

# ASTIR

ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS, IRELAND

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Address teachers' Senior Cycle concerns

- | ASTI Equality Conference
- | Driving teacher diversity and supply
- | Leaving Cert orals saga

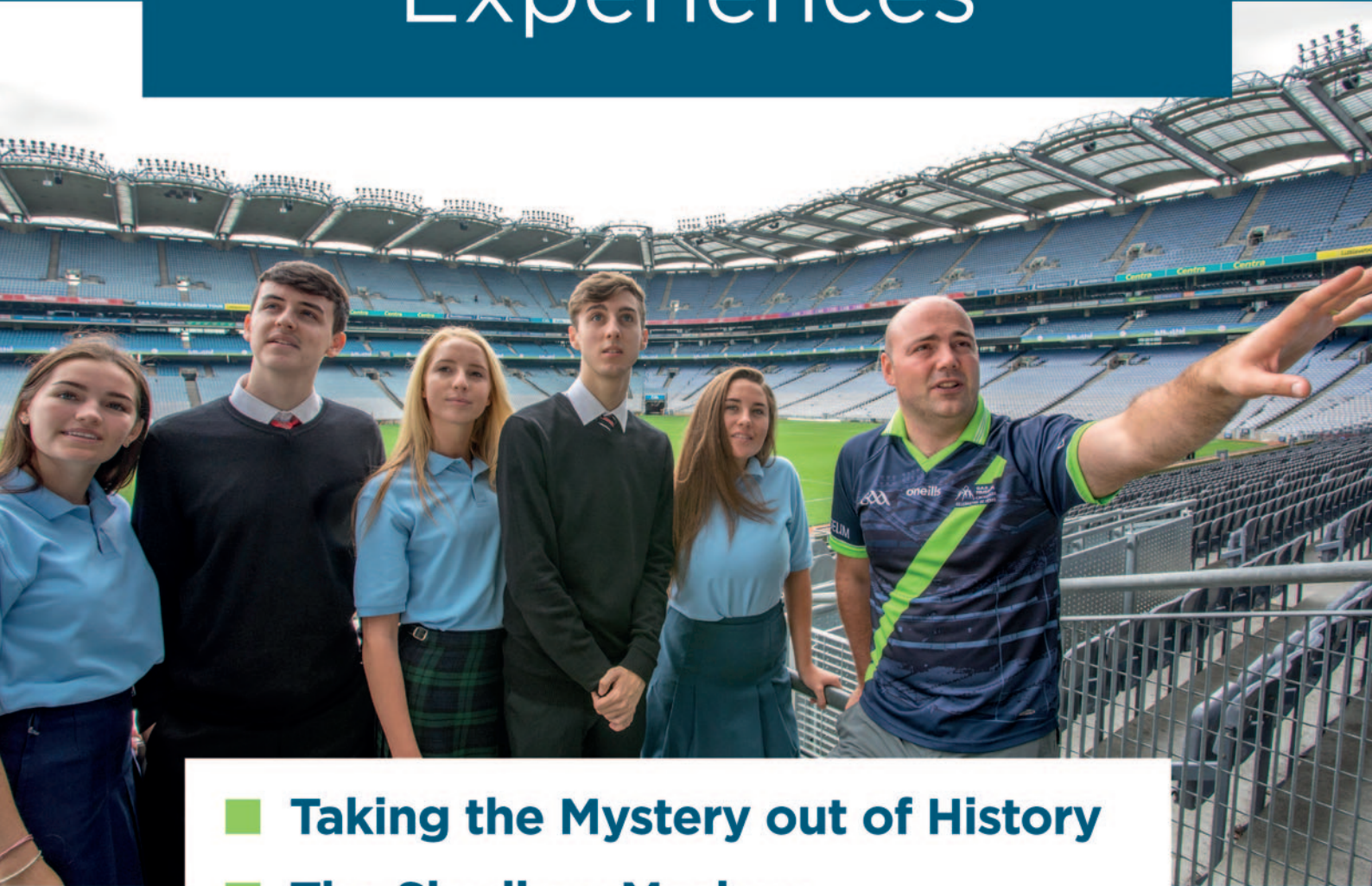


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## Valuing teachers is valuing education

Last November, 30,000 teachers – members of the ASTI and the TUI – staged lunchtime protests outside every second-level school in Ireland in a bid to have the ‘accelerated’ Senior Cycle redevelopment programme paused until key issues are addressed. The presence of teachers outside every school in every constituency in the run-up to a general election sent a strong message to incoming public representatives – that teachers have real and significant concerns about aspects of the Senior Cycle redevelopment programme, and in particular about the rushed pace of its implementation in the context of an already overburdened and under-resourced system. I wish to thank all ASTI members who participated in these successful protests. I also extend my deep gratitude to school stewards, branch activists and other activists who worked hard behind the scenes to ensure that placards were delivered to schools in time, school managements were kept informed, photos were organised for the ASTI’s social media platforms, and media personnel were facilitated in covering the protests. The protests attracted substantial coverage in the national and regional media. A review of press coverage shows that teachers who were interviewed on November 19 – whether at protests in Donegal or Wexford, whether members of the ASTI or TUI, whether teachers of physics or of art – all raised the very same key concerns about Senior Cycle redevelopment. Many of these press interviews came about when local media outlets visited school protests on spec. The uniformity in the media coverage demonstrates not only that teachers are unified on this issue, but that their concerns are widely felt and deeply held across the profession.

As the country embarks on a new calendar year and (imminently) a new programme for government, it is vital that the teacher unions build on the momentum of the November lunchtime protests. Maintaining one voice is the way to get our message out, and maintaining the active involvement of 30,000 teachers is the way to effect change. Together we can.

### Time to prioritise education

It comes as no surprise that one of the first education stories to hit the headlines in 2025 was teacher shortages, this time due to reports of a Department of Education study. As reported in *The Irish Times* on January 2, the Department’s own research (unpublished at the time this *ASTIR* goes to print) confirms what ASTI research has found time and time again in recent years: that there is an unprecedented number of teacher vacancies in second-level schools. This alarming shortage of teachers is harmful for students, the teaching profession and the public education system as a whole. The negative impacts have the potential to be lasting and far reaching. As a new government embarks on a new term, it is high time to prioritise the delivery of a quality education, equitably to all children and young people. This must include making teaching a sustainable career. Valuing teachers is valuing education.



**Donal Cremin**  
ASTI President

## Digital technology in education

The controversy regarding the €9 million allocation for mobile phone pouches in schools got me thinking over the festive period about the debate on digital technology in education, from a teacher union perspective. I previously set out in these pages a set of principles that Education International, of which the ASTI is an affiliate, and the OECD, jointly developed in *Opportunities, Guidelines and Guardrails for Effective and Equitable use of AI in Education*. They are as follows:

1. Equitable access to affordable, high-quality connectivity.
2. Equitable access to and equitable use of digital learning resources.
3. The critical and pedagogical uses of up-to-date digital learning resources should become an integral part of teacher agency and professional learning.
4. Use and development of AI-enabled technology should put student and teacher well-being front and centre.
5. Involvement of teachers and their students as co-designers in the research and development process of technology.
6. Data protection policies to ensure that the collection of data protects students’ and teachers’ privacy.
7. Teachers and students should receive timely human support and, when appropriate, a human alternative to an AI-enabled tool.
8. All matters related to terms and conditions, including the ethical use of data about teachers, should be negotiated with teacher unions.

Given that it’s a head-spinning time to be a teacher in Ireland – with Senior Cycle redevelopment in full swing, the unfolding culture wars that are impacting on schools, and even the remnants of the pandemic – it is extraordinarily difficult for teachers to continue to help students to thrive academically and emotionally, often in inadequate learning and teaching conditions. The challenges that digital technology impose overlay and add enormously to the burden.

Educators and policymakers must work together to make sure digital technology will be used safely and responsibly. Safety and privacy must be the centrepiece of all policy development. A promotion of human interaction and individuality, together with equity and fairness, is crucial. Digital citizenship that underpins our democracy will be a vital prerequisite for our society to thrive in the future.

### Busy year ahead

The formation of a new government is likely to bring a new agenda to our work in the ASTI. The Senior Cycle redevelopment programme and other issues will not go away though, and negotiations on a new pay agreement are likely to come into focus towards the end of the year. The challenges regarding examinations, workload and so on will undoubtedly ensure another interesting year ahead. As always, the ASTI will work hard on behalf of all of its members. Happy New Year.



**Kieran Christie**  
ASTI General Secretary

## The team at ASTI Head Office



ASTI Head Office staff promote the interests of second-level teachers, seek to improve the salaries and working conditions of ASTI members, and regulate relations between members, their employers and the Department of Education. Head Office staff work across a range of departments including industrial relations, union organisation, membership, accounts, events and training, leave and salary queries, education and research, and communications.

## ASTI Centenary Scholarship

The ASTI inaugurated an annual scholarship for members in its centenary year of 2009.

The scholarship is awarded to assist any ASTI member undertaking further third-level education on a full-time or part-time basis, and two scholarships of €2,000 are awarded each year.

ASTI members undertaking further studies can apply at any stage during the school year.

The closing date for submission of applications for next year is Wednesday, April 30, 2025.

Applications will be reviewed by a selection committee comprised of the ASTI officers. The criteria for selection are:

- relevance of proposed course to the professional lives of teachers and second-level education,
- potential for study to inform the ongoing policy agenda and work of the ASTI, and
- potential for research to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.



Members can apply at any time throughout the duration of their programme, even if they have already commenced their studies. For further information or to apply, go to: <https://www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants/>



## New ASTI official appointed

Eoghan Ryan has been appointed ASTI Executive Officer: Industrial Relations. Eoghan's earliest memories of trade union issues are dinner table discussions as a child with his ASTI member parents. Infused with a lifelong interest in union matters as a result, he was involved with SIPTU for many years when working in the Citizens Information Services, both as a shop steward and a representative on the SIPTU Community Sector Committee. He subsequently worked as an Industrial Relations Officer in the Health Division of Fórsa prior to moving to the ASTI.

Eoghan is replacing Brian Burke, who has resigned from his post as an industrial relations official. Brian joined Head Office after a career as a teacher, and as an ASTI activist who served on ASTI Standing Committee. The ASTI wishes Brian the best in all his future endeavours.

## ASTI General Secretary elected to European body

ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie has been elected to serve as the Irish teachers' representative on the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) for the next four years. He has also been elected Treasurer of the ETUCE Committee.

The ETUCE, based in Brussels, is a federation of 123 education trade unions in 51 countries, representing in total 11 million members all over Europe. It is the social partner representative for teachers at European level, and a defender of their interests to the European Commission and other European institutions. As a stakeholder in the EU social dialogue process, it responds to proposals, policies and decisions affecting the members of education unions in Europe.

The election of Kieran Christie ensures that teachers in Ireland, and other workers in the education sector, will have a voice at the highest level of the European trade union movement and in the wider social dialogue sphere in Europe.

The aims of the ETUCE are to:

- develop and maintain positive relationships with organisations in Europe that have similar aims and objectives,
- determine and promote policies in relation to the Council of Europe, and any such other European inter-governmental body that addresses issues of concern to education unions,
- promote the development of strong, independent and democratic education unions throughout the European region,



*Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary) and Donal Cremin (ASTI President) at the recent ETUCE Conference in Montenegro.*

- determine and promote policies in relation to the European Union (EU),
- represent educational organisations in EU consultative structures and at EU meetings,
- respond to proposals, policies and decisions of the EU affecting the members of education unions in Europe, and
- be the social partner for education workers in the EU Social Dialogue process.

“We face major challenges in education, in Ireland and across Europe, the implications of the war in Ukraine and the challenges posed by AI on our schools being just two examples,” Kieran Christie told *ASTIR*, emphasising the need for international co-operation in tackling these issues.

## Teaching Council update

### Renewals

All registered teachers must renew their Teaching Council registration annually in order to remain on the Register of Teachers. Teachers can apply to renew their registration online via their ‘My Registration’ account on the Teaching Council website.

Teachers are asked to ensure that their personal contact information is correct, and to provide any missing data such as Eircodes and mobile phone numbers.

**Further information can be found on the ‘Registration Renewal/My Registration’ section of the Teaching Council website.**

### Expiring conditions on Teaching Council registration

Teachers reaching the expiration date of their registration with condition(s) are required to submit evidence that they have addressed the condition(s). Teachers who have not been in a position to address the condition(s) must apply for an extension of time.

Teachers can make their request for an extension and submit the supporting documentation by logging on to the ‘My Registration’ portal and selecting ‘My Conditions’.

It is important to note that teachers who do not engage, or who do not show evidence of attempting to address their conditions, are putting their Teaching Council registration at risk.

### Re-vetting

The Teaching Council invites teachers who hold a National Vetting Bureau (NVB) disclosure that is more than three years old to apply for re-vetting on a rotational basis. Re-vetting is a two-stage process and teachers who have received an invitation to apply for re-vetting are strongly encouraged to commence the process as soon as possible to allow plenty of time for completion. Teachers are asked to include all past addresses from birth to the present, including addresses outside of the Republic of Ireland. Failure to do so may cause delays in the registration process.

**Further information about re-vetting can be found on the Teaching Council website.**

### Droichead

Droichead is the induction process for all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) or teachers who have not previously completed the required period of professional practice after they qualified as a teacher. The deadline for commencing Droichead in the 2024/2025 school year is Wednesday, March 12, 2025. Applications must be received before 5.00pm on that day. Registration for Droichead will reopen in the first week of September for the 2025/2026 school year.

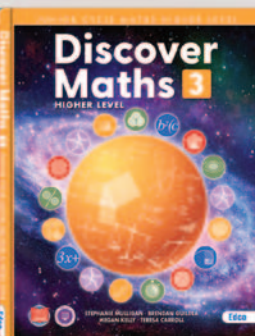
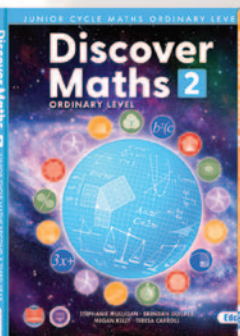
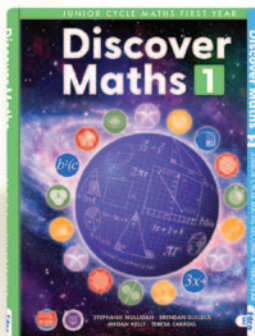
**For more information on Droichead and to register, please go to: <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/register/droichead/>**

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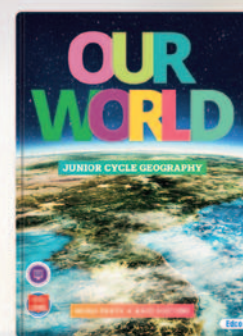
## JUNIOR CYCLE



JC Irish

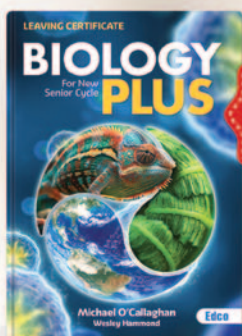


JC Maths



JC Geography

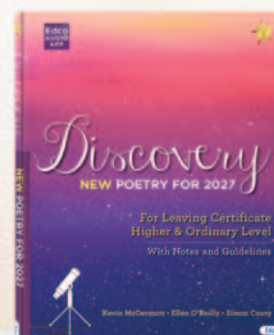
## LEAVING CERTIFICATE



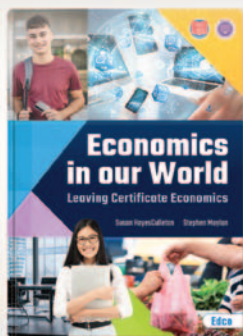
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## ASTI membership increases

ASTI membership has increased by 1,340 members over the past year, from 18,872 at the end of 2023 to 20,212 at the end of 2024. The union now has its highest number of members since its foundation in 1909.



Pictured during a recent visit to O'Connell Secondary School, North Richmond St, Dublin 1, are (from left): Sean Patterson (School Steward), Michael McGrath (ASTI Honorary National Organiser), and Derek Hobbs (ASTI member).



Pictured during a recent visit to Christian Brothers College, Cork, are (from left): Edmund Hussey (CEC), Vincent Murray (CEC), Donal O'Callaghan (School Union Committee), Traolach Martin (School Steward), Catherine Welch (School Union Committee), Michael McGrath (ASTI Honorary National Organiser), and Simon Kelliher (CEC).

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## Network for Education meets in Dublin



Irish education unions – the ASTI, TUI, INTO and IFUT – in attendance at a European and North America Network for Education meeting in Dublin in October 2024. The Network is part of the Global Campaign for Education, a global movement of teacher unions and civil society bodies committed to realising the right to education for all children and young people. The event in Dublin was a regional planning meeting for countries in Europe and North America and was hosted by the Irish Network for Education Worldwide – [www.inew.ie](http://www.inew.ie).

## Requesting digital publications through MyUnion

MyUnion, the members' only area of the ASTI website, allows members to decide how they would like to receive our publications – digitally or by post. Once you have created an account, you will have convenient access to information about your membership and will be able to request digital and hard copies of all our publications, such as *ASTIR* and *Nuacht*.

Members can also update their personal details directly in the MyUnion area, for example your home address and email address, to ensure that you receive the most up-to-date correspondence from the ASTI.

**You can do this at:** <https://www.asti.ie/my-union/>

## Ireland among top-performing countries for maths and science

A new study – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) – indicates that Ireland's second-level schools are performing exceptionally well, despite large class sizes and underfunding.

Second-year students attending schools in Ireland rank first in the EU for maths and third for science. The findings mirror other international studies of student performance, including the OECD PISA study, which ranks Ireland second in the world for reading literacy and well above the global average for maths and science. TIMSS research is undertaken every four years. In 2023, 64 countries participated, including 13 EU countries. The findings are based on data from more than 640,000 children who are fourth-year primary school students or second-year second-level students. In Ireland, TIMSS research is undertaken by the Educational Research Centre.

### Maths

While overall Ireland performed very well in maths, there are some concerns. Approximately one-third of second-year students who participated in the TIMSS research were recorded as attending DEIS schools. These students achieved a significantly lower mean score on mathematics than their peers in non-DEIS schools. In addition, students who were recorded as having more home educational resources demonstrated significantly higher average achievement in maths than students with fewer resources. Home educational resources include number of books, amount of home supports, and highest education level of either parent. Also of concern is the gender gap highlighted by TIMSS. In TIMSS 2023, second-year boys achieved a higher mean maths score than girls. This gap is described as "statistically significant" in the TIMSS report.

### Science

Students in Ireland achieved a mean score in science that is significantly above the international average and third highest in the EU. As with maths, students attending DEIS schools in Ireland achieved a significantly lower mean score than their peers in non-DEIS schools. Students recorded as having many resources at home achieved a significantly higher mean score than students recorded as having few resources.

The gender gap for science is the opposite of the international pattern. Boys in Ireland achieved a mean science score of 529, while girls achieved a mean score of 520. The nine-point score difference is described as "statistically significant" in the TIMSS report. The international average in science is 480 for girls compared to 477 for boys.

Commenting on the report, ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie said: "The TIMSS findings are testament to the high quality of our education service and the efforts of school communities, including teachers, parents and students. The ASTI is very concerned about performance gaps in the report, for example, the gap experienced by students who have fewer resources outside of school to support their learning. It is essential that all schools are resourced adequately so as to ensure they can mitigate against educational disadvantages faced by young people. It is crucial that the Senior Cycle redevelopment process improves inclusivity and fairness for students, and does not exacerbate inequalities or create new ones".

**View the full report here:** [www.erc.ie/studies/timss/](http://www.erc.ie/studies/timss/)

## ASTI Diary 2025: salary scales omission

Post of responsibility allowances (e.g., AP1, AP2) have been omitted from the ASTI Diary 2025 in error. The following posts of responsibility allowances apply since October 2024.

The ASTI apologises for any inconvenience caused as a result of this omission. For more information on salary scales and allowances visit: <https://www.asti.ie/your-employment/pay/salary-scales/>.

**Assistant Principal (AP1): €10,174**  
**Assistant Principal (AP2): €4,501**  
**Special Functions Allowances: (1) €3,109 (2) €4,596 (3) €6,084 (4) €7,621 (5) €7,956**  
**Upgraded Special Functions Allowances: (1) €3,858 (2) €5,890 (3) €7,786 (4) €9,761 (5) €10,174**  
**Director of Adult Education – Self Financing Part-Time Adult Education Posts of Responsibility: (A) €4,501 (B) €5,890 (C) €7,786 (D) €9,761 (E) €11,672 (F) €13,669 (G) €15,587 (H) €17,473 (I) €18,960 (J) €20,408 (K) €22,653 (L) €24,042 (M) €27,046**

**\*\*In 2013, ASTI members had their increments frozen and their pay cut (pay cuts applied to teachers earning over €65,000) under the Financial Emergency in the Public Interest (FEMPI) legislation. For full details visit [ww.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie)**



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## Fuel allowance for those over 66

The Fuel Allowance is a Government payment to help with the cost of heating during the colder months.

It is worth €924 a year per household, which members can get in two lump sum payments of €462 each, or as €33 a week for 28 weeks between September and April.

Members aged 66 or over no longer need to be getting a weekly social welfare payment to qualify for Fuel Allowance. This opens it up to class D PRSI civil and public servants. Single people over 66 are now able to have an income of up to €524 a week (before tax) to qualify. Couples are able to have a combined gross income up to €1,048 a week. This includes the State pension.

For more information on the allowance and to apply using your MyGov account please see: [services.mywelfare.ie/en/topics/pensions-and-older-people/fuel-allowance](https://services.mywelfare.ie/en/topics/pensions-and-older-people/fuel-allowance)

ASTI members who do not have a MyGov account and wish to apply for Fuel Allowance can do so by printing the application form using the relevant link below and mailing it to the Department of Social Protection.

**Form for members aged under 66:**

[assets.gov.ie/26442/b4f87125a3be47b8b8583ba2a853f7a6.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/26442/b4f87125a3be47b8b8583ba2a853f7a6.pdf)

**Form for members 66 and over:**

[assets.gov.ie/242512/d62890d1-f76e-4bfd-af4e-d0117364ef54.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/242512/d62890d1-f76e-4bfd-af4e-d0117364ef54.pdf)

# HIGHLIGHTING TEACHERS' SENIOR CYCLE CONCERNS

A joint protest by the ASTI and TUI showed teachers' frustration with Senior Cycle redevelopment.



ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie is pictured leading protesting teachers outside Coolmine Community School on November 19. Photo by Tommy Clancy, Tommy Clancy Photography.

More than 30,000 members of the ASTI and TUI joined lunchtime protests outside their schools in November, in a bid to highlight teachers' concerns over Senior Cycle redevelopment.

The nationwide protests were organised by the ASTI and TUI following a decision by the Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, to accelerate the Senior Cycle redevelopment process. Teachers' concerns include insufficient preparation and training timelines for teachers, inappropriate assessment arrangements for some of the new subject specifications, and lack of resources in schools, which has the potential to introduce new inequalities between students.

The protests received significant coverage in the national and regional media, and resulted in a request from the Department of Education for clarification on a number of ASTI/TUI concerns. Contacts between the teacher unions and the Department of Education were ongoing at the time of going to print. Prior to the protest, ASTI and TUI subject representatives and members of the two unions' executive bodies met in Mullingar to discuss Senior Cycle redevelopment, and in particular the process for the revision of Leaving Certificate subjects, including subject specifications and additional assessment components (AACs). The teacher unions' key concerns include the following.

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#### **Inequitable access to resources**

Equitable access for students to resources and facilities in schools is vital to ensure an effective roll-out of new and revised Senior Cycle subject specifications.

For example, revised science specifications require increased access to laboratories, equipment and other resources. In schools where these resources are inadequate, there will be further challenges when 40% of students' Leaving Cert grade is for a laboratory-based research report.



A joint ASTI-TUI meeting of National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) subject representatives took place on Saturday, November 9, 2024, in Mullingar Park Hotel, Co. Westmeath.

**Rushed subject specifications**

It is vital that any changes to subjects/specifications are not rushed through, are of educational benefit to students, and are based on the professional views of teachers – the practitioners tasked with implementing the changes.

The ASTI previously expressed alarm at the fact that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) subject development groups were denied access to submissions from many stakeholders (including teachers) during NCCA subject specification public consultation periods. This has weakened the redevelopment process substantially.

**One size does not fit all**

AACs in some revised subject specifications are being implemented without appropriate structures or consideration of how they impact both students and teachers. An insistence that AACs cannot be allocated less than 40% of

the overall marks will cause substantial problems for some subjects. While 40% or more works for some subjects, it does not work for others.

**Insufficient preparation time**

The scheduled release of subject guidelines, AAC guidelines, and sample examination materials lacks an adequate lead-in period. This jeopardises the quality of teacher preparation, professional learning opportunities, and resourcing prior to the introduction of new subjects and specifications.

**AI concerns**

Teachers have expressed concerns about the potential use of AI in project/research work and the implications of this for Leaving Cert assessment integrity and fairness.

**Keep up with the ASTI’s Senior Cycle campaign at [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie)**



# THE SORRY SAGA OF LEAVING CERTIFICATE ORAL EXAMINATIONS

**ASTI General Secretary KIERAN CHRISTIE outlines some of the findings of SEC research into the holding of Leaving Cert oral examinations during the Easter holidays.**

In a previous edition of *ASTIR*, I highlighted the world in which the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) lives, whereby it organises consultation processes for the introduction of new subject specifications and then refuses to share the stakeholder submissions with the NCCA Subject Development Groups. The sorry saga underpinning the recent announcement of the continuation of scheduling of Leaving Certificate oral examinations at Easter falls uncannily into a similar bracket. Members will recall that the move to Easter scheduling was originally negotiated as a Covid-19 measure. On March 29, 2022, Minister Foley abandoned all pretence in that regard and effectively announced it as a measure in perpetuity in the context of her announcement of the programme for Senior Cycle redevelopment.

## Difficulties

Following self-evident difficulties with the measure in the first year – for instance, the Music Practical Performance Test has been taken out of the arrangements – the Minister and the State Examinations Commission (SEC) decided to take stock. A review of the timing of the orals was requested by the Minister to provide advice to the Department.

While the SEC announced continuance of the arrangements for 2023, it stated that a “more extensive evaluation involving engagement with all stakeholders is required to fully assess the impact of holding the oral examinations at Easter”. Crucially, we were told that “this evaluation ... will be completed in order to advise the Minister on the timing of the oral examinations in 2024 and beyond”.

The ASTI opposed the continuation of the oral examinations during the Easter break post Covid-19 and the representatives of the student body, the Irish Second-level Students’ Union (ISSU), while initially in favour of the arrangements, changed their position in the teeth of having experience of them, and are now firmly opposed.

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## Research

Around this time, the ASTI became aware of plans within the SEC to commission the University of Galway to undertake a survey of relevant stakeholders. This survey went live in October/November 2023. A report on this survey was completed in November 2023 but we then began to hear that, in addition to the survey, a multi-site case study would be undertaken. That put the kibosh on any prospects that the SEC would honour its commitment that an evaluation would be “completed in order to advise the Minister on the timing of the oral examinations in 2024 and beyond”.

In December 2024, the Minister announced that following advice from the SEC, the Leaving Certificate language oral examinations would continue to be delivered during the Easter holidays, under the same timing model as applied from 2022 to 2024, until the 2026/2027 school year.

All of this makes one curious as to what the research undertaken by the Education Department of the University of Galway threw up.

## Survey findings

The survey had 11,200 respondents, comprising parents (22%), students (48%), teachers and teaching examiners (22%), principals and deputy principals (3%), and others (4%) (rounding applied). The standout finding is that the majority preference was for Leaving Certificate oral examinations to take place prior to Easter and during term time:

- only 15% of parents expressed a preference for “outside term time during the Easter holidays”,
- 19% of students under 18 years expressed a preference for “outside term time during the Easter holidays”,
- 29% of students over 18 years expressed a preference for “outside term time during the Easter holidays”,
- 17% of teachers and teaching examiners expressed a preference for “outside term time during the Easter holidays”, and
- 49% of deputy principals/principals expressed a preference for “outside term time during the Easter holidays”.

Bizarrely, with reference to deputy principals/principals, the report states: “however, a majority, almost 49%, chose outside school time during the Easter holidays...” Go figure! (I think it should have been described as a large minority or maybe a plurality, but what would I know.) When the picture emerged as above, one could see the need to continue to build on the lack of clarity and push forward with a multi-site case study as an imperative!

**Multi-site case study**

The multi-site case study involved research at eight school sites in relation to “the impact of conducting the oral examinations during Easter time in 2024 and the preferred timing going forward”. Schools were recruited by “convenience sampling”. In practice, this meant that “schools which had links to the researchers were contacted by email and/or phone call initially”.

Out of the eight schools, 32 teachers, 42 students, 10 parents, six principals and four deputy principals took part. Surprisingly, in one of the schools, the principal was the only participant. In four of the schools there were no parent participants.

Again, the “majority preference for Leaving Certificate oral examinations to take place prior to Easter and during term time” emerged in this aspect of the study. Amazingly, the report states that “as was the case with the first phase of the study, the only group to unanimously oppose this term-time preference were the principals and deputy principals, who favoured keeping the exams during Easter time”. That 49% majority in the first phase had now, it seems, morphed into unanimity! However, I think we can take it that all 10 principals/deputy principals who participated in the multi-site case study were clear in their expressed preference. Not even the niceties associated with the proper use of language escaped being a hapless casualty in this whole imbroglio.

The SEC noted “the challenges and issues associated with the timing; the outcomes of the research work; and the experience of delivering the oral examinations during term time and in the Easter holidays over the past

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**The voices of the students’ union, teacher unions, survey respondents and multi-site case study participants count for nought – save for the six principals and four deputy principals in the multi-site case study.**

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number of years”. They stated: “On balance we consider that candidates’ interests will be best served by the least possible interruption to their teaching and learning, and by as much assurance as possible that the SEC can deliver examinations and assessment to the published timeframes”.

The voices of the students’ union, teacher unions, survey respondents and multi-site case study participants count for nought – save for the six principals and four deputy principals in the multi-site case study. Precisely what part of the word ‘NO’ is not understood remains a mystery.

It seems we are stuck with the same arrangements for the next three years “subject to review after the conclusion of the 2027 examinations”. I’m sure that will go well, a 49% certainty I suspect, although in the tragicomedy genre, sequels rarely live up to expectations!

**More information**

**For more information on the survey carried out by the University of Galway and the research findings, please use the links below.**

**Timing of Leaving Certificate Oral Examinations Executive Summary:**  
[www.asti.ie/document-library/timing-of-leaving-certificate-oral-examinations/](http://www.asti.ie/document-library/timing-of-leaving-certificate-oral-examinations/)

**Timing of Leaving Certificate Oral Examinations Survey Findings**  
[www.asti.ie/document-library/timing-of-leaving-certificate-oral-examinations-survey-findings/](http://www.asti.ie/document-library/timing-of-leaving-certificate-oral-examinations-survey-findings/)



ASTI and TUI members at the recent Senior Cycle protest are pictured outside Loreto Community School in Milford, Co. Donegal. Photo by Clive Wasson, CW Photos Limited.

# SPOTLIGHT ON TEACHERS' SENIOR CYCLE PROTEST

ASTI and TUI members recently took part in a lunchtime protest at schools to highlight serious concerns regarding Senior Cycle change.



ASTI members are pictured outside their school, St. Declan's College, Cabra, Dublin 7, on the day of the protest.



ASTI President Donal Cremin is interviewed by Virgin Media News on the day of the protest to highlight concerns at proposed changes to Senior Cycle.

"It's to raise awareness among the public, particularly parents and students, of the damaging changes that are being implemented at a really fast pace on the Leaving Cert. It's worth pointing out that the ASTI, the TUI and teachers are not anti-change. We're very, very pro-change. But the change has to be for the better. We're not in favour of change to make the exam worse and more stressful for students. There's a plan to bring a second component into absolutely every subject and to make it worth a minimum of 40%. Now, this is going to ensure that students are under maximum pressure. So, it's going to do quite the opposite of what we were all thinking about well-being."

**Padraig Curley, ASTI Vice President**

*News, Ocean FM, November 12, 2024*

"There is a lack of adequate resources and facilities in some schools, so, it will disadvantage some students when the new Leaving Cert subject specifications are introduced in September. And some of these are revised subjects including all the sciences, which are going through at the moment – they include new Leaving Cert exam components. This would include your practical work and your coursework. And these are being rushed through and we do not have comprehensive resources. We need training well in advance for the implementation of these new subject specifications."

**Geraldine O'Loughlin, ASTI member and Standing Committee**

**Representative Region 2**

*News, Midwest Radio, November 14, 2024*

"The ASTI is in no way opposed to change. In fact, we believe change is necessary and in the modern world we've done everything we can to engage with change. For example, we're involved in the implementation of two new subjects – Drama

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**A rushed system can often be a failed system and that's what we're afraid of. It is a high-stakes exam. The Leaving Cert is golden, it's recognised throughout the world, and therefore, we don't want to see it brought down in any way.**

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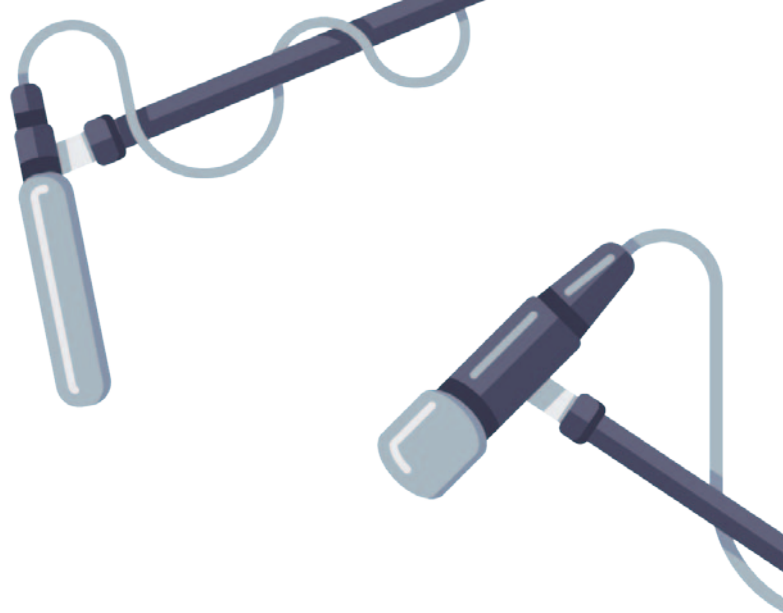
and Film Studies and Climate Action and Sustainable Development. We're blue in the face trying to engage in meaningful dialogue with the NCCA because we believe that in order to keep the Leaving Cert relevant it must be periodically updated. However, nobody wants redevelopment for redevelopment's sake. Surely we can't want to redevelop something and make it worse to end up with something that's more stressful, less fair, and more open to corruption."

**Richard Bell, ASTI member and Standing Committee**

**Representative Region 3**

*Galway Talks, Galway Bay FM, November 15, 2024*

"We're looking at several issues really. One would be the investment in second-level education and the investment that needs to be put into the new subjects that are going to be taught. We want to slow down the process because we do not believe that the NCCA nor the Department have the resources, at the moment, at their disposal to run things carefully and properly."



RTÉ covered the protest outside St Attracta's Community School in Tubercurry, Co. Sligo.



ASTI President Donal Cremin is interviewed by Emma O'Kelly of RTÉ at the protest.

So, a rushed system can often be a failed system and that's what we're afraid of. It is a high-stakes exam. The Leaving Cert is golden, it's recognised throughout the world, and therefore, we don't want to see it brought down in any way."

**Donal Cremin, ASTI President**  
*Morning Ireland, RTÉ Radio 1, November 19, 2024*

"The thinking behind it is that it will introduce more continuous assessment, but the problem with AACs [Additional Assessment Components] is they can be done at home by the students. I would have a huge concern that while students are preparing for these AACs, their whole focus will be on getting that right, and the rest of their work will fall by the wayside. Some schools have fabulous state-of-the-art laboratories, then in some schools there's one lab to be shared, in some the facilities just don't exist – so these projects would result in huge inequity between schools."

**Siobhán O'Donovan, ASTI member and Standing Committee Representative Region 5**  
*Echo Live, November 19, 2024*

"Our education system around the world is recognised for being fair and honest. We've only one computer lab for over 1,100 pupils. Where is the equity in that? The private schools will spend the money, they'll have the lab facilities, they'll hire lab technicians. Going forward, the well-off will be getting the HIs and the poor guy with the brain and no resources and no funding will get 60%. Sixty per cent is all I can prepare my students for from next September. We're going to have all the high-powered schools getting

all the lads going on to medicine, and they won't be coming from the ordinary, free education school down the road where a child does the best he can. We'd need billions spent on the education system to be capable of doing a laboratory-based assessment in the three sciences."

**Michael McGrath, ASTI member and Honorary National Organiser**  
*Irish Examiner, November 19, 2024*

"Tá dhá ábhar curaclaim nua ann anois – Gníomhú ar son na hAeráide & Forbairt Inbhuanaithe, agus Drámaíocht, Amharclannaíocht agus Scannánaíocht – ábhair iontach suimiúil agus tá mé cinnte go mbeadh go leor daltaí ag iarraidh iad a staidéar. Ach níl aon chúrsaí trí leibhéal réidh fós do chéimithe le cáiliú chun na hábhair seo a mhúineadh."

**Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary, Education & Research**  
*Admhaidín, RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, November 19, 2024*

"Whilst a 40% minimum allocation of marks is suitable for subjects where skills are assessed directly – as is the case currently in Leaving Certificate music where a musical performance is assessed in person by an external examiner and the AAC is worth 50% – it is not suitable in the proposed new Senior Cycle biology, chemistry, and physics specifications where skills are to be assessed indirectly via a laboratory-based research report, as the report may not be entirely the student's own work and could even be partially or fully generated by AI. In other words, it is open to cheating."

**John Conneely, ASTI member and Standing Committee Representative Region 4**  
*Irish Examiner, November 23, 2024*



# DRIVING TEACHER DIVERSITY AND SUPPLY

The Migrant Teacher Project is working to improve teacher diversity at a crucial time for education in Ireland, says Project Lead **DR GARRET CAMPBELL**.



The Migrant Teacher Project (MTP) at Marino Institute of Education (MIE) aims to increase the participation of immigrant internationally educated teachers in Irish primary and post-primary schools. In achieving this, the project provides information, advice and training to migrant teachers, including refugee teachers, who have qualified outside of Ireland, to help them to continue their profession in Ireland. This is crucial work at a time when teacher diversity is far from keeping pace with the changing demographics of Irish society, and when teacher retention is at an all-time low. Since commencing the project in 2017, the MTP has supported over 300 migrant teachers through a series of bridging programmes, and has also offered tailored supports for specific cohorts of teachers, such as those who have fled the war in Ukraine. The most recent data indicates that 66% of participants are currently working as teachers in Irish schools. This represents almost 200 qualified teachers who would otherwise have been lost to the system.

In addition to the supports offered by the MTP to migrant and refugee teachers, the project engages in advocacy and other activities aimed at raising the issue of registration, recruitment, retention, and promotion of migrant and refugee teachers within the Irish education system.

## Registration

For some migrant teachers, the process of registration is quite straightforward, but for others, their experience with the registration process is not a positive one. Many migrant teachers query the speed and cost of registration, and of addressing conditions attached to registration. Some report very significant difficulties in obtaining documentation from the country in which they qualified, and there is also often confusion regarding the relationship between registration and employment.

Since 2020, monthly meetings between the Teaching Council and the MTP have taken place. Since commencing this aspect of the project, the MTP has brought over 100 cases to the Registration Section of the Teaching Council. In many instances, these are from migrant teachers who would otherwise have given up on the process.

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**Participation in this programme has given me great insight into the Irish education system, curriculum, summative and formative assessment, as well as the most recent classroom, pedagogical and societal practices.**

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“Participation in this programme has given me great insight into the Irish education system, curriculum, summative and formative assessment, as well as the most recent classroom, pedagogical and societal practices. It has also given me invaluable membership of a network of contemporaries and mentors who have enthused, bolstered, and elucidated my professional growth and approach.”

*Sacha Hendricks, South Africa*

## Recruitment and retention

Many migrant teachers have very positive experiences of seeking employment in Irish schools. Other respondents were less positive about their experiences and their chances of securing longer-term employment. A teacher on one of the recent bridging programmes noted that it is “extremely difficult because if you don’t have references in Ireland they will not employ [you]”. The MTP aims to counteract this by securing school experience for migrant teachers in one of its many network schools.

## Ukraine

In 2022, in response to the war in Ukraine, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees to Ireland, and the need to support Ukrainian children in Irish schools, the MTP proposed the development and delivery of an introductory course on the Irish education system for Ukrainian

teachers seeking refuge in Ireland. Following the success of this introductory course, in which 47 Ukrainian teachers participated, the MTP went on to develop a tailored bridging programme for the growing number of Ukrainian teachers then living in Ireland and working in Irish schools.

This created an opportunity for the MTP to lead on a multi-agency response, which saw many of the key education stakeholders, such as the Teaching Council, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Teacher Education and Support Centres, teacher unions and school management bodies present on their work through a series of in-person sessions in MIE and online webinars, throughout the first half of 2023. Some 64 Ukrainian teachers recently graduated from this programme.

“Working alongside other teachers from diverse backgrounds and experiences has allowed me to gain new perspectives and insights.”  
*Maryna Ilia, Ukraine*

**Working alongside other teachers from diverse backgrounds and experiences has allowed me to gain new perspectives and insights.**

### Continuing the work

The MTP is co-financed by the European Commission under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, through the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, and by the Department of Education. It is currently facilitating another introductory programme for a further 76 Ukrainian teachers, while developing a bridging programme that will launch later this year.



**For further details on the MTP, or for your school to become an MTP Network School, email [MTP@mie.ie](mailto:MTP@mie.ie) or phone 01-853 5168.**

## Sharing experiences

**ASTIR spoke to four teachers who qualified outside Ireland about their experiences teaching in Irish post-primary schools.**



**Gilmar Souza**

*Gilmar is originally from Brazil and teaches PE at Gaelcholaiste Reachrann, Donaghmede, Co. Dublin.*

I’m originally from Brazil, where I worked as a PE teacher for 13 years. I came to Ireland in 2016 and got my qualification recognised in 2019. My experience has been positive overall, but not without challenges.

Irish schools are very welcoming, with both staff and students offering kindness and support. I’m teaching at Gaelcholaiste Reachrann in Donaghmede, Dublin, since 2021. I’m happy to have a permanent position now and feel deeply connected to the community. My choice to work in this setting was driven by a passion for the Irish language and culture. Coming from a background where much of my cultural heritage was lost through colonisation, I admire Ireland’s efforts to preserve its traditions.

Breaking into the Irish education system was tough. It felt like being thrown into deep water and left to rely on my resourcefulness. I requested to complete the Droichead induction programme for support, but my application was denied. Additionally, the Marino exams, which assess knowledge of Irish history and educational structure, were challenging. While they have potential as learning tools, they feel more like hurdles to overcome. A clearer and more supportive system for external teachers would ease the transition into the profession.

A diverse teaching force enriches education by bringing varied skills, perspectives, and teaching approaches into schools. I’ve seen how students feel motivated and valued when they see teachers who share

or respect their experiences. Beyond individual connections, culturally diverse teachers help students broaden their understanding of the world. Exposing students to different languages, cultures, and experiences fosters empathy and challenges stereotypes. Students begin to see their teachers as educators and as links to a global community. This representation goes beyond the classroom, helping students appreciate diversity and reject prejudice in their broader lives.



**Hanna Kobyliakova**

*Hanna is originally from Ukraine and is an EAL (English as an additional language) teacher at Ennistymon Community School, Ennis, Co. Clare.*

I came to Ireland from Ukraine in March 2022 to seek temporary protection and started working as a volunteer at Scoil Mhuire and CBS, Ennistymon. The schools needed help with interpreting for Ukrainian students and parents who had just arrived in the country. I was then hired as an SNA for their summer 2022 programme. In June 2022, I was registered with the Teaching Council and got a job as an EAL teacher at both schools. I was re-appointed as an EAL teacher at the new Ennistymon Community School (an amalgamation of Scoil Mhuire, CBS and Ennistymon Vocational School) in September 2023. I have been working at Ennistymon Community School since then. My experience is very positive. I receive continued professional support from my colleagues and the senior leadership team. Getting a foot into the Irish education workforce was easier for me as the Teaching



Council developed a tailored process of registration for Ukrainian teachers. I submitted all the necessary documents and was registered with conditions. I have successfully met two of them, but there is no procedure for the third one yet, 'Qualification Assessment'. The Teaching Council is supposed to start addressing it in 2025, and there is nothing I can do in the meantime. This condition stands as an obstacle to getting a contract of indefinite duration. However, I am fully aware of the fact that I am very fortunate to be able to work as a teacher considering the circumstances.

I think a culturally diverse teaching force is crucial for fostering an inclusive learning environment that benefits all. International teachers bring their unique vision and experience to the table while learning from their Irish colleagues, which makes the educational process more effective and culturally enriching.



#### **Stephanie O'Sullivan**

*Stephanie is originally from the USA and is a teacher at Wilson's Hospital School, Co. Westmeath.*

I spent about a year in Ireland as a substitute teacher before securing my first contract to work in an Irish second-level school. Initially, there was some culture shock as I adjusted to the differences in terminology, structure, and school culture between Ireland and the US.

This year, my second qualified year teaching in Ireland, I feel well adjusted – though I still come across interesting differences now and then. One of the most refreshing aspects is how much more supported and respected teachers are here compared to the US. One of my biggest challenges was completing my Teaching Council registration. This took several years due to the extensive documentation required for my situation. Despite my substantial and verifiable experience, I needed to provide syllabi, module descriptors, and book lists from my universities, along with transcripts and the necessary fees, to have my qualifications evaluated for post-primary registration. Many of these documents weren't digitised until the pandemic, which helped streamline the process. In the meantime, I was able to do some substitute teaching under Route 3 registration, an option I discovered by chance.

For migrant students, seeing teachers from similar backgrounds can be incredibly validating, helping them feel understood, boosting their confidence, and fostering a sense of belonging. It's also valuable for all students to have positive interactions with adults from various cultural backgrounds; this helps build empathy, awareness, and respect for people from different cultures. Professionally, migrant teachers bring fresh perspectives, approaches, and methods that can help schools stay in step with the evolving communities they serve.



#### **James Varghese**

*James is originally from India and is a Maths teacher at Swords Community School, Co. Dublin.*

Becoming a qualified teacher in Ireland has been a dream come true for me. For nearly a decade, starting in 2006, I was uncertain whether teaching in Ireland was possible, mainly because I wasn't sure if the Irish language was compulsory in secondary school teaching. This uncertainty led me to work in the engineering and telecom sectors, but I always felt unfulfilled, as teaching maths was my true passion.

The year 2019 marked a turning point in my life when I enrolled in the Migrant Teachers Programme at the Marino Institute of Education. Prior to that, I was not registered with the Teaching Council, and it took me three years to obtain my registration due to delays caused by Covid-19. After completing the programme, I gained the confidence to step into an Irish classroom for the first time at Ratoath Community College, officially starting my teaching career in Ireland.

Teaching in a post-primary school in Ireland has been a completely different experience compared to my home country of India, particularly in terms of culture, lifestyle, teaching methods, and the emphasis on the accent. I am the only non-EU teacher at my school, Swords Community School, which has been a source of pride.

When I first entered the classroom, some students were unsure if I could teach. To ease their doubts, I reminded them that I was there to teach maths skills, and that maths is universal. This opportunity has only been possible thanks to the warm and supportive Irish teachers who welcomed me wholeheartedly.

*Interviews by Breda Slevin.*

# EQUALITY CONFERENCE 2024

The recent ASTI Equality Conference heard that inclusive education in the classroom is paramount to the development of all students.



*Pictured at the event are (from left): Séamus Dooley (National Union of Journalists and Conference moderator), Nicola Beagan (Dyslexia Ireland), Megan Berry (Maynooth University), and Dr Richard Hogan (family psychotherapist).*

The first ASTI Equality Conference took place on Saturday, November 16. The theme of the conference was 'Inclusivity in our schools'. Addressing the Conference, ASTI President Donal Cremin highlighted the challenges faced by schools in addressing inequalities for students and the need for additional resources to tackle the issue: "School communities are embracing the values of inclusivity but they require significant investment and supports to address the effects of sociopolitical shifts, wars and conflicts, emerging youth mental health issues, and enduring inequities in a rapidly changing world".

## Insights on dyslexia

Guest speaker Nicola Beagan from Dyslexia Ireland emphasised the crucial role of teachers in recognising and promoting dyslexic students' strengths and abilities, and allowing them to reach their full potential in the classroom. Nicola highlighted the need for awareness surrounding both the challenges and strengths associated with the condition.

Providing children with dyslexia with the best educational opportunities includes "creating safety, then community, then awareness and understanding, and building upon that by introducing multi-sensory learning and learning that is very structured". This approach can be "life changing and transformative" for students.

Nicola described neurodiversity as "a difference in how people's brains work and how they interpret information", and stressed the importance of understanding that there is "no right or wrong way to learn, to process information, to interpret information around us". With one in ten students in Ireland affected by dyslexia, teachers can have up to three dyslexic students in the same classroom at any given time. She stressed the need for these differences to be valued, embraced and openly celebrated, and not seen as deficits. Instead, it is important to move away from a deficit-focused lens and instead take a "strength-based approach" to these differences.

Furthermore, she highlighted the importance of seeing students with dyslexia as individuals and noting that a 'one size fits all' approach is redundant; it is important to find the tools and strategies that work for each

individual: "Dyslexia is a spectrum which can range from mild to moderate and severe in some cases".

Nicola noted the benefits of assistive technology for students with dyslexia, such as speech-to-text software, which allows students to speak to their computer and the software will transcribe this into written text. This software is an example of assistive technology or tools that can enable students to thrive.

## Including Traveller students in education

Megan Berry, who works on the Maynooth University Access Programme (MAP) as outreach officer, stressed the importance of including and integrating Traveller children into mainstream education, and the importance of teacher support in a child's development and progression to second- and third-level education. Drawing on her own experiences in the classroom as a Traveller student, Megan highlighted the negative effects of discriminatory practices faced by Traveller children, such as segregation and cultural bias, on their progression in education beyond primary school:



*ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie is pictured with guest speaker Megan Berry at the ASTI Equality Conference.*



ASTI Deputy General Secretary Diarmaid de Paor is pictured with Dr Jennifer Okeke, Chair of the National Women's Council.



From left: Geraldine O'Brien (ASTI Immediate Past President); Dearbhla Cussen (ASTI member), Michelle Ryan (ASTI member), and Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary).

“Only 13% of Travellers actually complete second-level education, as opposed to 92% of the general population. We see a huge drop-out rate between primary school and college, with 80% of Traveller children attending primary school. This figure drops down to 13.5% before the beginning of Senior Cycle. Fewer than 1% of Travellers progress to third-level education”.

Reduced timetables, social stigma and discrimination associated with being from the Travelling community can have a dehumanising effect on these Traveller children: “You don’t hear about Traveller culture when you have big intercultural days in school. You can see everybody else; you can see the flags of everyone else, but you are missing the Traveller aspect”.

**Toxic masculinity and adolescent boys**

Family psychotherapist Dr Richard Hogan spoke about the effect on adolescent boys of an environment of toxic masculinity. However, Richard cautioned against labelling adolescent boys “toxic”, as this only serves to reinforce harmful gender stereotypes. “There are things in our culture that we need to address and we need to address those cultural ideas,” he said.



From left: Donal Cremin (ASTI President), Nicola Beagan (Dyslexia Ireland), and Philip Synnott (Chair, ASTI Equality Committee).

He added that the phrase “toxic masculinity is giving boys the idea that there is something inherently wrong with being a boy and masculine”. Richard stressed the importance of teaching boys “that it’s okay to be a boy”. In fact, masculinity is not about aggressive competition. “There are also parts of it that are about being vulnerable and being empathetic”. He also addressed the increasing influence of controversial figures such as Andrew Tate, explaining that adolescent boys are drawn to the black and white world views due to their still-developing abstract skills: “They’re 15, their brains are not fully developed yet, and won’t be for another 10 years. Their capacity for abstract thinking is not fully developed just yet. So, when someone says that the world is black or white, it makes sense to them”.

**Intersectionality**

The three guests engaged in a panel discussion where they dealt with questions from the audience. This conversation, expertly moderated by Séamus Dooley of the National Union of Journalists, illustrated the fact that many of the issues discussed can apply to the same individual and that it is most important to treat difference as a strength. Interestingly, Dr Hogan told the meeting that he himself is dyslexic and had still managed to succeed.

**Inclusivity versus conformity**

Closing the Conference, Philip Synnott, Chair of the ASTI Equality Committee, highlighted a significant contradiction in the Irish education system – the tension between the need for the education system to be inclusive and the need for students to conform to the same behavioural standards: “There’s a contradiction here because our education system is built around conformity”.

He called for more supports for schools to address issues, such as smaller classes, and for the partners in education to work together to create a truly inclusive education system for the benefit of all students.



Gemini



# AI IN THE CLASSROOM

**ASTIR talks to two teachers about their experiences using AI in the classroom. Article by Breeda Slevin.**

A 2024 ASTI RED C survey found that one in five teachers is using artificial intelligence (AI) in the classroom. ASTI members Natalie Doyle Bradley and Shannon Ahern have embraced AI tools. They talk to *ASTIR* about their experiences, the benefits to their students, and how some of the risks posed by AI can be addressed.



### AI to meet students' needs

Natalie Doyle Bradley (left) is a special education teacher at Chanel College in Coolock, Dublin 5. She outlines how she uses AI in the classroom: "To start with I use it for preparation for lessons. As a special education teacher, the needs of my students are very varied. I use AI to create pre-assessments and analyse reports. I brainstorm ideas, and research topics and methodologies I am unfamiliar with. In

class, I set students up with tools that already use AI to scaffold their learning at a personalised level, such as Read Theory, Reading Coach, Khan Academy and Quizlet. These tools adjust based on the student's input, ensuring that the material is at the appropriate difficulty level". Natalie has also created AI tools herself: "Creating my own tools means the students are using AI in a purposefully designed environment aimed at their specific needs".

One example is her Write Sharp Paragraph Assistant, which helps students to write a structured paragraph with a topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion, a skill needed for many different subjects: "Some of my students don't want to start writing sometimes due to fear of failure. This tool asks for input on what the student is

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**When students learn to use AI tools to adapt materials into formats that work best for them, it can enhance their learning experience. For example, they can convert text to speech, simplify complex language, or adjust the visual presentation of information.**

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working on and whether they find it easy or difficult. It provides a choice of sentence starters, and it ensures that each student gets feedback exactly when they need it. My students cast their screens up to my interactive flat-screen panel, allowing me to monitor their work in real time, checking who is on task and who is struggling. I can interrupt the student and offer support, where my personal knowledge of the student is beneficial in navigating them through the difficulty". Using AI benefits neurodivergent students and students with dyslexia, says Natalie: "For me, the primary advantage is the ability to quickly and easily create different versions of lesson content. The principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which advocate for providing choices and a wider range of learning materials, are now more practical and achievable with AI. When students learn to use AI tools to adapt materials into formats that work best for them, it can enhance their learning experience. For example, they can convert text to speech, simplify complex language, or adjust the visual presentation of

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**AI is trained on vast amounts of data and it is essential to ensure that this data does not include personal or sensitive information, especially data entrusted to our care. We must avoid uploading any data that should not be shared.**

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information. AI tools can also help reduce anxiety by providing a non-judgmental platform for practice and exploration, making students more willing to take risks and try new things”.

#### **Don't be afraid to dive in**

Natalie's advice to teachers is: “Don't be afraid to dive in. Use AI yourself and learn as you go. This technology is so new that there are no true experts yet”.

She acknowledges that it is hard to know where to start: “With so many platforms offering innovative tools, the choices can be overwhelming”. She recommends starting with ChatGPT: “I have customised my account and have become proficient in using it. Additionally, I use Play Lab AI to create my own AI tools. It's incredibly easy. It can significantly enhance both your and your students' learning experiences”.

Using AI in teaching has yielded positive results, says Natalie: “Most students are definitely more engaged with the work. They appreciate the immediate feedback and the ability to influence their learning experience, whether by topic or by level adjustment. It's beneficial for students to have a manageable challenge while still being able to complete the work. They find it easier to ask AI questions, as it's a personal platform, making them more likely to attempt answers than they might be in front of their peers”.

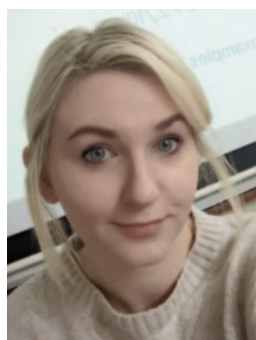
While Natalie is a staunch advocate for using AI, she feels there are obstacles that need to be addressed: “AI, particularly generative AI, is almost like a sophisticated predictive text machine. If you input poor-quality data, such as biased information or poorly constructed questions, you will get poor-quality results.

This can lead people to think AI is ineffective. However, through consistent use and refinement, the quality of AI-generated results can improve. Another issue is ‘hallucinations’, where the AI appears to fabricate information. Often, asking the AI to check its work can help identify and correct these errors”.

In terms of safety, Natalie thinks that “children under 13 should not have their own AI accounts”. She says: “before using AI, students should be taught strategies for discerning truth from fiction. Critical analysis skills are more important than ever”.

Privacy is another concern: “AI is trained on vast amounts of data and it is essential to ensure that this data does not include personal or sensitive information, especially data entrusted to our care. We must avoid uploading any data that should not be shared”.

Natalie concludes: “AI is not perfect yet. The content it produces needs to be reviewed by someone knowledgeable about the topic to ensure accuracy. I think that teachers are well placed to perform this oversight and edit AI-generated content as needed”.



#### **Outsource your typing, not your thinking**

Shannon Ahern (left) is a teacher at St Declan's College in Cabra, Dublin 7. She describes her experience of using AI: “I use AI for my planning and it's also a great search engine for finding resources that are hidden from us on Google.

But for me the big win with generative AI is differentiation of resources, for example, making reading comprehensions at a particular reading level. With AI tools you're able to generate the same article and prompt it to create different reading levels for students with different literacy levels. Some educational AI tools such as Diffit will generate material at different reading levels automatically”.

Shannon gives another practical example: “I often ask students to write out definitions to learn keywords. For those who have poor literacy levels or have additional needs, writing becomes a huge deal. It's the fear of being found out. So, I use ‘fill in the blanks’ worksheets. Previously, I made the sheets myself but now I can copy and paste the definitions into ChatGPT, say ‘remove keywords, put them in a work bank at the end of the worksheet’. I discretely give out the printouts and the difference in behaviour is huge. They are like different students in front of me and they really are genuinely appreciative of the effort put in for them”.

Generating sample lab reports is another use that Shannon suggests: “In second year science the CBA is a lab report on an experiment the students design themselves. When I used a ChatGPT-generated sample lab report to show the structure, I noticed that lots of students then wrote really long but not necessarily detailed reports. So, the following week I generated four new lab reports of varying lengths and levels of detail for them to rank from best to worst. Without me having to hammer it home and say to them ‘a long lab report isn't necessarily a good lab report’, they figured it out themselves”.

For her neurodivergent students and her autistic students that have a special interest, Shannon uses ChatGPT to theme questions: “Last year I had a sixth-year student who was mad into ships and marine engineering. So, one day I made my maths question for higher level maths about ships.

He just loved that. It's fantastic what you can do in terms of making things themed. You give it a sample question, you say: ‘this is the topic, this is the learning outcome. Here's a sample question. I want you to make it about this topic’. It makes a big difference in terms of their ability to understand questions”.

The Department of Education announced in April 2024 that with the support of Oide, it is working on establishing comprehensive guidelines for teachers and educators on the use of AI in the Irish education system. The Oide website provides links to a wide range of information and resources on using AI in the classroom.

#### **For further information visit:**

[www.oidechnologyineducation.ie/artificial-intelligence-in-schools/](http://www.oidechnologyineducation.ie/artificial-intelligence-in-schools/)

If you type into the chat box, ‘create a worksheet, this is the learning outcome, these are the style of questions that I want’, it will then message you back an output. If you don’t like it, you reply back like you would to a colleague and say ‘I don’t like that question.’



Sure! What type of worksheet would you like to create? I can help with different types, such as:

1. **Math worksheet** (e.g., addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, algebra)
2. **Reading comprehension** (e.g., short passage with questions)
3. **Writing prompts** (e.g., creative writing or sentence structure)
4. **Science** (e.g., basic biology, physics, earth science)
5. **Grammar and language arts** (e.g., parts of speech, sentence structure, punctuation)
6. **General knowledge** (e.g., trivia or facts-based)

Let me know what you need, and I'll help design it!

Worksheets generated by ChatGPT.

science

Great! Let's create a **Science worksheet**. I'll design it with a mix of questions that cover basic science topics. I'll include a variety of question types: multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and a few that require critical thinking.

---

**Science Worksheet: General Knowledge**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Part 1: Multiple Choice**

1. What is the chemical formula for water? a) CO<sub>2</sub>  
b) H<sub>2</sub>O  
c) O<sub>2</sub>  
d) NaCl
2. Which planet is known as the "Red Planet"?  
a) Earth  
b) Venus  
c) Mars  
d) Jupiter
3. What is the main source of energy for the Earth?  
a) The Moon  
b) The Sun  
c) Wind  
d) Water
4. Which of the following is a mammal?  
a) Shark  
b) Dolphin  
c) Crocodile  
d) Frog

Message ChatGPT

**Better balance**

In terms of what apps to use, Shannon says: “ChatGPT, at the moment anyway, is still able to do as much if not more than the others. There are mini custom apps within ChatGPT I just call GPTs that are designed to do specific tasks. There are loads of education-based AI apps too, but I find that if you can master prompting with ChatGPT, that’s what they all are underneath it all”.

Shannon’s advice to other teachers is: “If you can send a text message, you can use these tools. That’s all it is”. She describes the process: “If you type into the chat box, ‘create a worksheet, this is the learning outcome, these are the style of questions that I want’, it will then message you back an output. If you don’t like it, you reply back like you would to a colleague and say ‘I don’t like that question. Can we change it to something else?’ It’s about iterations and having that back-and-forth conversation with it”.

The phrase that Shannon emphasises is “outsource your typing, not your thinking”. She says: “To get quality output from an AI tool, quite a lot of thought needs to go into the prompt for the message that you give it, and the content that comes back. Be critical of the output, and I think that that’s where the skill lies for us as teachers, not in spending an hour typing”. Before AI, Shannon says she often thought, “Am I going to go in tomorrow, have the energy to deal with the behaviour management or am I going to go in tomorrow and have the resources but not have the energy?”

I’ll still come home and do a bit of work in the evenings, but I’m certainly able to get a better balance for myself and the guilt isn’t there.

Of course, it doesn’t fix all of the problems: I’ll still come home and do a bit of work in the evenings, but I’m certainly able to get a better balance for myself and the guilt isn’t there”. Shannon points out the importance of education around AI: “Like with any technology or any threat to society, students or our children, it’s education all the way. As teachers, we need to understand and know what the limitations are so we can communicate that to our students. I also think we need to have classes about it in school as soon as possible”.

Finally, Shannon says: “We’re never going back to a pre-AI time. It’s not going back in the box, and we need to exist alongside it, as much as possible. There’s always going to be negatives with any technology that comes out, whether it’s the internet or the printing press, but like with those things, the positives will always shine through and hopefully in the end will win out”.



# ASTI CELEBRATES OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS

Six more teachers were recently honoured by the ASTI for their contributions to their branch and to their fellow branch members.



From left: Geraldine O'Brien (ASTI Immediate Past President), Katherine Aherne, Kildare Branch (PJ Kennedy Award recipient), and Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary).

The ASTI Awards celebrate those who have provided invaluable service to the teaching profession and the union, and those who excel in their own right and provide a valuable example to their students.

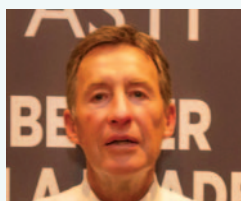
In the latest in a series of articles on the ASTI Awards, we focus on the 2024 PJ Kennedy Awards.

### PJ Kennedy Award

The PJ Kennedy Award is awarded to members who have given valuable service to their branch or to members of their branch, such as long-serving and diligent service as a school steward or branch officer. This Award recognises the particularly committed branch-level activists who do this work year after year to an exceptional standard. As well as Katherine Aherne (pictured left), this year's PJ Kennedy Award recipients were:



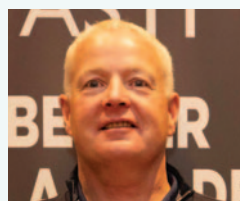
**Kevin Connaughton,**  
Dublin South  
2 Branch



**Gerry Dempsey,**  
Galway Branch



**Kevin Dunphy,**  
Laois Branch



**Michael Flanagan,**  
Carbery Branch



**Mairead O'Connor,**  
Fingal Branch

### Recognise your colleagues' activism and service to the union by nominating them for an ASTI Award

Each year the ASTI invites branches to nominate their members in a variety of award categories.

The ASTI Awards ceremony is hosted each year in May and provides an opportunity for members to be recognised and honoured for their outstanding service to their branch and fellow members.

The ASTI awards are broken down into the following categories and branches can choose to nominate any of their members for:

- the PJ Kennedy Award,
- the Thomas MacDonagh Medal, and
- Honorary Life Membership.

#### PJ Kennedy Award

This award reflects the contribution of the recipient to the ASTI. Eligible nominees are retired members who have given valuable service to their branch and/or branch members. Such a nominee might be a diligent school steward or

a branch officer whose years of commitment and sterling service warrant such recognition. Nominees for this award must be nominated by an ASTI branch.

#### The Thomas MacDonagh Medal

This award reflects the distinguished service and contribution of the recipient to the ASTI. Nominees for this award must be nominated by an ASTI branch or by a member of ASTI Standing Committee.

#### Honorary Life Membership

This award is conferred only in recognition of outstanding service to the Association and entitles the Honorary Life Member to all rights and privileges of full membership, including the right to hold office. Nominees for this Award must be nominated by an ASTI branch for the approval of the ASTI Awards Committee. If approved, the nomination will be referred to a vote at the January meeting of the Central Executive Council (CEC), who will then refer the nominee to Annual Convention for approval.

For more information on the ASTI Awards, see: [www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants/](http://www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants/).

# ANNUAL CONVENTION 2025

**ASTI Annual Convention 2025 will take place in the INEC, Killarney, Co. Kerry, from April 22-24.**

Every Easter, approximately 500 ASTI members attend Annual Convention to discuss and vote on the Association's policies for the year ahead.

## Attending Convention

Delegates to Convention are selected at branch meetings, usually in January. Each branch is entitled to send a number of delegates to Convention depending on the number of members in the branch. Branches must submit delegates' names to ASTI Head Office not later than January 31. Members of the ASTI Central Executive Council and Standing Committee also attend Convention as delegates.

If you wish to attend Convention 2025, you should go along to your next branch meeting. If you are unsure about when or where your branch meets, ask your school steward for the meeting schedule.

When attending Annual Convention, you must be either a delegate or an observer. Only delegates are allowed to speak and vote on Convention motions.

## Costs

The cost of travel and an overnight allowance are paid to all delegates. There is also a registration fee, which is paid directly to Head Office by ASTI branches.

## Where to stay

Accommodation for delegates will be available at The Gleneagle Hotel, Killarney. Convention hotel accommodation is limited and is allocated on a first come, first served basis. Delegates who wish to stay in The Gleneagle Hotel are required to use the promo code ASTI2025 when making their booking to avail of the special ASTI accommodation rate.

There are several other accommodation options in Killarney; details of hotels and guesthouses in the surrounding area are available on [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

## ASTI Kids Camp and babysitting

ASTI Kids Camp for delegates' children aged from four to 12 years is available during Convention sessions in the Aquila Club, Gleneagle Hotel. The Aquila Club does not provide services for children under the age of four years. Kids Camp is available to delegates who complete the registration form and return it to the ASTI by Friday, March 21. For registration forms received after March 21, places cannot be guaranteed and may incur a late booking fee of €75 per child.

There are also limited babysitting services available for children (under four years) of delegates attending Convention sessions and staying in the Gleneagle Hotel. Hotel babysitters are vetted. If you require babysitting services, please email [jkearns@asti.ie](mailto:jkearns@asti.ie) by Friday, March 14, 2025.



## Convention dinner

The Convention dinner will take place on Tuesday, April 22, in The Gleneagle Hotel. Tickets cost €60, but branches can reserve a table for 10 before April 2 for €500 – a saving of €100. Payment for branch reserved tables must reach the ASTI Accounts Department on or before April 11.

If your branch wishes to join with another branch for a table, please book under one branch's name by emailing [info@asti.ie](mailto:info@asti.ie), reference 'Annual Convention Dinner'.

## Teachers in the spotlight

Key debates on education, teachers' terms and conditions, and the ASTI's role as a trade union take place during Convention. Annual Convention attracts significant media attention and provides opportunities to highlight some of the main issues for second-level teachers. Coverage focuses on important speeches, including the President's address on Tuesday evening, and on key debates throughout Convention.

## Topics for debate

Topics for debate are dictated by motions, which are submitted and selected at branch meetings. In other words, ASTI members get to decide what is debated at Annual Convention. Branches normally decide on the topics they would like to see discussed at their November branch meetings.

A Convention Steering Committee, which consists of classroom teachers elected by Annual Convention each year, prepares a list of motions received from branches. The list is circulated to all branches before January 7. Branches are asked to prioritise motions for inclusion on the Convention agenda not later than January 31. They can also propose amendments to motions. Motions and amendments are considered again by the Steering Committee in early February and a final agenda is drawn up.

## Connect at Convention

The ASTI encourages the use of social media during open debates (some debates are closed sessions and delegates may not discuss these on social media). Social media platforms X and Facebook allow the ASTI and delegates to spread the news to their colleagues who cannot attend and to highlight important issues to their followers.

## Where can I get information about Convention?

The ASTI website – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie) – is where you will find all of the information you need about Convention 2025. Go to the 'Events' section to find the Convention 2025 page.

# SUPPLEMENTARY PENSIONS

**Changes to the administration of Supplementary Pensions can facilitate teachers who wish to return to teaching post retirement, says DESMOND O'TOOLE, ASTI Executive Officer: Development & Organisation.**



This is the time of year when many longer-serving teachers may be considering their options for retirement, either at the end of this school year or in the coming years.

Members who began their teaching careers before 2013 are typically members of the Secondary or Education and Training Board (ETB) Teachers' Superannuation Schemes. These schemes provide options for teachers to retire from various minimum ages, and to have their pension benefits calculated on the basis of their final salary and the amount of pensionable service they have accumulated over their career.

However, a third factor that is hugely important in calculating a teacher's pension is the pay-related social insurance (PRSI) record that a retiring teacher has built up during their teaching career. Teachers typically pay PRSI at the D rate if they have continuous teaching service from before April 1995, or the A rate if they started teaching after that date or have breaks in their teaching service, other than approved unpaid leave.

Retired teachers who have always paid PRSI at the D rate have all their pension benefits paid directly by the Department of Education. They do not typically qualify for the State Contributory Pension (SCP) unless they build up sufficient A rate PRSI contributions from working during retirement. Retired teachers who have always paid PRSI at the A rate, however, are paid what is known as a 'co-ordinated pension', the calculation of which takes account of their future entitlement to a SCP. This is fine if such a teacher retires on their 66th birthday, the qualifying age for the SCP, as all that it means is that they will receive their co-ordinated pension benefits from two sources, their teachers' pension and the SCP.

## When can you claim a Supplementary Pension?

What happens, however, if a teacher with a co-ordinated pension retires before their 66th birthday, before they are entitled to receive the SCP? The co-ordination still takes place and the calculation of their teachers' pension is still adjusted to reflect their future entitlement to the SCP. However, so long as the retired teacher is neither working nor entitled to Jobseeker's Benefit, they can claim a Supplementary Pension from the Department of Education to cover the period up until their 66th birthday, at which time they can claim the SCP.

Claiming a Supplementary Pension used to be quite difficult. A teacher had to confirm that they were not working in retirement and that they had exhausted any entitlement they had to Jobseeker's Benefit. This second requirement was particularly onerous for retiring teachers who had always paid PRSI at the A

rate. Such teachers typically had to apply for Jobseeker's Benefit, and were then subject to employment activation measures to ensure that they were actively seeking work. Only once they had exhausted their entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit could they then apply for their Supplementary Pension. In addition, once the Supplementary Pension was in payment, a teacher had to advise the Department of Education if they undertook any paid work so that the Department could stop payment of the Supplementary Pension for the period of that employment. This changed in August 2024, driven by the crisis in teacher supply, when the process by which retired teachers could return to teaching was made much simpler.

## Significant changes

It continues to be the case that teachers retiring before their 66th birthday, who are entitled to a co-ordinated pension, must still make an application for a Supplementary Pension, the payment of which is halted during periods of future employment. However, two significant changes have been introduced by the Department of Education, which make this process much easier to navigate. Firstly, the requirement for a retired teacher to exhaust their entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit has been removed.

Retiring teachers can now apply for the immediate payment of their Supplementary Pension using the form available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/891c7-supplementary-pensions/>. The same restriction about working in retirement continues to apply. However, if that employment is as a post-primary teacher, the impact of that employment on the payment of a Supplementary Pension will be managed directly by the Department of Education through the payroll and pensions systems. The Department is now able to leverage its twin role as pensions and payroll provider to directly manage the payment of co-ordinated pensions, Supplementary Pensions and salaries to teachers working in retirement. For example, the Department will maintain payment of Supplementary Pension for periods of teaching employment and only suspend the payment of a Supplementary Pension for those individual days that a teacher is working in a school.

These two initiatives make it much easier for retiring teachers with co-ordinated pensions to access a Supplementary Pension and to return to the classroom without completely losing access to their Supplementary Pension while working. As always, ASTI Head Office is happy to advise teachers on these initiatives and on any other pension or retirement matter.



My dear friends,  
 I would like to wish you all a very happy New Year with good health and many blessings. As the days lengthen and the spring flowers begin to appear, the 18 branches of the RSTA will be busy planning an exciting programme for the year ahead. We are a separate organisation from the ASTI but have very close and warm bonds with it, and are deeply grateful for its very strong and generous support, especially in our commitment to maintaining parity with our serving colleagues, which is only granted for the duration of the current pay agreement. Perhaps you are thinking of retiring this year, or have friends/colleagues who intend to retire. Do, please, think of joining the RSTA and encourage your friends to join too. You will be given a very warm welcome. Due to the restrictions imposed by GDPR, schools are prevented from telling us when teachers retire, so we rely on the help of serving teachers to spread the good news of the RSTA. We not only fight

for your pensions, in conjunction with the Alliance of Retired Public Servants, of which we are a founder member, and also the Retired Workers' Committee of Congress, on which we have representation. We also organise meetings in our local branches, featuring speakers on all sorts of topics of interest, and great trips both within this country and abroad.

**All information is on our website – [www.rsta.ie](http://www.rsta.ie).**

Susie Hall  
 RSTA President



### RSTA membership application/renewal

Name:

Address:

Home phone:

Mobile:

Email:

RSTA branch:

**Annual subscription: €24**  
**Annual renewal date: September 1**

**Payment options:** Bank standing order (recommended by RSTA) or cheque (payable to RSTA)

**Return to:** Mrs Muriel McNicholas, Cordarragh, Kiltimagh, Claremorris, Co. Mayo.

**Contact:** [murielmcnicholas@gmail.com](mailto:murielmcnicholas@gmail.com) or 085-118 1330

The personal information requested here is required to administer your membership of the RSTA. It is used by the RSTA in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). See the RSTA Data Protection and Privacy Policy on the RSTA website – [www.rsta.ie](http://www.rsta.ie).

### Standing order set-up form

To: The Manager (Bank name and full address)

I hereby authorise and request you to DEBIT my account:

Account name/s:

IBAN

BIC

And to credit the account of:

**RETIRED SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION**

**IBAN:** IE55 AIBK 9323 6112 7290 80 (**BIC:** AIBKIE2D)

with the amount of **€24** (twenty four Euro)

**Start Date:** \_\_\_/\_\_\_/20\_\_\_ **Frequency:** Annually until further notice

**Reference:** (To identify member's subscription on RSTA bank statement):

Member name

Signature:  Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/20\_\_\_

## Host European colleagues as part of Erasmus+

Mobility Hub is looking for interested secondary teachers to host European teachers for short-term job shadowing experiences. This initiative is fully funded by the European Commission, and is seeking teachers who might be interested in hosting European colleagues for one or two weeks.

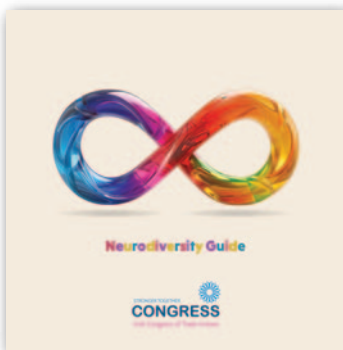
These visits would allow European teachers to observe and learn from the educational practices in Irish classrooms, enriching their perspectives and skills. This project presents a valuable opportunity for ASTI members and visiting teachers alike, fostering an exchange of pedagogical insights and methods.

Mobility Hub would oversee all logistical aspects of these visits, including travel, accommodation, and other arrangements, ensuring that there is no cost or administrative workload for the host teachers. Mobility Hub Ltd, based in Galway, works to support professional exchanges and mobility under the Erasmus+ Programme, partnering with schools and educational institutions across various European countries.

**For more information on the Programme, please contact Fátima Benayad at [fbenayad@mobilityhubltd.com](mailto:fbenayad@mobilityhubltd.com), or apply online at: <https://www.mobilityhubltd.com/>.**



## ICTU Neurodiversity Guide for trade unions



The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), of which the ASTI is an affiliate, has published a guide to support neurodiverse members at work and within partner trade unions.

Neurodiversity refers to the wide range of difference in how individuals' brains work. Neurodiversity recognises that some people's brains are wired

differently. Examples of neurodiverse conditions include dyslexia, dyspraxia, and ADHD, as well as learning and intellectual disabilities.

The guide explores the importance of embracing neurodiversity in the workplace and the benefits it brings, including creativity, problem-solving skills and diverse perspectives.

The objective of this guide is to provide workplace representatives such as school stewards with information on how to better represent neurodivergent members in their workplace.

This guide will help workplace representatives to recognise the workplace issues that can impact neurodiverse individuals, and equip them with the information and guidance necessary to help tackle these issues.

**For more information and to access the neurodiversity guide please visit: [www.ictu.ie/publications/neurodiversity-guide](http://www.ictu.ie/publications/neurodiversity-guide)**

**CNB.ie**  
**COLÁISTE NA BHFIANN**  
ROS MUC | GAOTH DOBHAIR | DROIM RÍ

**FOLÚNTAS DO MHÚINTEOIRÍ BUNSCOILE AGUS DO MHÚINTEOIRÍ MEÁNSCOILE AR CHÚRSAÍ SAMHRAIDH GAELIGE**

An bhfuil spéis agat obair ar fhoireann spreagúil, bhriomhar atá paiseanta faoin nGaeilge? Tar ag obair le Coláiste na bhFiann!

Foirm Iarratais ar fáil ar **WWW.CNB.IE**  
nó tuilleadh eolais a lorg trí ríomhphost a sheoladh chuig **MICHELLE@CNB.IE**

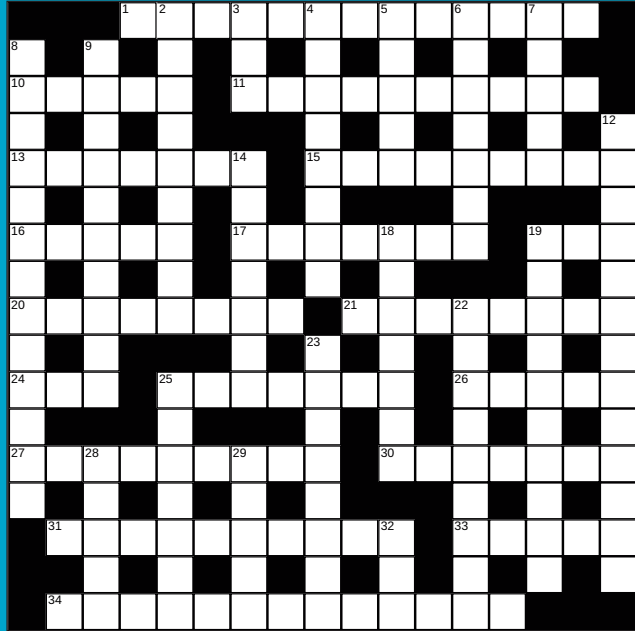


Sponsored by Cornmarket

ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 2501

The winner will receive €250 in One4All vouchers.

If you wish to keep your copy of *ASTIR* intact you may send a photocopy of the crossword. One entry only per member.



Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: ASTIR Crossword No. 2501,  
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, February 14, 2025

ACROSS

1. Mythical being takes away small molars? (3,5,5)
10. Number of members who must retire from Sickness Benefit Committee at each election (5)
11. Backward, regressive, negative (10)
13. Resembling, or having the nature of, a mushroom (7)
15. The loudest point reached in a piece of music (9)
16. Distressed house pets lose shoe (5)
17. Sharp pointed metal frame fixed to climbing boot (7)
19. Slump (3)
20. Conspirators, or computer hardware devices (8)
21. Arresting figure in Paris (8)
24. Lament French street (3)
25. He composed *The Barber of Seville* (7)
26. At least two members of the ASTI Sickness Benefit Committee must be ... (5)
27. I am traveller, in brief (9)
30. Route to conflict? (7)
31. Unappealing, drab, unsightly (10)
33. Angle between land providing income for clergyman (5)
34. A close shave from dental plaque (4,2,2,5)

DOWN

2. Tool used to control bleeding during surgery (9)
3. An Irishman's country (3)
4. He helps you with eye contact? (8)
5. His 1676 law of physics springs to mind (5)
6. Nigerian, say, or Angolan (7)
7. Radioactive gas might adorn your house (5)
8. Self-restraint after a slap in the gob? (5,5,3)
9. Ringo tends to keep his nose to this (10)
12. A slap in the gob yields a wry twist of fate (6,2,5)
14. South east heals and protects (7)
18. Pay less for pay per view (7)
19. Methods of restarting play in rugby football (10)
22. Out and out, complete, absolute (9)
23. In a way that is very dirty or unpleasant (8)
25. Structured health routine (7)
28. Capital city of Belarus (5)
29. Halo of snooty distant (5)
32. Introductory expletive to express surprise or enthusiasm (3)

Solutions to ASTIR Crossword No. 2405

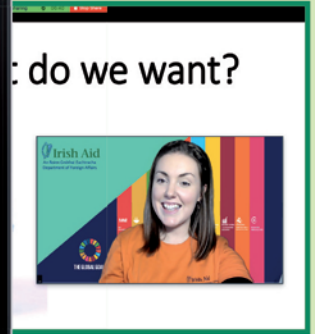
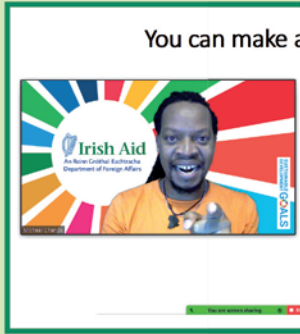
ACROSS	DOWN
1. One in a million	2. Nonsmoker
10. Often	3. IED
11. Daydreamer	4. Amygdala
13. Dynamic	5. Idris
15. Desperado	6. Loafers
16. Thick	7. Opera
17. Nelson's	8. Goody two shoes
19. Tor	9. Stinginess
20. Override	12. Four-poster bed
21. Neutrino	14. Conflab
24. HMS	18. Openers
25. Website	19. Tailgaters
26. Right	22. Turkestan
27. Expensive	23. Directly
30. Shelter	25. Wannabe
31. Irradiated	28. Perch
33. Three	29. <i>Iliad</i>
34. Three-day event	32. Dev

Did you miss?

- Driving teacher diversity and supply 17
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CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 2405:  
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