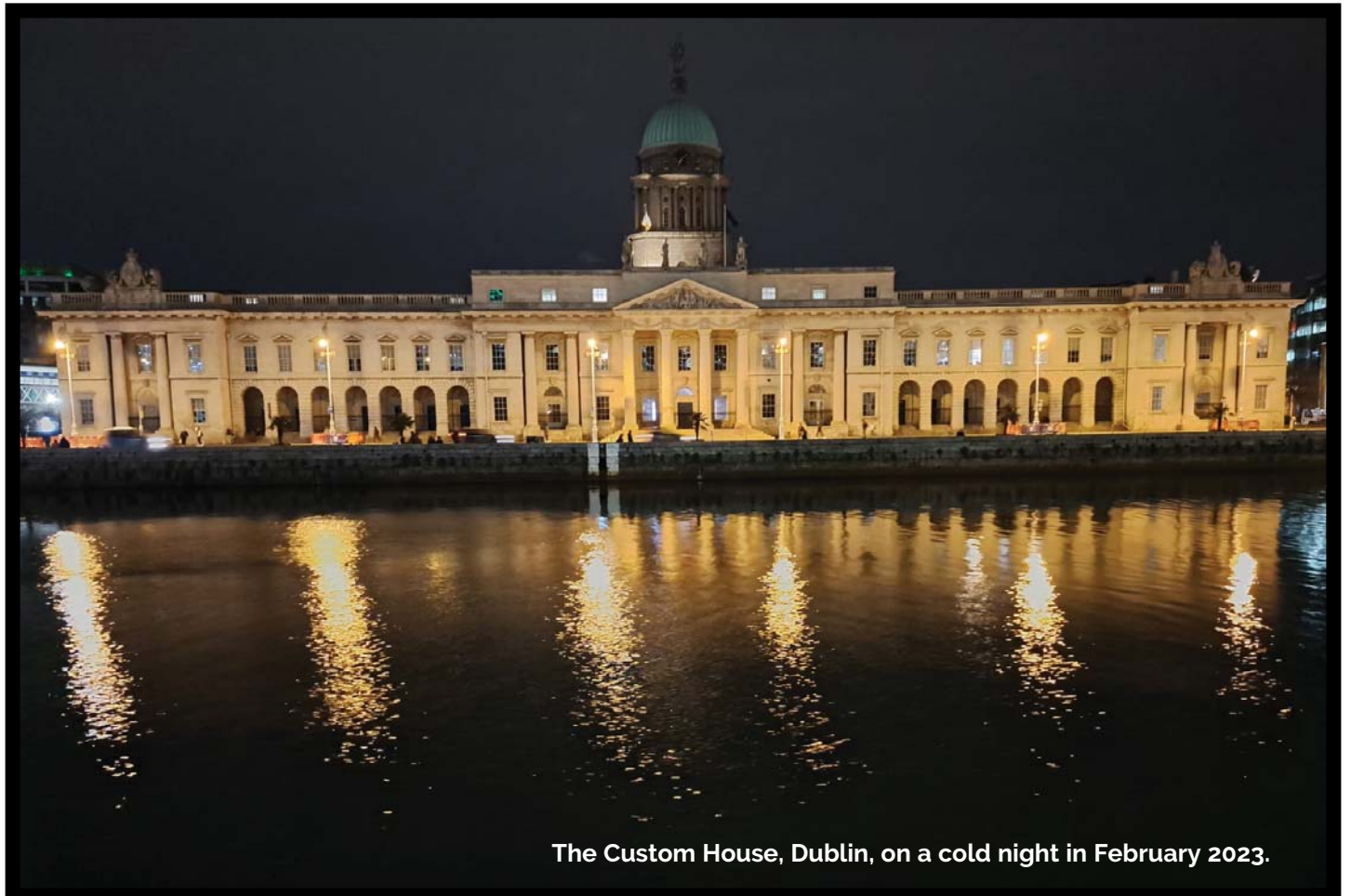
The Admissions Act has not been fully road tested yet. There are pressure points, as highlighted. Some schools feel that the special education staff are being increasingly diverted to deal with behavioural issues. There is much frustration with the unavailability of vital supports for vulnerable students.

There are significant dividends in some areas and challenges in others. Schools have demonstrated remarkable resilience in coping with change, even when the demands are exacting.



*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](mailto:druddy@mhc.ie)**



The Custom House, Dublin, on a cold night in February 2023.



UCD  
INNOVATION  
ACADEMY



Alan Morgan

## *Six ways to apply a creative mindset in your classroom*

Students should be encouraged to create and innovate rather than just accrue knowledge. Most schools are intent on returning to 'normal' as we recover from the pandemic – but 'normal' is officially outdated! The 'normal' is an education system that was designed for the 20th century and has yet to adapt in real and demonstrable ways to the needs and wants of the 21st century. Henceforth, 21st Century Learning is now crucial.

Teaching methods have not changed substantially for decades. We line students up in rows and we teach them to remember and regurgitate knowledge based on standardised testing for all. Many of our teachers are disillusioned and disempowered. Students too.

Does this sound familiar?

At University College Dublin's Innovation Academy we work with educators to bring creativity and innovation into education. We believe it is essential to transform the education system in Ireland, and globally which remains focused on the consumption of knowledge, even though, in today's world, knowledge is ubiquitous. We need to recognise this and instead design education to focus on what we do with knowledge.

I offer 6 key takeaways for educators, drawn from more than 10 years of cultivating creative mindsets in education to help reignite the passion that brought teachers into the profession in the first place and to ensure that teachers and students have the skills needed to teach and work in the 21st century:

### 1. EMPATHY

The introduction & development of empathy in the classroom is essential. For students, it has enormous benefits to healthy social and emotional functioning and the presence of empathy is related to positive academic, social, psychological, and personal developmental outcomes. Empathy education is now seen as being just as important as core subjects such as maths. In general, there are three types of empathy:

- Emotional empathy – the practice of feeling what another person feels
- Cognitive empathy – putting yourself, mentally, in another's shoes
- Compassionate empathy – action toward someone because of their circumstance

Simple techniques can be introduced into the classroom, such as listening to understand rather than listening to respond. When students are exhibiting emotions, seeking to understand why they are feeling the way they are. Why are they displaying these emotions? Then allowing them the opportunity to discuss, so as they can understand their own feelings a little clearer. Another good technique is to promote compassionate empathy. This can be done by creating value for others outside the classroom. Projects such as collecting items for a local food bank, making cards for the local nursing home or fundraising for a cause. These are all ways to help students learn how important it is to work as a community and recognise there are others in the world they can help.

Research shows that empathy is linked to a range of positive effects in young people from reduced prejudice and aggression to better academic performance. Empathy education can increase young people's sense of belonging in school. Teaching empathy and creating an empathetic culture within the classroom is essential for the development of a creative mindset in students. Recent evidence from neuroscience demonstrates that when students are taught empathy and understanding their academic achievements improve.

It's worth noting that Professor Pat Dolan from NUI Galway is very active in this space and doing wonderful research and work on Empathy Education.

### 2. CREATE A SAFE PSYCHOLOGICAL SPACE

Students need a space in which no one is afraid to ask a silly question or to propose a blue-sky idea. Consider inviting

students to share a story openly with the whole class through an object with personal meaning to them. This breaks down barriers and creates an environment where no one is afraid and there is support in a co-creating environment.

### 3. ENCOURAGE FAILURE

When you are failing, you are learning. When you are failing, you are reinventing. When you are failing, you are reimagining. Most education systems around the world do not allow for failure. In fact, we are sometimes punished for failing. We take the opposite approach and the rewards are rich.

### 4. INTRODUCE CO-CREATIVE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The diversity of our student base is one of the richest sources of learning in our classrooms. Taking this insight into our classroom is an amazing source of creativity. Tapping into this wealth of knowledge and cultural diversity by creating a co-creative learning environment dramatically expands the potential for building a creative and innovative mindset. From my experience, without exception, when students are invited to be co-creators and collaborators in learning, they encourage each other, an environment of empathy is created and the exchange of ideas and experience of learning from each other is both rich and long lasting, giving students a voice in the learning and empowering them in their own learning journey. Building a community of practice among students is key.

### 5. REIMAGINE THE WAY WE TEACH

We are hardwired to do things in certain ways. How can we challenge ourselves to think differently? In our work with educators, we ask them to consider American writer and academic Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey – the hero recognizes a call to action and steps across the threshold, from where they find the solution in a place they have never been before and returns home victorious. Identify the barriers or baggage that impedes our work and leave that baggage behind. I challenge educators to cross the threshold as laid out in Campbell's thinking – that point of no return – and come back with the magic elixir.

### 6. INTRODUCE THE ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET

An entrepreneurial mindset draws from entrepreneurship principles, but it is not being an entrepreneur and it is not about starting businesses. It's a way of thinking that enables us to overcome challenges, be decisive and accept responsibility for the outcomes of our decisions. It's about constantly looking for ways to improve, by learning from our mistakes and failures. There are 8 key competencies within an entrepreneurial mindset:

- creativity and innovation
- opportunity recognition
- flexibility and adaptability
- resilience and self-direction
- comfort with risk
- value creation
- future orientation
- initiative

Bringing the competencies of an entrepreneurial mindset into our classrooms is a crucial step to develop a 21st century learning environment.

The next iteration of The Professional Certificate / Diploma in Creativity & Innovation in Education, delivered fully online, will be June 2023 (see below). The June Summer School is delivered over three modules beginning with the first module from Tuesday 6 June to Friday 9 June. Module 2 is from Monday 12 June to Friday 16 and the final module delivered from Monday 19 June 19 to Friday.

On completion of these three modules and submission of deliverables, educators will have completed the Certificate stage of the programme. They can then continue to the Diploma stage which begins in September 2023. The Diploma stage is a self-directed and fully supervised learning module in which students take their learnings from the Certificate stage and implement an Action Learning Project in their school/classroom.

**UCD INNOVATION ACADEMY**

Open for applications and partnerships

**Professional Diploma in Creativity and Innovation for Education**

June 2023 | Professional Certificate with pathway for Professional Diploma | Modules over three weeks

<b>Module 1: Creativity &amp; Innovation:</b>	6th - 9th June
<b>Module 2: The Entrepreneurial Mindset</b>	12th -16th June
<b>Module 3: Creative Leadership</b>	19th - 23rd June

- As educators, we must keep pace with our rapidly changing world, and adapt to what we now understand about the neuroscience of learning.
- By developing our own creative and entrepreneurial mindsets we can help our students to fully realise their capacity for innovation, for the good of society.

QR Code

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 Website: [www.innovationacademy.ie](http://www.innovationacademy.ie)

**Alan Morgan** is an entrepreneurial specialist and programme director at University College Dublin Innovation Academy.

# The National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education

## We unite. We support. We advocate.



Eileen O'Rourke

The National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE) is the voice of special education management, representing special schools, along with primary schools and post primary schools that have special classes. We directly support our member schools and BOMs, and advocate for them with the DE, NCCA, NCSE and Oireachtas and we collaborate with all the relevant stakeholders and management bodies.

NABMSE has recently been working to support member schools that wish to provide Senior Cycle programmes of learning for students who cannot access any of the existing Leaving Certificate programmes. These are the most vulnerable students in our schools. They have a right to access, engage with, and achieve in programmes of learning which give them the potential to develop knowledge and skills in areas of learning which align with their interests and abilities.

It is central to the dignity and self-worth of these students that the qualifications and certification they receive are nationally recognised and accredited. This will give these young graduates from our schools the opportunity to progress in these fields of learning post-school and increase their likelihood of obtaining meaningful employment in their areas of interest in the future.

The support we are developing for our schools is in the form of a QQI Co-operative, where school co-ordinators come together to review/update and develop new programmes, develop a wide range of assessment modes, share teaching and learning best practice and support each other at every stage of their engagement in the QQI process.

NABMSE is recruiting a Co-operative Leader to lead this collaborative process and provide advice, training and support for the schools either through the co-operative or at school level. We have also developed a range of quality assurance structures, processes and roles to support the co-operative schools to maintain the highest standards required by QQI.

We are excited by the potential of this initiative to enhance the engagement and achievement of the most vulnerable students in our care. We envisage that our co-operative will grow and develop over time, so that these opportunities can be offered to many more of the Senior Cycle students in our care.

People are aware of the recent acceleration in the provision of special classes in mainstream post primary schools across the country. In NABMSE we have a wealth of experience and expertise in our special schools, which are, in effect, specialist centres of education and care. We want to build on that experience and use it to help

mainstream schools just beginning the journey in the provision of education and care for children in new special classes.

NABMSE is delighted to begin a new collaborative journey with NAPD. NABMSE and NAPD are both deeply committed to the provision of a comprehensive suite of supports to post primary schools, which have recently opened a new special class or who will do so in the near future.

Our first NABMSE-NAPD collaborative event is a full day focus group/seminar for post primary schools in Kildare Education Centre on Monday 20 March. Details are available on the NABMSE and NAPD websites. Registration is via the Kildare Education Centre training calendar: [www.eckildare.ie/coursebooking/cpd-course-calendar.html](http://www.eckildare.ie/coursebooking/cpd-course-calendar.html)

If there are specific areas /topics we should focus on, please email: [info@nabmse.ie](mailto:info@nabmse.ie) and we will have these addressed at the seminar.

Our head office, based in Kildare Education and Support Centre, (045 533 753), can assist with general queries and with queries on training, advice and support needs. Geraldine, our office administrator, will be able to advise on membership and registration for upcoming seminars and training.

**Eileen O'Rourke,**  
**General Secretary, NABMSE**



**Eileen O'Rourke** is the General Secretary of NABMSE, which is the voice of Special Educational Needs Management in Ireland. Eileen is passionate about equity, inclusion and social justice in Education.



# TENI School and Family Support Services

Hannah Solley, TENI

The Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) is a non-profit, member-driven organisation founded in 2006. Our vision is a world where all people, regardless of gender identity or expression, enjoy full acceptance, equality and human rights. Its mission is to advance the rights and equality, and improve the lives, of trans people and their families.

One of the areas of TENI's work is supporting families and young people. Our Family Support and Education Officer works closely with parents, family members and young people to make sure that they are linked in with support groups and other families in our community. We strive to create a community network for families of trans people, so that they can build a sense of belonging and feel less isolated in this new family journey.

TENI works closely with both primary and secondary schools and with organisations that interact with young people to offer advice, guidance and ongoing support, as well as delivering trans awareness trainings. TENI has been working with schools for the past 10 years to help school leaders and staff gain the confidence to provide dedicated support to their trans and non-binary students.

Helpful resources on how to support transgender students are on the NAPD website under Very Useful Guides in a document called *Gender Identity and Gender Expression – Guiding Principles and Procedures*.

TENI also offers families one-to-one support and guidance, either in person or via zoom, depending on the location. We also have a wide variety of support groups:

- **TransParenCI** is our parent and adult family member support group, open to parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents etc. The group meets monthly in Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Kerry. This group also meets monthly via zoom. This group is facilitated by parents of trans people, so there is a knowledge and understanding of the challenges and emotions that parents can experience.
- **Transformers** is our young person's support group for ages 13-18. This group meets monthly in Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Kerry. This group also meets monthly via zoom. This group is facilitated by a qualified therapist or similarly qualified person.

Both these groups meet at the same time in the same venue, but in separate spaces for privacy. This way, both parents and young people receive support, whilst also supporting each other.

- **TransParenCI Minis** is a support group specifically for parents of children who are age 12 and under. Often the needs of families of younger children are different to those of teens. This group aims to support these families exactly where they are at and looks at age-appropriate responses to situations that may arise. This group meets monthly via zoom.
- **Transcend** is a support group for young adults, 18-24 years. Often young adults do not feel ready to join an adult peer support group initially. This group aims to bridge the gap between adolescent and adult services. This group meets monthly via zoom.
- **Transgender Family Support Line** is a listening and signposting service for family members. It runs on Sunday evenings from 6pm - 9pm and Tuesday morning from 10am - 12pm. It is run by volunteers who are all parents of trans people, who have been on this journey themselves. It is a useful service for parents who want to talk to other parents and who might not be ready to reach out to TENI or join a support group yet. Our motto is 'Families supporting Families'. The contact number is 01 907 3707.

Contact us at [office@teni.ie](mailto:office@teni.ie) or 01 873 3575



**Hannah Solley** is the Family Support & Education Officer, TENI.

An Chomhairle um Oideachas  
Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta



## COMHDHÁIL

An Chomhairle um Oideachas  
Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta



Gaeloideachas   
Guth don Oideachas lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta

**Do Phríomhoidí, Do Phríomhoidí Tánaisteacha agus  
Do Mhúinteoirí i bhFeighil ar Aonaid a Fheidhmíonn  
in Iar-Bhunscoileanna Gaeltachta agus i nGaelcholáistí  
Óstán na Páirce | Muileann gCearr  
Déardaoin | 20 Aibreán 2023**

I bpáirt le:

Cláraigh ar **cogg.ie**

An tSraith Shóisearach do Mhúinteoirí  
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Lárionad  
Ceannaireachta Scoile  
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School Leadership

**NAPD**  
National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals  
Ceannaireachtaí Príomhaire agus Príomhaireáidí

**PDST**  
An tSeirbhís um Fhorbairt | Professional Development  
Service for Teachers

**accs**  
Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools  
Ceannaireachtaí Príomhaire agus Príomhaireáidí

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## An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta



Tugann Toirdealbhach Ó Lionáird, an tOifigeach Oideachais Iar-bhunscoile Gaeltachta agus Pádraig Ó Beaglaoich, Leas-Phríomhfheidhmeannach COGG, spléachadh dúinn ar an earnáil agus ar obair na Comhairle ag freastal ar riachtanais oideachais na scoileanna Gaeltachta agus na scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge.

### Téacsleabhair nua

Tá forbairtí móra déanta ag COGG maidir le soláthar téacsleabhar iar-bhunscoile le scór bliain anuas agus tá freastal cuimsitheach déanta aici ar iliomad ábhar. Ó 2014 i leith, mar fhreagairt ar na sonraíochtaí nua uile, bhí an obair seo dírithe cuid mhaith ar ábhair na Sraithe Sóisearaí, agus anois ag teacht le hathbheithniú na Sraithe Sinsearaí agus na hathruithe a thiocfaidh dá réir, díreofar ar théacsleabhair agus acmhainní cuí a chomhordú, a fhorbairt agus a sholáthar don tsraith sin.



### An Tairseach

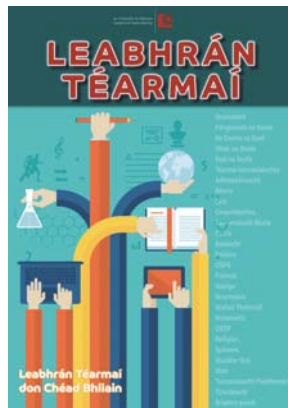
Táimid an-dóchasach go mbeidh tionchar an-dearfach ag *An Tairseach* [www.tairseachcogg.ie](http://www.tairseachcogg.ie) mar acmhainn teagaisc agus foghlama agus go mbeidh ábhar oidi na tíre go léir ag baint úsáide aisti. Sprioc leanúnach atá againn ná feasacht na scoileanna agus na múinteoirí a ardú i leith na n-acmhainní atá ar fáil agus iad a spreagadh le hacmhainní a chruthú agus a roinnt ar an Tairseach.

### An Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta (POG)

Tháinig an Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta ar an bhfód chun aitheantas a thabhairt don dúshlán a bhíonn roimh scoileanna Gaeltachta an tumoideachas a chur i bhfeidhm, i dteannta leis an teanga a chaomhnú agus a threisiú mar theanga an phobail.

Leithdháil an Roinn Oideachais acmhainní breise ar COGG chun acmhainní foghlama ardchaighdeán a fhorbairt agus chun maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar ghníomhartha ar leith laistigh den Pholasáí.

Mar thoradh air seo, is léir go bhfuil scoileanna ag bláthú le cabhair Forbairt Ghairmiúil leanúnach ó COGG agus le tacaíocht na gcuariteanna comhairleacha ó chigirí na Roinne Oideachais. Beifear ag súil go mbronnfar aitheantas mar scoileanna Gaeltachta ar na scoileanna as seo go deireadh thréimhse an Pholasáí. Tá dul chun cinn éachtach déanta ag scoileanna na Gaeltachta ó cuireadh tús leis an POG agus tá COGG bródúil as a bheith rannpháirteach san obair cheannródaíoch sin.



### An Leabhrán Téarmaí

Coimeád súil amach do cheardlanna amach anseo, ach go háirithe, ceann nua bunaithe ar an Leabhrán Téarmaí atá forbartha againn le tamall beag anuas.

Tá an acmhainn seo dírithe ar scoláirí agus ar mhúinteoirí araon le tacaíocht a thabhairt dóibh leis na dúshlán a thagann chun cinn agus scoláirí agus múinteoirí ag tosú ag obair le chéile sa chéad bhliain ar shealbhú na téarmaíochta nua sna hábhair éagsúla trasna an churaclaim.

### Ról an Taighde

Tacaíonn COGG le taighde ar an ngaeloideachas, oideachas Gaeltachta agus múineadh na Gaeilge agus foilsítear na staidéir ar shuíomh COGG <https://www.cogg.ie/taighde-cogg/>.

Tá COGG tiomanta do leabhrán eolais, a chuimsíonn na príomhtheachtaireachtaí ó na saothair taighde éagsúla, a sholáthar do scoileanna chun tacú le príomhoidí agus múinteoirí agus iad ag plé le ceisteanna a thagann aníos faoi bhuntáistí an tumoideachais agus an dátheangachais.

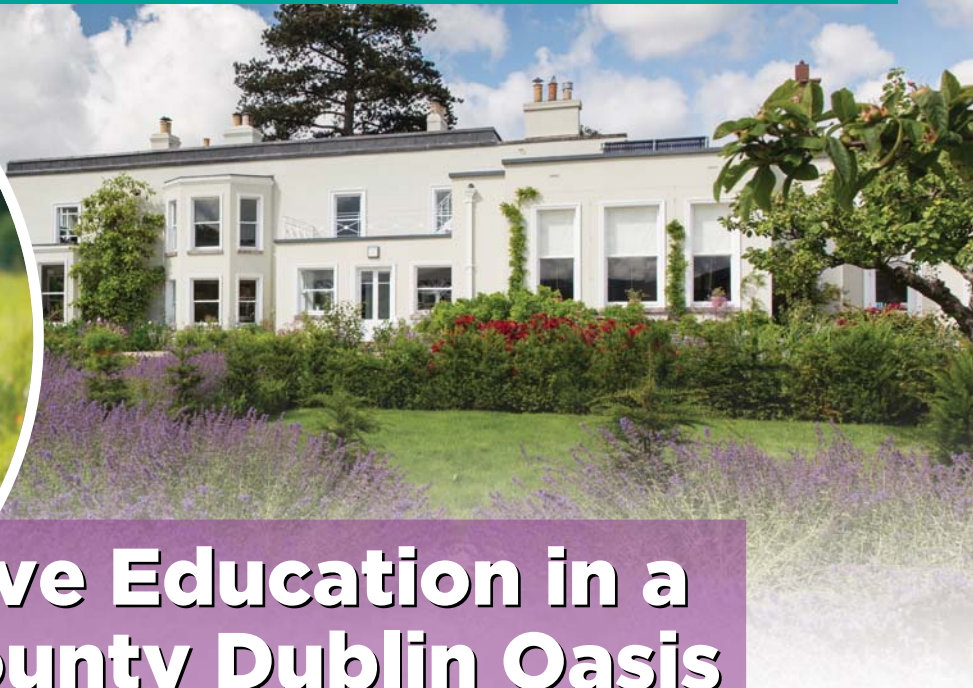
### An Polasaí don Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge (POLG)

Tá an próiseas comhairliúcháin phoiblí chun eolas a sholáthar d'fhonn polasaí nua a fhorbairt don oideachas lán-Ghaeilge lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht tosaithe ag an Roinn Oideachais. Beifear ag súil leis go mbeidh an rath céanna ar an bPolasaí don Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge (POLG) is a bhí ar an POG. Beidh sé tábhachtach go mbeidh na tacaí céanna ar fáil do na scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge, mar shampla, caighdeán chomónta, táscairí deachleachtas, critéir theangabhunaithe, tacaíocht forbairt ghairmiúil leanúnach agus na foilseacháin agus cáipéisí éagsúla a soláthraíodh do na scoileanna Gaeltachta mar threoir.

### Seoladh Leabhar

Oíche Déardaoin 16ú Feabhra, sheol an Dr Colm Henry – an Príomhoifigeach Cliniciúil i bhFeidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte (HSE) – an leabhar *An Gadaí Bradach* le Brendán Ó Dufaigh agus sheol Pádraig Ó Beaglaoich, Leas-Phríomhfheidhmeannach COGG dhá leabhar de chuid Ré Uí Laighléis *Máchainil* agus *Spluff Splaifeirtí agus an tIonradh ar an bPlainéad Marz*. Ba cheiliúradh í an ócáid seo ar fhoilseacháin Bhreandáin Uí Dhufaigh agus Ré Uí Laighléis le linn na paindéime.

Cuirtear fáilte i gcónaí roimh mholtai agus roimh thuairimí forbartha ach scéal a chur go [eolas@cogg.ie](mailto:eolas@cogg.ie).



# Disruptive Education in a South County Dublin Oasis

Claire MacEvilly

**A**irfield Estate is a beautiful 38 acres working urban farm and gardens located in Dundrum, Dublin 14. The Estate was left in trust to the people of Ireland for education and recreation by Letitia and Naomi Overend who were passionate, trailblazing sisters and inspirational role models, with values relevant to today's society.

They created a productive environment at Airfield, supporting communities with quality, nutritious food from the Estate. They had many altruistic endeavors, including supporting the St John Ambulance and the Sunshine Home (now The Laura Lynn Foundation). They embodied principles which were in tune with modern approaches to sustainability, waste reduction and the circular economy.

Their legacy continues today on the Estate by supporting people of all ages through learning and education, which is at the core of Airfield's ambition to be a Sustainable Food Hub supporting the delivery of the UN SDG goal 11, sustainable cities.

Airfield provides a relaxing and inspirational setting for an interconnected ecosystem, produces healthy and nutritious food, manages waste, promotes biodiversity, conserves energy and tackles climate change. It also encourages people to make good food choices for their own health and well-being and for the environment.

We welcome people of all ages. We engage with second level students through a variety of programmes, both online and on-site. Food is an integral and fundamental part of all our daily lives and, yet, our food literacy (knowledge and understanding of its production, components, and processing) is continuing to decline.

To help combat this, we have created a Junior Cycle Short Course (Level 3) called *Food: From the Ground Up*. It aims to inspire and enable students to make informed food choices

that positively impact themselves, their environment and the community by becoming involved in the production and development of a food product from soil until sale. The course enables students to build a firm understanding and appreciation of sustainable food production practices within a local, national and global economy, whilst also learning how they themselves can affect them into the future.

Students will participate in growing and creating their own food and in doing so will contribute to their own wellbeing, as well as exploring practical and research skill sets. Intrinsic to the course are learning opportunities that will allow the student to enhance their physical and social wellbeing, explore sustainable food production and enable them to build practical life skills and develop a strong sense of connection to their community, their food, and their land. Students grow their own food, cook with it and market it, all with the support of local producers, chefs and farmers.

This 100-hour practical short course (which can also be used well in TY), combines key elements and learning outcomes





of subjects like Business Studies, Home Economics, Science, Maths, English, Geography and SPHE and inspires them for Leaving Cert subjects like Biology, HE and Agricultural Science.

Studies have shown that people who are actively involved in the production of their food are more likely to make improved food choices in the future. Studies have also demonstrated that by being actively involved in the growing of food, students increase their physical activity as well as their physical and mental wellbeing. Students partaking in this course will also understand the importance and responsibility of sustainable food production, which will allow us to produce safe food for a growing global population in an environmentally responsible manner into the future.

*FarmerTime* is an online programme where individual farmers are matched with a school to develop a long-term relationship, using their mobile phones to bring themselves and their farm work live to young people in the classroom. The uptake of *FarmerTime* has been amazing, with almost 100 schools, both primary and secondary, matched with farmers around the country.

We are opening a new visitor attraction – *Foodscape, Soil Society*. The exhibition will be focused on sustainable food systems, with a mission to educate through a fun and interactive approach, allowing young people, families and environment enthusiasts actively explore the world of soil. The installation will provide an immersive visitor experience and, given that almost 95% of all food produced is reliant on soil, it has been designed to deliver a simple understanding



of the richness beneath our feet within the global foodscape.

Our education team is led by Dr Kirstie McAdoo and our ethos around education is that Airfield is a place of lifelong learning. We're spearheading discovery learning techniques that build knowledge at every level through workshops, discussion and interactive play. By offering the space and safety to ask any question about food and to learn directly from the experts working in these areas, we have found that conversations arise that explore the opinions, attitudes and assumptions young people have around food. Young people are our future consumers, so it is important that we not only share our knowledge with them and meet their learning needs, but that we also listen also to their insights and observations.

We are keen to bring young voices to the table with our new *Youth Board*. The Board's role will be to work alongside the team and established board at Airfield, to shape its ambition to be at the cutting edge of food systems – and help write the recipe for the sustainable food future we all need.

We go beyond children and young people. Teachers and school leaders come to Airfield to learn about sustainability. We've hosted second level teachers (mostly Science, but also Business, HE or Geography) to explore how sustainability can be integrated into the curriculum.

Airfield Estate is open Wednesday to Sunday throughout the year. To download our resources, visit [www.airfield.ie/education](http://www.airfield.ie/education). To arrange a school tour, participate in Farmer Time, or arrange teacher training please contact [education@airfield.ie](mailto:education@airfield.ie).

**Claire MacEvilly** is CEO of Airfield Estate. She is a nutritionist by background, with a particular interest in communications. She spent many years working in the UK and Ireland for a range of diverse organisations in communications roles. She was the co-founder of SCICOM, Ireland's largest Science communication conference and founding Director of the Advanced European Nutrition Leadership Programme. She is a member of the Safefood Advisory Board and the editorial board of the Nutrition Bulletin.





# Erasmus+

Enriching lives, opening minds.



## Opportunities for Co-operation Across Europe in Adult Education

Deirdre Finlay

Erasmus+ is all about connecting people across Europe. For the Adult Education sector, there is a wide range of opportunities for educators and learners to meet with, and learn from, their peers around Europe.

For adult educators, there are opportunities to attend training courses or carry out job shadowing placements. These can be worthwhile experiences in terms of CPD, but also opportunities for networking and sharing of best practices. Current staff projects cover all kinds of topics, from sustainability to strategic planning, inclusion and diversity to well-being and resilience.

Learners can partake in international learning experiences, where they connect with adult learners in other countries to share experiences and gain an understanding of each other's cultures and lives. While abroad, they can take part in peer learning with the participants from the host organisation, work-based learning to hone new skills and even volunteer in the community.

As well as international travel, participants can also take part in virtual connections before and after their experience to help them build relationships with the partner organisation and to embed their learning.

International experiences can occur in any of the 27 member states of the European Union, as well as in Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye.

*“When I speak to participants about their experiences, or indeed when I read their reports, what always stands out is the unexpected learning that takes place. People gain so much from simply sitting with peers from other countries and sharing stories. There’s a great catharsis in sharing challenges and in learning that you’re not alone”*

Jemma Lee, Senior Support & Development Officer, Léargas



Erasmus+ grants support travel and subsistence for international trips, as well as organisational costs incurred in managing the project. There are also supports available for those with fewer opportunities to remove barriers to participation.

*“The major benefits from this learning experience were from the input of the participants involved in this training. Their openness and friendliness made the experience all the better”*

Marianne Walsh, participant in staff mobility, Social and Health Education Project’s (SHEP) project

The next application deadline will be in October 2023. Léargas organises workshops both in-person and online to support organisations with their applications. See the Léargas website for further information.



SCAN ME

EPALE, the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe, is a good first step for



getting started with a project idea. It’s where education professionals, including FET educators and trainers, guidance and support staff, researchers, academics, and policymakers connect and support better adult learning opportunities. This platform allows practitioners to collaborate, innovate, and connect through blog posts, events, news, open discussions, the partner search tool and physical gatherings.

Key to the success of EPALe is:

- Open membership
- Multilingual approach
- User-led content
- Communities of practice

**Jemma Lee**, Senior Support and Development Officer in Adult Education at [jlee@leargas.ie](mailto:jlee@leargas.ie), or



**Manika-Nia Dixon**, EPALe Ireland Co-ordinator at [mdixon@leargas.ie](mailto:mdixon@leargas.ie)



**Deirdre Finlay** is Head of the Education and Training Development Team at Léargas.



Supporting and assisting schools and principals is what our Local Allianz Reps do. It helps to know yours.



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Alan.Carroll@allianz.ie  
087 956 6721



**Noel O'Loughlin – West**  
Noel.O'Loughlin@allianz.ie  
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**Martin Sinnott – South East**  
Martin.Sinnott@allianz.ie  
087 686 2329



**Martin McKeogh – South**  
Martin.McKeogh@allianz.ie  
087 920 3992



Here are a few of the common topics your local Allianz Rep can assist your school with\*



You would like some guidance as a new principal



You receive a solicitor's letter



An incident or an injury that may lead to a claim



There has been significant damage to the school property such as fire, storm, flood etc.

\*If your school is insured through an insurance intermediary, please contact them for assistance.



Longford Lambs

Photography by Charlie McManus