

Leader

QUARTERLY

SUPPORTING OUR UKRAINIAN COLLEAGUES & STUDENTS

O commemorate me where there is water
Canal water preferably, so stilly
Greeny at the heart of summer. Brother
Commemorate me thus beautifully
Where by a lock niagarously roars
The falls for those who sit in the tremendous silence
Of mid-July.

Lines Written on a Seat on the Grand Canal

Patrick Kavanagh
1959

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

Summer
2023

National Association of Principals & Deputy Principals
Cumann Náisiúnta Príomhoidí agus Príomhoidí Tánaisteacha

NAPD



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19300 NAPD editorial 04-23

FROM THE EDITOR



We continue to commemorate NAPD's 25th anniversary, with a further six former Presidents offering their reflections. Tom Collins takes up the baton from Anne Looney who contributed a Spring reflection on how we navigated to 1998, what's happened since and where we're now headed.

If you missed Anne's insightful, and somewhat sobering, prognosis it might merit a visit.

Tom brings us from the bleak early years of the last century, with the *control rod of punishment* at the centre of schooling to the enlightened understandings of Vatican 2, furthered by liberal thinking of Rogers, Freire, Illich and Dewey. The child, a fully formed and innately good human being, would no longer be the target of the

Christian Brother's leather (*an leathair*, as Gaeilge, for those of us with a lingering visceral connection) but would be placed at the centre of their own learning. Children would look forward to going to school, which would have a social as well as educational purpose.

Happy days then? No further spoilers. Enjoy the read and give the arising questions some time.

Teacher shortages continue to bedevil the days (and nights) of school leaders. It seems that we are happy to propose small changes when more radical actions are required. As questioned in the Ambassador's Reports herein, does the PME really need to be 2 years? Do fees need to be €12,000 before living expenses are added (make that €40,000 if living away from home and you want to eat and be clothed).

With a debt of €40,000 upon qualification, I'm more likely to consider Dubai or Melbourne than Dublin or Mullingar.

Even if I've generous parents and am debt free, I want to travel. Can we incentivise young teachers to give us two, three or even five years before they go? Can we refund them their training costs over this time? If Western Australia's education people can come here to dangle goodies, can't we imaginatively counter-offer? Radical? No, the bean counters, awash with beans, could easily figure this one out.

Where we have subject teacher shortages, can't we share teachers between schools on a remote learning basis? Will we tell fifth years we don't have a Physics teacher, so how about Economics or Geography? Long before COVID, there were arrangements within some ETBs and also nationally with the teaching of Irish, where schools shared teachers online. We know it works, so who could possibly object? Radical? Or just the smart use of existing resources?

Hospitals are considering building affordable accommodation for young nurses. Why can't we do this for young teachers? Radical, outside the box even? For sure, but wouldn't Donough O'Malley and Niamh Bhreathnach at least be bending the ears of the Finance and Housing Ministers?

Yerra, it will be grand hasn't ever worked (and never will).

In arguing for reform of the Education Welfare Act, Brian Fleming refers to absenteeism figures. Irish data is 5 years old. Given the trauma of Covid, it's remarkable that we don't have more recent data. UK data reveals that the number of children absent more than 50% of the time doubled since the start of the pandemic, as did the rate of persistent absence (10%+), from 13% to 24%. Severely absent children are most likely to be both the perpetrators and victims of crime. And how do we re-engage our children (anecdotally numerous) who have completely dropped out of school? When we eventually get Irish data, will it be too late?

We had intended giving AI (and other stuff) a good airing in this column, but ran out of room. Next time we'll hand over to ChatGPT, tighter spec, 600 words. ChatGPT editor, then? You couldn't make this up. ChatGPT could, though.

As ever, observations here are mine alone. We are indebted to all who contributed. Out of space and time, I wish readers a long, hot and relaxing summer.

Barry O'Callaghan
Editor

Leader

Quarterly

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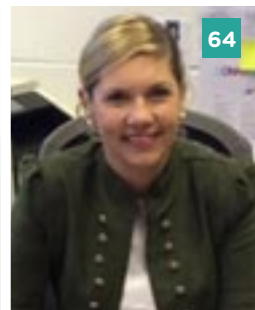
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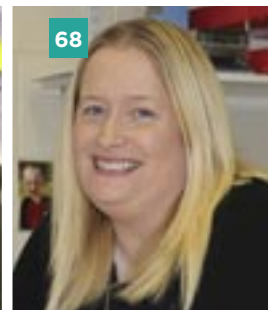
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Presidential Musings

Shane Foley
President



I recently attended the Norwegian Principals' Conference where renowned Finnish educationalist Pasi Sahlberg was the keynote speaker. Sahlberg placed significant importance on social and emotional learning in schools as a way to achieve the necessary reforms that our educational system needs. However, he also recognised that schools are facing a very real problems with student disengagement, anxiety and absenteeism.

Ireland is no different to other European countries or indeed Australia when it comes to student absenteeism. I have spoken to many schools and it would appear to be a very real problem for many of us.

Disengagement and anxiety are now terms which are more frequently being used when we talk about schooling. In terms of disengagement in schools, Sahlberg expressed concerns about the impact that remote learning may have had on student motivation and engagement, as well as the impact

of digital technologies. While remote learning was necessary during the pandemic, Sahlberg worries that students may have become disconnected from their peers and teachers, leading to disengagement and a lack of motivation. This of course is a concern that many of us have been expressing here post-pandemic too. One might question if this is the cause of the increase in student absenteeism?

Sahlberg also argued that the pandemic disrupted the relationships between students and their teachers, as well as among students themselves. Sahlberg suggested that some students may have developed a sense of disengagement anxiety, a fear of returning to school and reintegrating into a social environment that has been disrupted by the pandemic. Is this something that you can associate with in your schools?

We are all aware of the importance of creating a positive school culture so that our students feel connected to their teachers and classmates in order to feel motivated to learn. Our schools are places that foster creativity, curiosity and a love of learning. That is what we strive to achieve on a daily basis; however, the significant increase in absenteeism is something that needs to be addressed. We need to stem the tide here. If some of the reasons for this are consequences of the pandemic, as Sahlberg suggests, then we need to name it and begin the process of understanding the issues.

The solution I believe, will be one that involves parents, students, teachers and of course our Department of Education and other state agencies. It's time to start these discussions now.

I suppose it would be remiss of me not to mention Artificial

We are all aware of the importance of creating a positive school culture so that our students feel connected to their teachers and classmates in order to feel motivated to learn. Our schools are places that foster creativity, curiosity and a love of learning.

As President, I would like to take this opportunity to recognise you for your service to the position that you have held. Your hard work and dedication to your schools may not always have been adequately acknowledged.

Intelligence (AI). Many of you will have become familiar with Open AI or Chat GPT. Such technology can be seen as disruptive technology since it is a known unknown. It has the potential to change the way we do things in schools. While this technology has been emerging for a considerable number of years, its potential impact to change how things are done is just in its infancy.

Having said that, I do not think that as leaders of our schools we can ignore the potential of AI for our students and teachers. While many of our schools did not adopt a 1-1 device, I don't think that it an option now for us not to embrace AI. We need to plan new directions to help us imagine the future and to prepare for the disruptions that will happen. We have demonstrated resilient leadership during the pandemic, and we have shown that we are capable of implementing change. So let us begin the process now of imagining the future through scenario planning in order to prepare us for what lies ahead.

It's now June and for the majority of teachers the end of the school year has come. Not so for Principals and Deputies. The public perception is of course that all teachers, regardless of status, are heading into a three-month break which, as we all know is not the case. In reality, for the majority the real business of schooling happens over the next few months.

There will be many challenges to overcome, such as the recruitment of new staff, which has a direct impact on timetabling and the curriculum that can be offered. A quick check recently on Education Posts shows 157 vacancies in Gaelige and that does not include vacancies in the ETB sector. I expect that many of us will spend much time this summer trying to recruit teachers.

Schools will not only be looking for teachers – they will also be looking for Principals and Deputies to replace those who have decided to call time. As President, I would like to take this opportunity to recognise you for your service to the position that you have held. Your hard work and dedication to your schools may not always have been adequately acknowledged.

There may be a perception that perhaps due to school size or some other factors such as the sector you are in, that you have had it easy. The truth, of course, is that no matter what your context, you have not had it easy, in fact, you more than

likely have made tremendous personal sacrifices to ensure that your school community has flourished.

For all who are retiring, I would like to wish all the healthiest and happiest retirement possible from NAPD.

Finally, I would like to congratulate our newly appointed Deputy Director Rachel O'Connor, and wish her all the best in her new role that she will take up from September.

I look forward to working with her and the team in striving to give members a voice where and when it matters.

Ar aghaidh le chéile

**Shane Foley,
President**

Mayfly



"They rise from the waters and swarm vertically upwards before parachuting down and up again to find a mate – once mated they die – the female spreads her wings and ejects the fertilised eggs into the waters before she is picked off by a fish or swallow – the male suffers the same fate. They exist without mouths since they do not need to eat during their brief lives. Success is assured – the genes go round"

*Narrative & photo by
Graham Powell*



NEW INNOVATIVE STUDENT MEAL SOLUTIONS

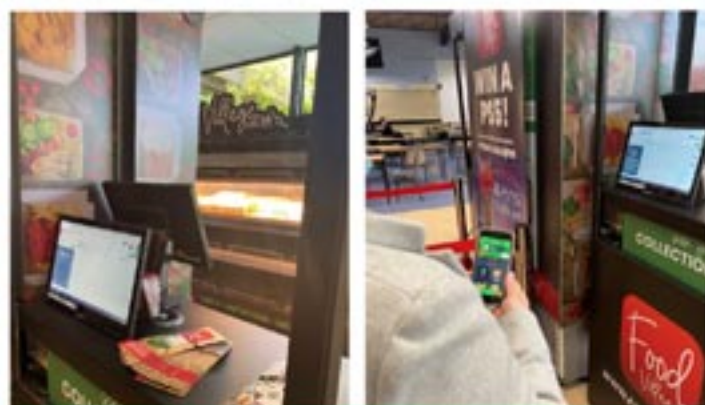
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DIRECTOR'S DESK



PAUL
CRONE

The end of another school year provides an opportunity to reflect on significant situations that make an impact on us as school leaders.

We recently hosted a delegation of Principals from Norway and Slovenia, who were interested in the Irish education system and, in particular, in our system of school leadership. They wanted to hear from us in NAPD and from the Centre for School Leadership, CSL.

I asked why Ireland?

Their response surprised me. Because, they said, in their eyes and internationally Irish education is seen as a high performing system and Irish school leadership is held in high regard. Their chief inspectors had told them that in relation to school leadership, Ireland was an international leader.

Very often, when we are elbow deep in trenches with the job, it doesn't feel like we are inspirational leaders and it certainly doesn't feel like we have mastered school leadership. However,

these conversations with our international colleagues started my reflections on school leadership in Ireland and why we might be held in such high regard internationally.

In true Irish fashion, we tend to focus on the negative, the things that are hard or don't work.

I am taking this opportunity to consider why Ireland's school leadership is so highly rated.

At the heart of our schools are remarkable teams of Principal and Deputy Principals, carrying the torch for education and shaping the future of our nation. As leaders of educational transformation, they navigate uncharted territories, embrace challenges and inspire a generation of learners.

Great leaders are visionaries, able to see beyond the immediate horizon. They embrace a vision that encompasses academic excellence, inclusivity and a nurturing environment where every student thrives. By articulating this vision, they ignite a spark within their school community, uniting teachers, students, and parents toward a common goal.

A true leader understands that the key to success lies in empowering those around them, fostering a culture of collaboration and trust and allowing their teachers to flourish as innovators and educational advocates.

They encourage professional development, providing resources and creating opportunities for sharing best practices. By nurturing a strong team, they foster an environment of continuous growth and inspire collective excellence.

In a diverse and multicultural society like Ireland, fostering inclusivity is paramount. As school leaders, you have the privilege and responsibility to

ensure that every student feels valued, respected, and included. You create the inclusive culture that celebrates diversity, embraces different perspectives, and provides equal opportunities for all.

You implement policies and initiatives that promote equality, empathy and understanding among students and staff. By championing inclusivity, you cultivate an environment where differences are celebrated and students can develop the skills to thrive in a globalised world.

Integrity is the cornerstone of leadership, setting high standards of ethical behaviour, leading by example and demonstrating honesty, transparency, and fairness in all interactions. Your commitment to integrity creates a foundation of trust within your school community, fostering an environment where students, parents, and staff feel safe and respected. When faced with difficult decisions, you ensure that they align with your core values and the best interests of your students.

In your role as a school leader, you encounter challenges that test your resilience and determination but you embrace these challenges as opportunities for growth and transformation. Setbacks are stepping stones toward success and you inspire your school community to adopt the same mindset. Through perseverance, adaptability and positivity, you overcome obstacles and lead your school to meet new challenges.

The impact of school leadership is immeasurable. School leaders are the wind beneath the wings of our system, the gatekeepers of change and the inspiration of a generation. On behalf of your students, their parents and our system leaders – Thank You. Now, together going forward, let us create a world-class educational system that unlocks the potential of every student

Ar aghaidh le chéile

Paul Crone, Director



NAPD Covers

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NAPD Annual Conference 2023

Galway



This year's Conference will take place from Wednesday 11 October to Friday 13 October at the Galmont Hotel (formerly Radisson), Galway.

The Conference schedule and information on speakers are yet to be confirmed and will be issued to those who register and also notified via the NAPD App and website.

To register for Conference, you need to be a NAPD member in 2022-2023; to attend you need to be a NAPD member in 2023-2024.

NAPD membership for 2023-2024 will open in June 2023. Members will be notified by email once registration is opened.

Register via the NAPD Website
or scan the QR Code.



The Conference Hotel, the Galmont, is now full.

The following Hotels are also full:

The Hyde Hotel

The Harbour Hotel

We have secured rates for the following hotels with a booking of two nights:

The G Hotel: €239 B&B

The Hardiman Hotel: €229 B&B

The Connacht Hotel: Single €238 / Twin €258

The House Hotel: Single €199

Other hotels within walking distance of the Galmont are:

Victoria Hotel – 7 min walk

Imperial Hotel – 8 min walk

Jurys Inn Hotel – 14 min walk

None of these offer a Conference rate.

All accommodation will be booked and managed by delegates.
NAPD will not accept responsibility for hotel bookings.

Details of the Conference programme
are available on the NAPD website.

Queries – contact Michelle at info@napd.ie

DEPUTY DIRECTOR PAUL BYRNE



“The direction you choose to face determines whether you're standing at the end or the beginning of a road” –
Richelle E. Goodrich

As I write my Deputy Director piece for this Leader, I cannot help but reflect on my journey with NAPD. Starting a decade ago when I joined the National Executive, I have enjoyed working alongside some education greats, witnessing their remarkable dedication and integrity. I was particularly inspired by NAPD Presidents leading the organisation while also leading their own busy schools.

In 2015, I was honoured to be elected as the fourth Deputy Principal to serve as NAPD President. I was lucky to have mentors like Pdraig Flanagan and Mary Nihill, who mentored me in my Presidential role. The unwavering support and guidance of Clive Byrne and Tim Geraghty were also invaluable during my Presidency. Together, we formed an effective team, relentlessly focused on delivering additional support for NAPD members and consistently representing the voice of school leaders. I am profoundly grateful for the wisdom, guidance and generosity of the time I received from these people during my Presidency.

During this time, we tackled the critical issue of professional indemnity for school leaders. Thanks to the hard work, research, negotiation, and delivery efforts of Tim Geraghty, the

NAPD Legal Indemnity Insurance came into being. This initiative, provided initially by DAS and later ARAG, provides legal indemnity, 24/7 legal advice and access to counselling. This initiative supports and gives protection to NAPD members and has led to an expansion in NAPD membership.

NAPD has always been open to innovative ideas. When the development of a national substitution database was proposed, the idea was readily accepted, and I was delighted to have the opportunity to work with a professional team to develop SubTeacher.ie. This system served as a successful national substitute database for many years and became the foundation for the National Substitute database, SubSeeker.ie.

Working with the Publications Editors Derek West and Barry O' Callaghan has been an enriching experience. Under their guidance, while serving on the editorial board, I honed my attention to detail, learned the principles of planning publications and gained insight into publishing both hard copy and digital communications.

One milestone in my journey was the 2014 ESHA Conference, where the value and potential of international networking was immediately apparent. That year, NAPD was proud

to see Clive Byrne elected as President of ESHA for the first of two terms. In 2018, I was honoured to join the ESHA board as a Vice-President, contributing to the organisation's strategic planning and driving membership expansion. Today, ESHA boasts 29 member organisations from 24 countries, with a membership of 100,000 school leaders. I have enjoyed delivering keynotes and workshops in many ESHA member countries and I look forward to the upcoming conference in Dubrovnik.

My involvement with the International Confederation of Principals (ICP) has been both interesting and rewarding. Through the networking opportunities facilitated by ICP and ESHA, I have built valuable relationships with school leadership organisations worldwide. These connections have benefited not only NAPD but also our education partners over the years.

Since my appointment as Deputy Director in April 2019, NAPD has continued to develop support systems for our members, while advocating for their voices at national and international levels. Growing membership,

enhancing communication and delivering support have been key NADD priorities. I have particularly enjoyed being involved in organising conferences and sourcing key speakers, especially those I have had the privilege of meeting at ESHA or ICP events.

In 2019, I initiated the development of the NAPD Confidential Support Service. This service has grown and has supported Principals and Deputy Principals across all three sectors of post-primary education and was a timely and appropriate follow on to the work of the local support service which was led by former NAPD President Michael McCann.

I have also enjoyed my involvement in the Welfare Committee, led by NAPD founder and the first President, Shay Bannon. This Committee continues the development of valuable guidance documents, templates and initiatives. The successful Regional Ambassador program, led by Tim Geraghty, Shay Bannon, and myself has also been a highly beneficial addition to NAPD.

A significant part of NAPD's work since 2019 has focused on addressing the workload issues faced by school leaders. We commissioned key research, both nationally and internationally, on the health and well-being of school leaders. The results of this research have been shared with education partners, providing rigorous evidence of the need to address these workload challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about sudden changes in how we all worked, both in schools and within NAPD. During this time, together with Director Clive Byrne, we established a new regional communication system through the creation of regional Chairs, Secretaries, and Representatives groups. We convened working groups involving all major stakeholders, adapting to online and hybrid meetings and developing online Conferencing as a substitute for face-to-face networking.

Collaborating with Mason Hayes Curran in developing legal webinars was a particularly enjoyable aspect of my role. The webinars have proven beneficial to NAPD members, and I have had the pleasure of working with David Ruddy and his team, learning from their professional approach in preparing and delivering carefully selected and researched content.

The Corporate Advisory Board has played a vital role in supporting NAPD. Thanks to the wisdom and vision of Clive Byrne, we have access to a top group of business and public professional leaders who generously share their wisdom and experience with NAPD officers and Presidents. Their insight and input have contributed greatly to the development of NAPD in recent years.

The work of the NAPD Creative Engagement initiative gives wonderful support and encouragement to the Arts in education under the guidance

of Dermot Carney and his dedicated Creative Engagement team.

As my tenure as Deputy Director ends, I hope that I have made an important contribution to the members and the broader education community. I trust that the support systems we have developed will continue to serve the needs of current NAPD members and future members. This journey has taught me invaluable lessons, allowed me to form lasting friendships and build a global network of educational professionals.

People move on, and organisations continue to grow and flourish. I extend my best wishes to Paul Crone, Rachel O'Connor, the NAPD Presidents, the National Executive and the NAPD office staff for their future endeavours. I look forward to hearing of new and effective member supports in the coming years.

I have immensely enjoyed my time with NAPD, serving its members. I thank my wife Siobhan, my daughters Maria and Lauren and my friend and Principal Adrian Jackson for their constant and unwavering support over the last decade.

I look forward to the next chapter in my life, travelling new roads in the company of fresh companions.

Ar aghaidh le chéile

Paul Byrne,
NAPD Deputy Director



*Lough Cloondoorney, Co. Clare
Photo by Stephen Stewart*

Magenta Principles

Mike Hughes



Mike Hughes

The Magenta Principles is an umbrella phrase that refers to a philosophy and an approach to teaching based upon the premise that learning should be both exciting and engaging.

More specifically the phrase represents a pedagogy underpinned by a belief that:

- Learning is a consequence of thinking ... therefore our job is to get them to think
- Language is central to thinking ... therefore our job is to get them to talk
- Learning is an active process ... therefore our job is to get them doing

While we talk about Magenta Principles, in reality there is only one principle - in order to make sense of information that comes their way, students are required to do something to or with it.



Level 1 – Newcomers

Series of 3 workshops in a choice of 3 locations

Workshop 1

Workshop 2

Workshop 3

Galway

Tue 12 Sept 2023

Tue 5 Dec 2023

Tue 16 Jan 2024

Kilkenny

Wed 13 Sept 2023

Wed 6 Dec 2023

Wed 17 Jan 2024

Dublin

Thur 14 Sept 2023

Thur 7 Dec 2023

Thur 18 Jan 2024

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

Schools can register up to 4 participants. We require the same participants to attend all 3 workshops (since workshop 2 builds on workshop 1 etc.).

A **per-school** registration fee for the programme is €650.

Level 2 – Returners

1 workshop

Portlaoise

Monday 23 October 2023

Participants must have previously completed a Level 1 (Newcomers) programme.

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

Become a Leader of Learning

1 workshop

Portlaoise

Tuesday 24 October 2023

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

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

Important Information

1. Workshops run from 9:00am to 1:30pm, followed by light lunch.
2. If face-to-face workshops cannot take place, they will be offered online via zoom.
3. We might need to limit participant numbers, depending on venue capacity and health regulations.
4. Places will be allocated on a first come basis.
5. We strongly recommend that each participant has a copy of the Irish Magenta Principles/Na Prionsabail Maigeanta to support their understanding and learning throughout the programme.
6. Books cost €30 each (plus €10 PP). For 4 or more, books cost €25 each (plus €15 P&P). For 10 or more, books cost €20 each (plus €20 P&P). Orders should be emailed to info@napd.ie.
7. Registration can be made by Principals or Deputy Principals via the NAPD website (go to the Professional Learning tab from the home page).
8. Any questions? Contact Barry O'Callaghan at leading4learning@napd.ie.

The Learning Power Approach

Graham Powell

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

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



Important Information for all workshops

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

Level 1 – Newcomers Programme –

2 workshops with a choice of 2 venues

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

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

Schools can register up to 2 participants. A **per-participant** registration fee for the programme is €140.

We require the same participants to attend both workshops (since workshop 2 builds on workshop 1).

It may be possible to register additional participants.

Level 2 – Returners Workshop

1 workshop in 1 venue

| | Workshop |
|------------|----------------------|
| Portlaoise | Wed 15 November 2023 |

Participants must have previously completed a Level 1 (Newcomers) programme or be leaders of schools whose teachers previously participated.

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

Becoming a Leader of Learning in your School using The Learning Power Approach

2 workshops in 1 venue

| | Workshop 1 | Workshop 2 |
|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Portlaoise | Thu 16 Nov 2023 | Wed 6 March 2024 |

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

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

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

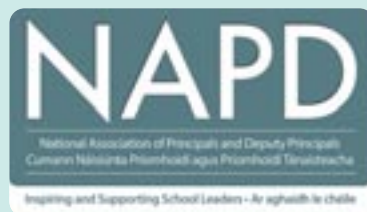
Schools can register up to 2 participants. A **per-participant** registration fee for the programme is €140.

We require the same participants to attend both workshops (since workshop 2 builds on workshop 1).

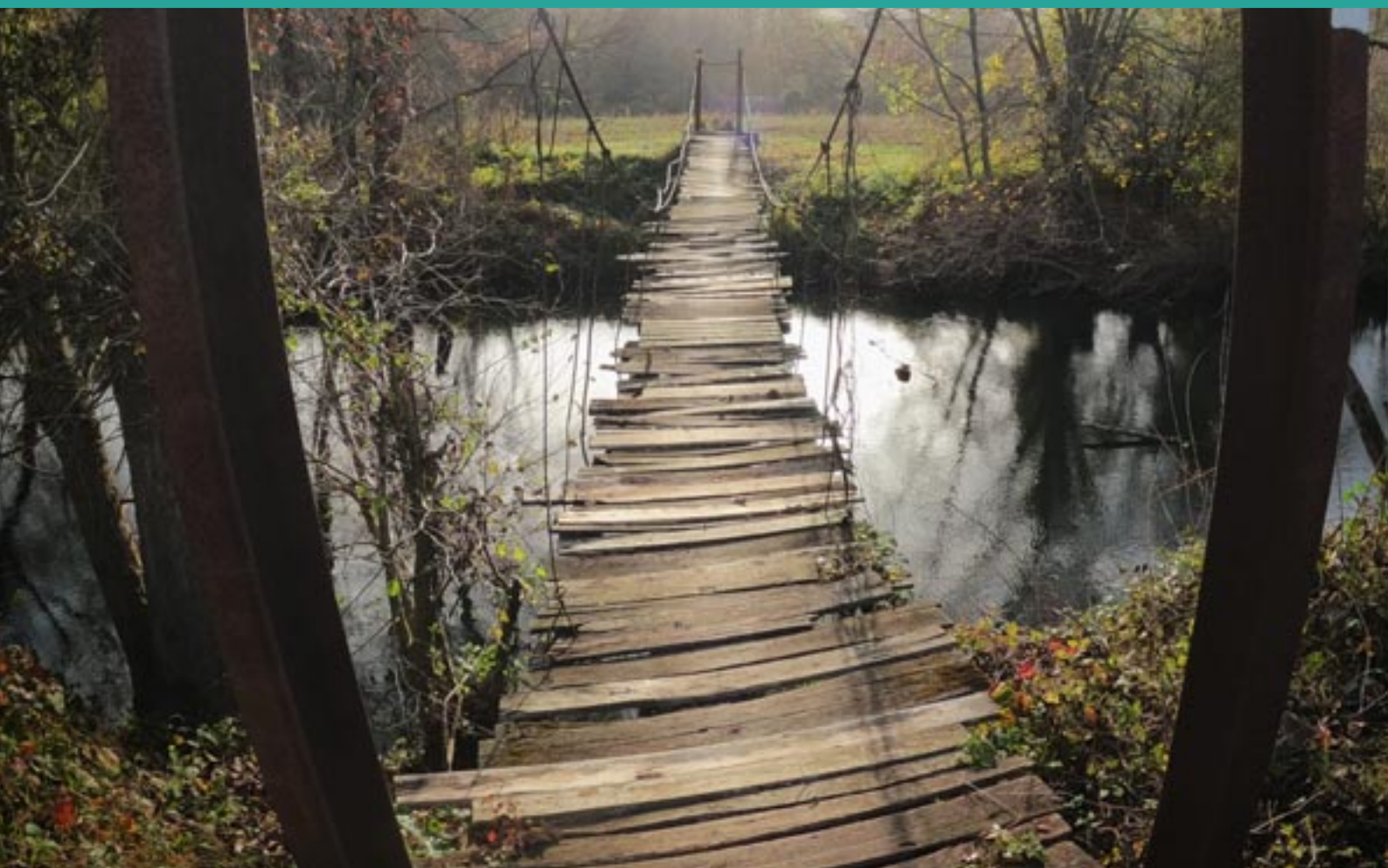
It may be possible to register additional participants.

THE CARNEY ANGLE





LEADING EDUCATION? *BARRIERS AND BRIDGES*



**Reports from National Symposium
February 2023**

SHANE FOLEY, PRESIDENT

Report by John O'Donovan

Shane outlined the many challenges facing school leaders on a daily basis. He tracked his career path from teacher, to post holder, onto Deputy Principal and then Principal. He talked about the difference between leadership and management and linked both to their impact on the student experience in the school.

His passionate plea to be allowed to do the job that school leaders applied for resonated throughout his presentation. He posed the question "What do we want to achieve from our education system at post-primary level?"

The answer, he mused, will shape all further decisions that we will need to make.

Shane drew particular attention to the challenges of senior leadership roles in schools, outlining some of the issues that impact on the school leaders as part of their daily routine. One of the key ones is that the Principal is responsible for everything in their school. His call for support to allow for Principals to lead their school, to, as Shane said, get off the dance floor and on to the balcony, was received positively.

Shane set the tone for the day's discussion, challenging delegates to take time to reflect, to keep an open mind and to put the students at the centre of what we do. His passion for ensuring students' needs are met in our schools was evident throughout, as indeed was his frustration at the barriers preventing him, as Principal from delivering for the students in his charge.

His invitation for having robust discussions to lead to a shared vision for the future of Irish education was broadly welcomed by the delegates.

Shane's genuine belief in putting the student first challenged delegates to identify and name the barriers and also to commit to building the bridges that will lead to success.

Shane Foley is President of NAPD. He was appointed in 2020 as the first Principal of Enfield Community College, a new green field start-up school Co. Meath. This school is currently in its third year and is rapidly expanding to 1,000 students.



John O'Donovan is Principal of St Joseph's Secondary School, Ballybunion, Co Kerry



PROFESSOR TOM COLLINS

Report by Deirdre Hickey

Tom Collins gave an engaging and thought-provoking presentation, titled *Pathways: Stairways to Heaven or Mirror to Mediocrity* on second level education.

In Tom's view the student experience in school is as recognisable today as it was in 1972. There has been a persistent continuity over the decades in the structure of school. Yet socially, today's world is significantly different to that of decades ago. Though not exclusive to today, children nowadays are growing up in a world of uncertainty and fear, brought about by climate change and war, to name but a few.

Digitisation and the impact of artificial intelligence require an immediate response due to the challenges and consequences they present for education. The rise of the far right, the pervasiveness of performance management and persistent inequality are all having a profound impact on students.

He questioned if our schools are adequately responding to these.

Some of the key issues in the presentation were the points race, social mobility, the 2021 Nixon Study "Growing Up in Ireland" and schools as sites of social reform.

In Ireland, education has expanded to the extent that two thirds of the Leaving Certificate cohort advance to third level education. Consequently, this raises questions in third level as to who goes where. In the current secondary school system, there is a national preoccupation with state examinations and third level entry. There is general public acceptance of the distribution of opportunity to the next generation based on the narrative of fairness built up around the CAO.

Yet, access to Higher Education is socially constructed. There are persistent and widespread barriers for children from disadvantaged backgrounds accessing courses such as medicine, veterinary, pharmacy, general nursing, primary teaching etc. Success and failure in the Leaving Certificate are seen as the consequence of the student's own efforts, but which does not consider the impact of social background on academic achievement and progression.

Tom commented on a study concerning expectations of 5-6-year-old boys from both affluent and socially deprived backgrounds as to what they would like to be when they grew up. The responses were enlightening: "A doctor, a scientist, an artist" were some responses from the former cohort, whereas "build houses, footballer, join the army" were responses from the latter.

An interesting observation was his comparison of two working class experiences as portrayed in *Derry Girls* and the *Young Offenders*. In the case of the former, there was as a sense that these working-class kids had it figured out and were on a path. However, in the case of the boys, ennui, alienation, and desperation were more to the fore.

Tom referenced the Nixon Study in 2021, which looked at the social and emotional growth and mental health and well-being of 13-years-olds. It studied the impact of peers, the

displacement of parents and the rise in risk-taking behaviour among this cohort.

How can schools cater for 19-year-olds within the same context as 13-year-olds, considering that a significant number of secondary school pupils are sexually active and economically independent in their mid to late teens? Can schools cater for students who are living an adult life outside of school – being able to vote, being above the age of consent, working – while in school operating as though they are children?

Schools have been brought kicking and screaming from zones of instruction to zones of construction; from being child-centred to being child-active. This is reflected in Junior Cycle reform. Senior Cycle reform will likely move in this direction also.

The role of the teacher is evolving from subject leader to learning facilitator. The role of the Principal is also evolving from managerial and operational to culture setting and pedagogical leadership. He raised the matter of reimagining the teaching profession in the context of Senior Cycle reform. The base of teacher recruitment needs to be broadened. Teacher morale and engagement need addressing, as does career progression.

Schools today bear many of the same characteristics as they did five decades ago, yet in the same town there can be two schools which are very different. He says this comes down to the Principal and the culture and vision which they lead, establish and embed in their schools.

In my opinion, Tom Collins raised significant questions about challenging issues, which are not for the faint-hearted. Addressing them is long overdue.

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



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



PROFESSOR PATRICIA MANNIX McNAMARA

Report by Rachel O'Connor

Patricia's keynote opened with a stark warning. According to the World Economic Forum, 86% of respondents to the Survey on the Global Agenda agree that we have a leadership crisis in the world today. We are now on a global stage where national leaders are indicating they "*no longer have enough in the tank*", have "*waning energy levels*" and are offering "*polarisation*" as a reason for resignations.

We are facing times of significant transition in leadership, with the authoritative ship's captain no longer expected or wanted.

Leaders are now expected to be invitational, democratic, mediators, coaches, mentors, facilitators of empowerment, yet are heavily criticised for *being* decisive and *for not being* decisive.

No pressure then!

The most fascinating piece within Patricia's keynote was the notion of not only *Toxic Leadership* but also that of *Toxic Followership*, which lead to much discussion through our break out session. She referred to Circular Letter 003/2018 which states that '*school Leaders have a key role in improving educational outcomes by creating a positive school climate, as well as motivating and empowering educators and learners within their school community*'.

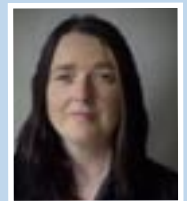
Patricia drew on the recent research by Deakin University where results show that despite a very high level of burnout, stress, lack of sleep and depressive symptoms, job commitment and motivation remains high.

So, the question becomes – who cares for the carers?

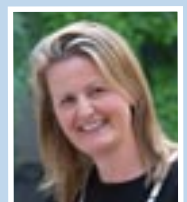
School leaders as curriculum leaders, change makers, leaders of teaching and learning, as well as managers need policy making that is more aware of, and more responsive to, the contexts and culture in which they work.

Patricia's keynote was enlightening, insightful and full of stark warnings, all backed up by lots of research.

Patricia Mannix McNamara is Chair (Professor) of Education at University of Limerick. Originally a post primary teacher, she now works as the Head of the School of Education at the University of Limerick. Patricia is internationally renowned for her scholarship in leadership, workplace culture, incivility research, and health promoting schools.



Rachel O'Connor is Principal of Ramsgrange Community School, Wexford. She served as NAPD President in 2021-2022.



DR ZACHARY WALKER

Report by Andrea Finlay-Kajic

Zachary Walker focused on building the Learning Organisation around the specific themes of strategy, practice and culture. As always, Zachary was insightful, engaging and thought-provoking. He challenged school leaders and educational stakeholders to think about leading education in terms of today's society – "Tetris built schools serving Minecraft students", so that we can start to move from top-down leadership to collaborative and constructive leadership, where we can build the learning organisations that our school communities need.

He challenged us to consider what we are designing our schools for, to really emphasise our long-term strategies and the things we want our schools to be known for. He urged us to be led by research and not by practice, reminding us that the student should always be the central focus of all initiatives by quoting Jamie Casap: "Don't ask them what they want to be when they grow up but what problems do they want to solve".

This changes the conversation from who do I want to work for, to what do I need to learn to be able to do that. Throughout his presentation, Zachary highlighted the need to focus our leadership on the 3 Rs + 1: Relevance, Relationships, Rigour and Research.

He reminded us that human behaviour can change and that we are in the privileged leadership position, so that we must lead by example and influence others by our own behaviour – "you are the leader, you are out in front".

Zachary opined on the difference between group work and team work and cautioned us that leadership is no longer what we can achieve as an individual but as a team, where team members share a mutual accountability and work closely together to solve problems, much like in this symposium.

He asked us to question "are we on the same team"?

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



Andrea Finlay-Kajic is Deputy Principal of Loreto Secondary School, Navan, Co Meath



DR KATRIONA O'SULLIVAN

Report by Lesley Byrne

'Do we want a good education system for the masses or a great one for everyone?'

Katriona shared her own personal journey of growing up as a young child in a family that experienced the effects of generational poverty and disadvantage. She recalls arriving to school unwashed and hungry. Deeply embedded in those memories are her experience of being cared for by pivotal teachers who saw her potential and instilled in her a sense of belief and worth.

She also recalls the teachers who did the exact opposite of that, who chose to not see past the little girl without a pen for class, which made her question her worth and value. Katriona, is unapologetically proud of who she is, recognising her own intelligence and the value she adds to society through her work in Maynooth.

She challenged school leaders present to recognise their role in creating an environment where those left behind – those who are the 'statistical failures' of the system – are given the opportunities to thrive. Katriona asks us to widen the lens in which we view success. Why do we sideline care and centre examination results?

Is it time to change the metrics?

She called on us to keep these young people at the centre of our decision making and to take on board that what we do now in terms of policy and reform, lives on in the lives of those we educate. In order to do this, we must face up to the reality that the system as it stands is 'rigged'. It allows for those with the financial ability to advantage themselves over others.

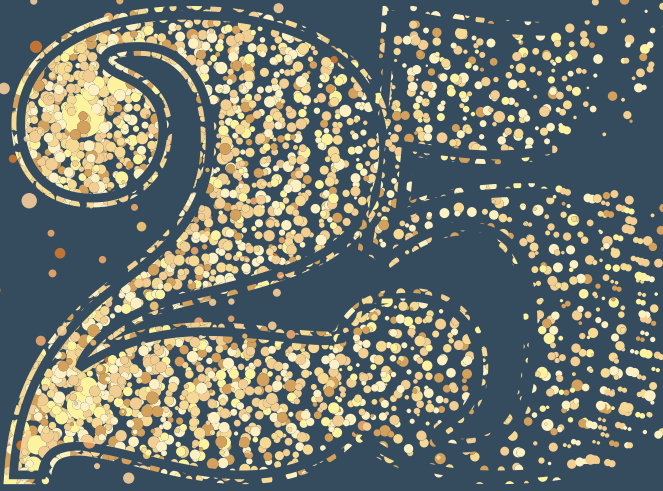
School leaders have the skill sets, the motivation and the passion to make meaningful differences in the lives of those most marginalised in society. Instead, our time is often taken by administrative task that are completely outside of our skillset – if this does not change, we will continue to fail those who most need our system to be a great one for all.

Katriona O'Sullivan is a lecturer of Digital Skills in the Assisting Living & Learning Institute in the Department of Psychology, Maynooth University.



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





YEARS of NAPD

Tom Collins

IRISH EDUCATION OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS – THE GRAVITATIONAL FORCES

For those of us of a particular generation in modern Ireland, the importance of many of the certitudes of our early lives has diminished and faded into oblivion. The observance of the Sabbath; the distinction between a mortal and a venial sin; the Corpus Christi procession and the Walton programme have all been consigned to history.

But in the same period, the importance of education in Ireland has not diminished but has flourished and grown. Why is this the case?

Where does a leaf begin - on the tree's stem, branch, trunk or root? Or, perhaps, none of these? Likewise with Irish education and its centrality to the social, economic and cultural life of the society. Perhaps we need to look back to the Irish monasteries and their role in Ireland and Europe in the early middle ages? Or perhaps we begin with the Penal Laws and the conflation of Catholicism with anti-state treason.

Or perhaps, we trace it to the emergence of religious teaching orders in Ireland throughout the 1800s, especially female religious orders. In this regard, it is worth noting that in 1800 there were fewer than 300 female religious in Ireland; by 1860 there were about 8,000 and by 1960 about 18,000. While some of these orders came to be associated with the systemic abuse of Irish girls and mothers in institutional settings such as the Magdalene laundries, they would also play a crucial role in the education of Irish girls, many from poor or disadvantaged backgrounds, who would go on to form generation after generation of well-educated Irish mothers.

And in a sense, Irish education up to the 1970s thrived more in spite of schools than because of them. A child of my generation would rarely acknowledge that they liked school and indeed the majority of them actively disliked it. Corporal punishment was an ever-present threat and regularly and frequently employed in Irish schools until it was banned in 1984. As graphically captured by Frank McCourt in *Angela's Ashes*.

"They hit you if you can't say your name in Irish, if you can't say the Hail Mary in Irish, if you can't ask for the lavatory pass in Irish. It helps to listen to the big boys ahead of you. They can tell you about the master you have now, what he likes and what

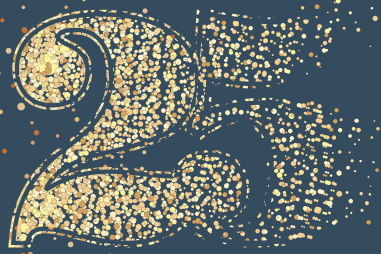
he hates. One master will hit you if you don't know that Eamon De Valera is the greatest man that ever lived. Another master will hit you if you don't know that Michael Collins was the greatest man that ever lived. Mr. Benson hates America and you have to remember to hate America or he'll hit you. Mr. O'Dea hates England and you have to remember to hate England or he'll hit you. If you ever say anything good about Oliver Cromwell, they'll all hit you".

McCourt's experience, even allowing for artistic licence, was supported by a world view of the place of children in society and the role of education which was promulgated by the Department of Education, informed by the views of the Professor of Education in UCD – a Jesuit by the name of Timothy Corcoran, SJ.

Corcoran had been educated in Clongowes Wood College and was appointed Professor of Education in UCD in 1909 – a post he would hold until 1942. He was a man of many hatreds. He was strongly nationalist in his beliefs, anti-British and anti-Protestant; he advocated for Irish as the medium of education in primary schools and rejected the views of child-centred educationalists such as Froebel and Montessori, arguing that children needed to be controlled through the 'rod of punishment.' Critically, he was a confidante both of Eamon De Valera and Archbishop Mc Quaid. It is arguable that his views had a seminal influence on the evolution of Irish schooling in the early years after the foundation of the State and held sway for decades up to the second half of the twentieth century.

As a young Sociology undergraduate in Maynooth in the 1970s, Professor Liam Ryan would tell us that we had experienced more change in the course of our lives than we would for the remainder of our lives. At the time, this seemed almost like a preposterous proposition. And indeed, bearing in mind that we have since seen the emergence of the digital age, gene technology and the climate crisis, it strains credibility somehow.

But, unlike his students, Ryan had grown to adulthood in the pre-1960s. In his own life, he had witnessed the impact of Vatican 2 in re-writing the centuries-old tenets of St Augustine concerning the innate sinfulness of the human condition and its predisposition to eternal damnation. Vatican



YEARS of NAPD

2 would revisit this world view, concentrating on the innate goodness of the human condition, on its capacity for growth and salvation and on its focus on realising and releasing human potential.

This was a world view that was far removed from Corcoran's. It would be buttressed in education circles by philosophers such as Dewey and, in the out of school context, by thinkers such as Rogers, Freire and Illich.

Rogers, whose views on humanism and the therapeutic relationships began to gain a foothold in the US in the 1950s began life as an agriculturist. Possibly drawing from this background, he believed that for a person to 'grow' they needed a supportive environment of genuineness, acceptance and empathy.

Dewey saw the school as a site of social reform where democracy – the ultimate ideal of social organisation – would flourish. Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), saw education as a liberating and humanising force in society, emancipating the learners to a higher level of self-knowledge and social agency. Illich, in *Deschooling Society* (1971), argued for the disestablishment of schools, arguing instead for the merits of informal learning and self-help groups.

And so, a momentum began in the 1970s in Irish education which would be carried forward in the ensuing decades which elevated the learner to the centre of the learning process, which repositioned the learner as active rather than passive, which argued for the possibility of multiple intelligences and which was committed to the nurturance and protection of the child. Much of this work began in out of school, adult learning settings throughout the 1980s, where possibly the stakes seemed to be less high and which were much less circumscribed by state curricula or state examinations.

Over time, they would percolate into schools, beginning in primary schools as the curriculum moved from syllabus centred to child centred to child active.

And so, in the past 25 years, perhaps the biggest change which has occurred in Irish education is that the school – especially the primary school – is arguably now the safest institutional setting in which the child finds itself. While undoubtedly the child will worry and fret about other things, it is to be hoped that the teacher is a caring and benign presence in the life of most children and the school – for many is a site of possibility, exploration and discovery.

It is beyond the scope of this article to instance the many initiatives and new policy directions that have punctuated Irish education over the past twenty-five years and which have culminated in this new order. At the risk of overgeneralisation, it may be useful to explore some of the thematic foundations which have underpinned the direction of travel of Irish education over these years.

It was probably inevitable that a society which had been confronted with an ignoble history of widespread child abuse, particularly clerical abuse, over the many decades since the

foundation of the state, would fundamentally interrogate its understanding of childhood and the state's responsibilities around children. And so the centrality of the child's voice is now an important consideration, governing all adult/child interactions; shaping the pedagogical agenda and informing the structure and culture of school settings.

Philosophically, we appear to be moving away from a view of the child as latent adult to the child as full human being who, while being in the early stage of the life cycle is not any less whole in being so. It could be suggested that much curricular development and reform over the past twenty-five years, whether in the early years, primary or junior certificate level begins from this premise.

The child as a self-directed, problem solving and agentic partner in a pedagogical co-creative relationship with teachers, peers and subject matter is now the driving vision of most curriculum development and reform endeavours.

Plato was of the view that children's education should 'take the form of play'. This seems like a convincing prescription, where play implies problem solving games; is developmental physically, emotionally and socially and engages the child's imagination.

In a context of smaller families, of the migration of paid work from domestic to other settings and cultural and legislative concerns for health and safety, the possibilities for spontaneous, organically generated opportunities for childhood play seem to have diminished.

If it is true that 'it takes a village to raise a child' it is also the case that the notional concept of the village as an intergenerational, localised neighbourhood with a somewhat coherent sense of itself and characterised by intimate, face-to-face relationships is more likely to be found in a Thomas Hardy novel than in the sprawling housing estates of contemporary Ireland.

So, childhood play must now be organised or formally provided for. While there are many participants in this – with the market being ever present – schools, especially early childhood settings, are hugely important in ensuring that playtime offers developmental and holistic learning opportunities for children.

In this regard it is also worth noting that parents must also learn how to play with children and a failure to do so means that the wonderful enrichment opportunities of co-creation between parent and child are missed.

In recent decades it is probably true to say that everyone, particularly those involved in education, have had to re-appraise their relationship with digital technology. If we consider the beginning of the digital age as the mid-1970s, it can be said that all those teaching in Irish schools today are digital natives – though it is also undoubtedly the case that some teachers are more comfortable than others in this relatively new world.

From an early excitement with the educational potential of digital technology in the 1990s and thereafter, it could now be suggested that schools and teachers have arrived at a somewhat more discriminating and less hopeful juncture in this encounter.

While COVID marked a possible tipping point in

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demonstrating the possibilities of remote learning, it also highlighted many of its shortcomings. Crucially, children missed the social world of the school. They missed their friends; they bemoaned the loss of extracurricular activities like team sports and musicals and were bereft at the loss of those celebratory rituals which punctuate the school year and which particularly mark graduation whether from primary, second level or even third level. Remote ceremonies not only failed to compensate for the loss of the in-person events – they accentuated the loss.

Anecdotally, there is widespread concern throughout the country with the time allocated by young Irish people to screens; with the potential deleterious effects of social media and with the sedentary and what appears to be the anaesthetising character of many computer games.

From an educational perspective, it may be the case that screenagers learn better from images than from oral or literary sources, raising concerns about a capacity to interrogate concepts, to synthesise ideas or to create a narrative.

And while these may be the shared goals of much educational endeavour, a dystopian vision might see such aims being allocated to the field of Artificial Intelligence – as it can now do these things much better than any individual student.

It is probably not overstating things to say that children born in the last twenty-five years are among the first in the history of human civilisation to face the end of the planet, at least as it has been known, during their lifetimes.

Climate change, the loss of bio-diversity, ocean acidification, rising sea levels and the proliferation of micro plastics will circumscribe the lives of all those currently in school and college in Ireland and present an existential threat which no previous generation has encountered.

Given this context, it is remarkable that Irish young people are generally well adjusted and hopeful. The Growing up in Ireland survey is a longitudinal study of children and young people begun in 2006 which follows the progress of two groups of children: 8,000 9-year-olds (Cohort 98) and 10,000 9-month-olds (Cohort 2008). Cohort 98 are now around 25 years old, while those of 2008 are about 14 years old.

Separate studies by Nixon (2021) and by Nolan and Smith (2021) suggest that the majority both of 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds are faring well. Where they are not doing so, some patterns emerge. For 13-year-olds, premature puberty, bullying and fractious relationships with parents tend to characterise those who are in difficulty.

With regard to 17-year-olds, girls are more likely than boys to be in difficulty; family socio economic status and financial strain are common place where there is a mental health or wellbeing issue and positive relationships with a teacher is an important countervailing force.

It is also significant to note that the demographic of the school going population has changed somewhat in recent decades. The emergence of the ECCE programme has meant that most children are now five years old when they go to primary school.

The generalisation of transition year (TY) means that most will be 19 years old when sitting the Leaving Cert. As 19-year-olds they can legally marry, vote or receive a criminal conviction. Though not economically independent, they are in all legal senses adults. In the context of the current debate on Senior Cycle reform, this is surely an important consideration as so much of second-level schooling is based on a view of the learner as a child.

Hence, it might be suggested that the project of Senior Cycle reform should be less about making the curriculum more learner centred than about making it more adult centred!

While there is continuous contextual and policy change in Irish education, it might be argued that the one constant is the continued direct relationship between the child's background and schooling outcomes. While almost all policy and legislative initiatives in education in Ireland over the past three decades have prioritised the commitment to equality of educational opportunity for all, there continues to be substantial evidence of the class-based nature of educational outcomes, leading to a common perception that Leaving Certificate points are a proxy for social class.

There is evidence on the other hand that third level access in Ireland has been widely democratised since the turn of the century and the third level population is now largely representative of the population as a whole. The challenge at third level now is to achieve equal access into the different disciplines and also into postgraduate opportunities.

The argument for doing so is increasingly couched in terms not only of the economic return of a highly skilled workforce, but also in terms of social cohesion and the democratic dividend.

Just as 1916 was a pivotal one for Ireland in the 20th century, in this century 2016 was similarly significant with Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. Both phenomena were predicated on educational fault lines in the two countries and both provide stark evidence of the long-term effects of underinvestment in education and the failure to ensure that inherited disadvantage is not translated into achieved disadvantage.

If we are to address this issue successfully in the coming years we will need -yet again - to revisit the points system as the end stage of second level and the primary gateway to third level. If intergenerational social mobility is to become the norm in Ireland in the coming decades, meaningful reform on entry criteria to third level – and to the most restrictive disciplines in third level – must be the starting point.

Tom Collins is President Emeritus and former Professor of Education at Maynooth University.



THE LEADER PROFILE

Kevin Callinan

by John Walshe



It has often been discussed in the past, but the President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Kevin Callinan strongly believes that the time is right for teacher unions to merge.

Tentative talks are taking place at present between the two post-primary unions – the ASTI and TUI – about that possibility. The Congress leader suggests that if they succeed this time, then down the road the INTO should also consider merging with them. It would be in the best interests of members to have a single union for the teaching profession.

It would strengthen their hand in discussions on pay bargaining, says Callinan, who is also General Secretary of FORSA, which is itself the result of a merger in November 2017 of the Irish Municipal, Public and Civil Trade Union (IMPACT) and the Civil and Public Services Union (CPSU).

Forsa is a much bigger player in the education area than is generally realised. It represents about 20,000 special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, administration staff in ETBs and in education centres, educational psychologists, and others. It also represents thousands of local government and

services workers including clerical, administrative, management, technical and professional staff.

If Congress has its way there will be a lot more people working at all levels of the public service, including education. Callinan is a strong advocate of a much bigger role for the State in delivering public services. He's not the only one. As Danny McCoy from the employers' body, IBEC, has been saying much the same for the past few years. Green Party leader, Eamonn Ryan, surprised some observers recently when he said that the growth in the size of the economy has not been matched by an increase in the size of the State.

Said Ryan: "The financial crisis may have left a legacy of being terrified of budget deficits and there may have been an ideological aversion to running deficits but that has changed. It is now recognised that we need to invest in the public service to deliver what needs to be delivered".

The comments in a podcast with the Irish Times were music to Unions leaders' ears. According to Callinan: "Ireland's public service employment as a percentage of total population (around 7%) looks completely out of step with

most of our EU partners. In Denmark it's closer to 13%. Even Croatia, a relatively new EU accession country, has a figure of around 8.5%. And in Scotland, which some might say is a more culturally comparable nation, it's 11%".

He argues that "poorly resourced public services and inadequate infrastructure are holding back the potential of our economy. Even more importantly, they are causing real hardship for many who have difficulty accessing essential housing, healthcare or affordable childcare".

Callinan, who also chairs the Public Services Committee of Congress, believes that a lot more could be done on these social and economic issues by talking together more proactively. He sees the need for a new form of 'social compact' between government, unions and employers. This would be different from the Programme for National Recovery (PNR) and the Programme for Economic and Social Partnership (PESP) of old, which saw moderate pay rises in return for macro-economic stability, tax reform, employment and training, worker participation and labour legislation etc.

"When we talk now about social dialogue, people think of the social partnership era. But one thing is clear, we are not going back to centralised pay agreements for the whole economy. Neither unions nor employers want this".

Last year FORSA published an excellent document on the role of the State in a post-pandemic Ireland. It makes the case for a more farsighted approach, focused on improving public services and addressing societal needs. This would go beyond electoral cycles and short-term targets. The paper attracted little media attention, as its launch coincided with the Russian invasion of Ukraine which eclipsed all other news stories. It's still worth reading for a vision of a different Ireland where the main civil society actors such as the government, unions and employers working more closely together.

We have elements of the architecture necessary for this dialogue with the Labour Employer Economic Forum and the National Economic and Social Council. But Callinan would like to see the Department of the Taoiseach champion much deeper social engagement. This, he says, would help greater joined-up planning for a rapidly changing Ireland which has a rising population, an increasing number of older people, and which is facing the urgent challenges of climate change, digital technology and Artificial Intelligence.

He rejects the view that this kind of social partnership is anti-democratic or undermining the parliamentary process - "I think in the modern world deeper social engagement is a key part of the defence of democracy".

Pay, of course, is central to any discussions. "All we have to do is look across the water and north of the border to see the toxic environment created by the Tories' hostility to collective bargaining in the public service" says Callinan. He will be leading the negotiations this year if there is to be an agreement in place to succeed the current one on its expiry at the end of December.

When it comes to the private sector, he says the unions won't be over prescriptive, as he is well aware that different firms have different levels of profitability.

He also believes it is time for a new review of pay and allowances for different grades, groups and professions in the public service. It is 17 years, and in some cases over 20 years, since this kind of exercise was last undertaken. "This is simply unsustainable" says Callinan, who points out that the Public Service Pay Commission in its 2018 Report highlighted the desirability of such an exercise. "More than half the workforce have never had such an opportunity simply because they weren't in employment on the last occasion" he reminds people.

Since then, the nature of jobs has changed, often dramatically; austerity measures were imposed with some remaining in place; qualifications have been raised, while recruitment and retention problems have arisen, especially in teaching.

Time, of course, will reveal all. We will know in the short term whether or not Kevin Callinan's hopes for decent pay rises for all are realised; the medium term will reveal if the ICTU president's call for a separate review of pay and allowances for different grades, groups and professions in the public sector will be seriously addressed, while his call for full teacher unity may not be fully answered until the longer term.

Kevin Callinan is General Secretary of Fórsa and was elected as President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions for the 2021-23 term. He has chaired its Public Services Committee since 2019, leading negotiations with the government on behalf of almost 400,000 public services workers. He is currently a trade union nominee to the National Economic and Social Council and has been a delegate to the Labour Employer Economic Forum since its inception in 2016. He is a member of the governing body of the National College of Ireland.



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



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

Group Mentoring for Principals appointed in 2022/2023

A CSL Endorsed Programme

Máire Ní Bhróithe & Mary Keane

Principal Mentoring is organised on a regional basis for Principals appointed in the 2022/2023 academic year.

WHO ARE THE MENTORS?

NAPD has 15 trained mentors around the country, all of whom are experienced Principals. They received their initial training from the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) and subsequently engaged in further training in group mentoring with NAPD. They meet twice a year to engage with each other and annually attend CSL professional learning events.

WHAT SIZE ARE THE GROUPS?

Groups vary in size, depending on the number of Principals appointed in a particular area. Groups can be as small as three and as large as eight. In some areas two mentors work with a group.

WHERE ARE MEETINGS HELD?

Meetings are usually held in Education Centres and hotels. Sometimes, at the request of a specific group, they will be held in a school.

Meetings may take place online. This might happen in adverse weather or where Principals are geographically far apart.

WHAT HAPPENS AT MEETINGS?

Meetings, beginning with a lunch, last up to 2 hours. Participants discuss issues such as staff shortages, responding to critical incidents, motivating staff, first encounters with challenging parents, having difficult conversations with colleagues, their own well-being, time management and conflict management. Groups can engage in deeper discussion about some of the opportunities and difficulties Principals experience in their new roles. Normally, agendas are determined by the participants.

HOW OFTEN ARE MEETINGS?

There will be 4 meetings:

- Late August/Early September 2023

- November 2023

- February 2024

- April 2024

WHY SHOULD I JOIN A MENTORING GROUP?

Last year mentors reported that there was excellent engagement among the mentees and that it really was a positive experience for both mentors and mentees. There was a general feeling that everyone was grateful to leave behind the business of the school day, to make time to create a space to talk, to be listened to and to reflect. Mentees reported opportunities to network with each other. Contacts made in the first year often last throughout Principals' careers.

I WAS APPOINTED IN 2021/2022 AND I NEVER GOT AN OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN A MENTORING GROUP. CAN I JOIN NOW?

Yes – are all welcome. Principals who have not had an opportunity to be a part of group mentoring should contact us.

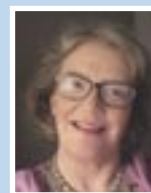
HOW CAN I JOIN?

Email mentoring@napd.ie. We will contact you, place you in a regional group and invite you to the first meeting.

We wish all new Principals the best in their role and hope that the NAPD mentoring will benefit them throughout the 2023/2024 academic year.

Máire Ní Bhróithe and Mary Keane

are NAPD's Mentoring co-ordinators. Máire is a former Principal of Ratoath College, Co Meath, a former Education & Leadership Director of LMETB and a former National Deputy Director of the CSL. Mary is former Principal of Christ King Secondary School, Cork.





25 Years – Presidential Roll of Honour

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

■ Spring
 ■ Summer
 ■ Autumn
 ■ Winter

In the Spring Leader we carried the reflections of Shay Bannon, Derek West, Áine O'Neill, Dónal Ó Buachalla, Paul Byrne and Alan Mongey.

In this Summer edition we carry the reflections of the Mary Hanley, Michael Parsons, Ciarán McCormack, Kay O'Brien, Cathnia Ó Muircheartaigh and Michael Cregan.

In the Autumn and Winter editions we will carry the remaining reflections.



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

Back row (left to right):

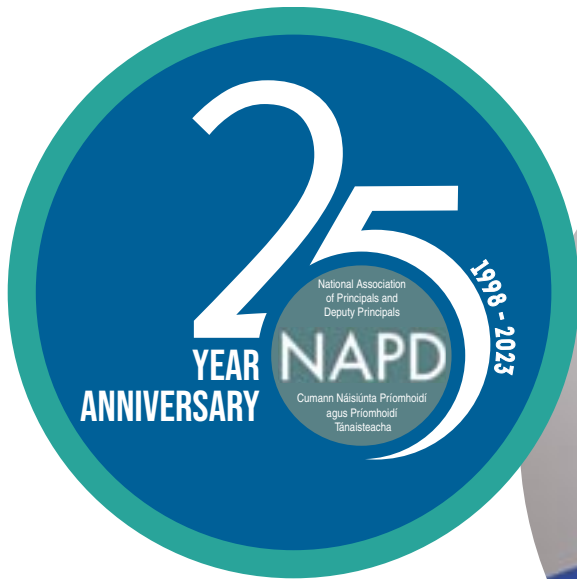
Kevin Bonner (Facilitator), Michael McCann (SSPAI), Mattie Kilroy (AVPSCC), Jean Geoghegan (SSPAI), Dick O'Connor (VPPA), Ray Kennedy (SSPAI), Ivan Bolton (ISA), Sheila McManamly (SSPAI), Derek West (APVC), Robert Kirkpatrick (VPPA).

Front Row (left to right):

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

MARY HANLEY

President 2000-2001



Having spent nine wonderful years teaching in the Boys' Comprehensive school, Ballymun, I moved back to my native Shannon as Vice-Principal of the newly built St. Caimin's Community School. David Barry, a former president of the ASTI had just been appointed Principal. From day one, David and I worked very closely as the senior management team, as was best practice in Community & Comprehensive schools.

In October 1997 at the APVC annual Conference held in Galway, I was elected President of the Association. During my term as President, I attended numerous meetings in Dublin's Ashling Hotel with representatives from the five other Associations in order to establish an Association that would represent the concerns of all school leaders. Minister for Education Micheál Martin, together with Department officials John Dennehy and Pat Burke were strong advocates for this alliance. Everyone involved felt that a unified body of

Principals and Deputies would ensure that school leaders would now be viewed as full partners in the 'education debate'. The new Association, NAPD, was officially launched by the Minister on 21 September 1998.

In March 2000, at the first annual Conference of NAPD in Tralee, I was honoured to be elected President of the Association. My term of office straddled three academic years. The next Conference was held in Galway in October 2001. Many changes took place during that period.

Very early on in my term as President, I realised that we, as an Executive, had to be very proactive in our approach to the Department of Education and Science, the Management Bodies and the Unions. The various Associations that preceded NAPD began the process of winding up their affairs. Sectoral committees to provide a mechanism for consultation were established. The dream of having one strong, respected, vibrant association to look after the welfare of all Principals and Deputies and to deal with their concerns became a reality. Along with this, much time and effort had to be given over to on-going industrial action and the many implications and difficulties this raised for everyone.

Looking back now, I can vividly remember several of the major issues that concerned us:

- Supervision and Substitution
- The erosion of the school year
- The Education Welfare Bill
- Staffing allocation
- Resources for students with special education needs
- The introduction of Whole School Evaluation
- Organising superintendents for State Examinations (exam aides)
- Leadership courses for aspiring Principals and Deputies.

Despite many difficulties encountered during my term in office, tremendous progress was made in many of the above areas. The appointment of an exam aide allowed Principals and Deputies freedom to carry out their many administrative tasks in the month of June. It was also extremely gratifying for us Principals and Deputies to see teacher allocations issued as promised by the DES in January 2001, rather than July, as in previous years.

I remember our Director, Mary McGlynn, along with myself and the Executive devoting many hours to the Education Welfare Bill. As a result of the numerous meetings with the Legal Services Section of the DES, we caused many amendments to be made before the Bill was enacted. Schools have been operating under the terms of that Act since July 2002.

In February 2001, then Director Mary McGlynn and I met with Tomás MacEoin and Jim Gallagher to discuss the idea of establishing an NAPD Retired group. A database was compiled and all known retirees were contacted. NAPD-R has gone from strength to strength, holding its annual Conference and golf outing in Autumn each year. NAPD-R continues to provide invaluable support and advice for serving members, while also providing a social outlet for retired Principals and Deputies.

“Despite many difficulties encountered during my term in office, tremendous progress was made in many of the above areas. The appointment of an exam aide allowed Principals and Deputies freedom to carry out their many administrative tasks in the month of June”

As President I was involved in a variety of educational initiatives. However, I derived most satisfaction from the setting up of two sub-committees: Arts and Culture and NAPD-R. Immediately after my election as President, I set up the Arts and Culture Committee under the chairmanship of Derek West. The first Committee comprised talented representatives from all three educational sectors. By setting up this committee I wanted to draw attention to the central importance of the Arts in education. Subsequent collaboration between the NAPD, the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Arts Council and the DES led to our recognition as a major player for the promotion of the Arts in our schools.

With the help of funding from both Departments and through the tireless work of the sub-Committee and Derek West in particular, the Creative Engagement project was established. This initiative provided students with opportunities to articulate and interrogate their experiences through the expressive Arts and to encourage engagement which is rooted in a variety of art forms.

To date over 500 schools and at least 16,000 students have participated in this project. A number of Creative Engagement Exhibitions have been held in the National Museum Collins Barracks, Dublin, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin and the National Indoor Arena at Abbotstown, Dublin to showcase the work done by these incredibly talented students. I am extremely grateful for the support we

have received from our Directors, Mary McGlynn, Clive Byrne and Paul Crone.

Dermot Carney, who replaced Derek as Arts Officer, is doing tremendous work to promote the Arts in our schools and he continues to be relentless in his pursuit of furthering the development the Arts in education. I admire his vision and congratulate him on his achievements to date. On a personal note, the Creative Engagement Project allows me to maintain a close link with the Association. I retired as Principal of St. Caimin's in 2009 and thirteen years on, the CE project continues to provide me with fantastic opportunities to visit schools and meet the many incredible teachers and students in our schools.

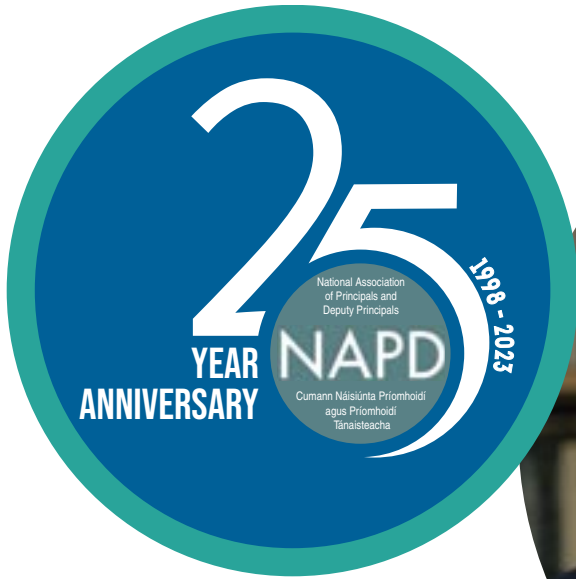
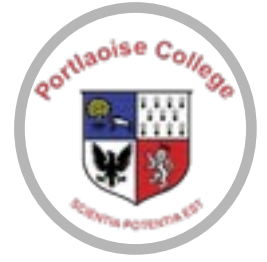
My involvement with NAPD has spanned over the 25 years. It has been a privilege for me to work alongside some truly incredible people, whose friendships I cherish to this day. I believe this organisation plays a pivotal role in supporting the Principals and Deputies of this country but also helps shape the educational landscape of an ever-changing Ireland.

Mary Hanley
retired as
Principal of St.
Caimin's
Shannon, Co.
Clare in 2009.



MICHEAL PARSONS

President 2004-2005



Looking back over the last twenty five years, I feel that NAPD has made a very substantial contribution to Irish Education. NAPD has provided a clear vision of education at second level and in the field of Further Education. It has identified problems, advocated sensible solutions and always has sought to advance the welfare of students.

The multiplicity of management bodies, both religious and lay, tended in the past to encourage fragmentation of the voices of school leaders. As well, trade unions naturally placed Principals and Deputy Principals in an

ill-defined position in times of challenge.

When NAPD was formed in 1998, there were a number of organisations representing the interests of Principals and Deputy Principals. This weakened

and sometimes smothered the legitimate views and concerns of school leaders.

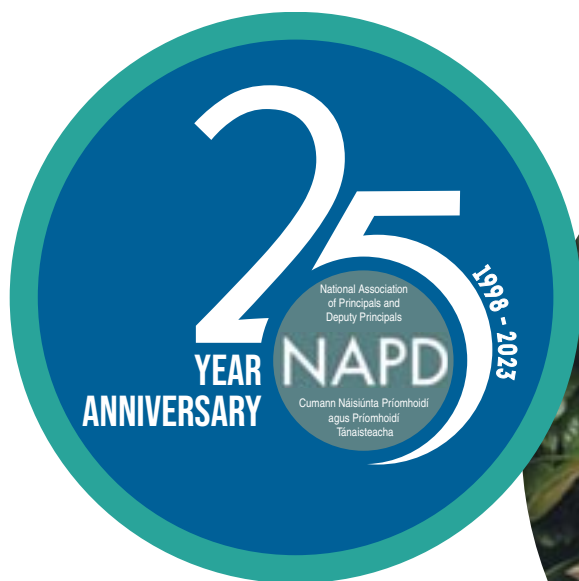
The collegiality of school leaders since 1998 has been truly heartening. The centrality of teaching and learning has been steadfastly underlined by NAPD over the last twenty five years. I wish the organisation and its members continued success for the future, confident that NAPD will continue to provide support, advice, collegiality and vision in the years ahead.

“When NAPD was formed in 1998, there were a number of organisations representing the interests of Principals and Deputy Principals. This weakened and sometimes smothered the legitimate views and concerns of school leaders”

Michael Parsons
retired as
Principal of
Portlaoise
College,
Co. Laois in 2008

CIARÁN McCORMACK

President 2008-2009



I remember my time as NAPD President as a time of challenge, though you might ask when is it not a time of challenge in Education? The Minister would not engage with us. He had been offended by comments made at an NAPD Conference. The first of the cutbacks were beginning to bite. Posts of Responsibility were not being replaced if a post holder retired and the number of posts a school was entitled to, decreased.

Supervision became an issue. Sports fixtures or field trips were cancelled since cover, at times, was not available for colleagues who wished to bring students away to a game or an event. It did not affect all schools equally and this caused tension locally. Schools that were competing with each other for student numbers at times would publicise the fact that *"we do not have to cancel anything"*.

One of the high points was Dublin being chosen, instead of Cairns Australia, by the International Confederation of Principals (ICP) as the venue for its next major Conference. Delegates from across the world

would attend. Unfortunately, this also turned out to be a low point, as the decision was reversed a number of months later. The ICP decided, with the economic downturn, that since the Government would not provide the financial assistance it had promised, the Conference was taken from us and given to Cairns.


This was also the time when we began the process of buying our present offices at Eblana Villas. Leeson Street, which we were renting, had served us very well for a number of years. The Treasurer, Vera Collins and I (Assistant Treasurer) brought a proposal to National Executive that we should

begin to put funds aside with a view to eventually buying a premises. I subsequently had the privilege, as President, of signing the documentation for the purchase of our offices.

The three Presidential years were a high point in my career. Two memories that remain with me are first, the warm reception that I received as I visited the regions and second, the support and advice given to me by our Director, Clive. He said that *"it was his job to make me look good"*.

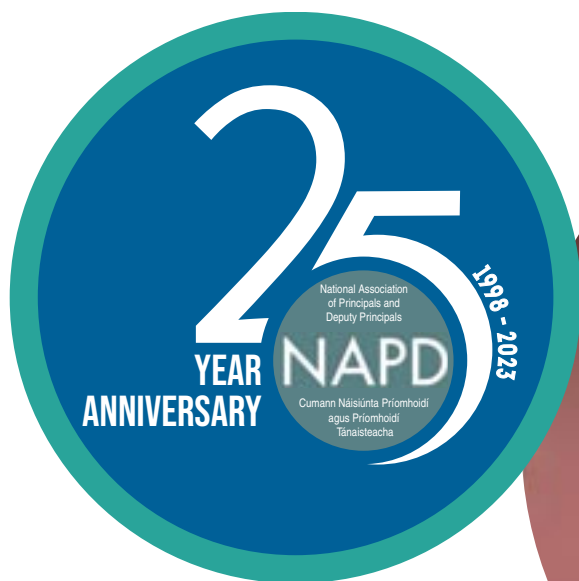
And with me, he definitely had a job to do.

Ciarán McCormack
retired as Principal
of St Paul's College,
Raheny, Dublin in
2014.



KAY O'BRIEN

President 2012-2013



Like many things in life, I joined the executive of NAPD not quite sure what to expect and not entirely sure what my role might be.

I have said on many occasions since, this opportunity to be part of the National Executive of NAPD was a defining moment for me. From the start I enjoyed meeting school leaders from Voluntary Secondary, ETB and Community & Comprehensive schools and enjoyed immensely the collegiality, support and the sharing of experiences and views with each other at National Executive level.

I wished I had been involved earlier in NAPD, particularly when I started out as a new Deputy Principal of St Ciaran's CS, Kells, Co Math. I didn't feel I had the time in those early days to regularly attend regional meetings. I felt it was impossible to leave what is a very busy demanding job.

As President of NAPD, it was a great honour to represent all school leaders but particularly special to do so as a

Deputy Principal and have an opportunity to highlight their concerns and views.

NAPD holds a respected position in education circles and as President of NAPD I had first-hand experience of this.

2012/2013 was a challenging time for school leaders- the moratorium on Posts of Responsibility took an enormous toll on Principals and

Deputies. On my travels to regional meetings it was very sobering to hear of the sacrifices in time and energy school leaders made to compensate.

There was – and still is – considerable concern for the welfare and wellbeing of school leaders, so I'm delighted to see that the Centre for Leadership is growing from strength to strength. There is, I hope, a greater recognition of the central role of Principals and Deputies in all that is positive in our education system.

Junior Cycle reform was also a hot topic during my role as President and I have fond – and terrified – memories of facing Brian Dobson on the RTÉ Six One News and finding myself a very minor celebrity for a few minutes!

I have always felt that the voice of our students needed greater support and recognition and I'm delighted to see that this is now accepted policy, due in

no small measure to the pioneering work of Dr Paula Flynn, who I had the great pleasure of working with during my Presidency.

The role of President of NAPD was challenging and busy but never onerous. With the support of outgoing President Donal Ó Buachalla, incoming President Pádraig Flanagan, and Director Clive Byrne a busy agenda was easy to manage and get through.

I'm also delighted to say I still feel very welcome at NAPD HQ. Over the few years I had the opportunity to work with NAPD Creative Engagement, chairing the Arts and Culture Committee, celebrating creativity in our schools (often funded on a shoestring) but there nevertheless because of committed school leaders and teachers.

Looking back, being President of NAPD was an enriching and positive experience for me.

“ The role of President of NAPD was challenging and busy but never onerous. With the support of outgoing President Donal Ó Buachalla, incoming President Pádraig Flanagan, and Director Clive Byrne a busy agenda was easy to manage and get through ”

School leaders are busy and the thought of attending another meeting may be just too much most days but getting involved in regional meetings could be an opportunity to meet up with likeminded people with similar trials and tribulations. It might be an opportunity to get advice support and first-hand information on what's happening in other schools and in the broader education system. You might even one day end up being President of NAPD and if that happens, you won't for a second regret it.

Kay O'Brien
retired as
Deputy
Principal of St
Ciarán's
Community
School, Kells,
Co Meath in 2014.



NAPD-R Update

Ciarán McCormack

Just one day after we visited the Hugh Lane Gallery in March 2020, schools closed and the great Covid lockdown began. All of three years and one month later, on 27 April 2023, the NAPD-R Spring tour and lunch was resumed. Twenty four NAPD-R members gathered to visit the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin Castle, which was followed by lunch in the 1592 Restaurant in Trinity College.

Only a small percentage of the collection in Chester Beatty is on view at any one time. Accordingly, it is possible to visit the Library on a regular basis and see something different each time. Our guides related the remarkable life of Chester Beatty and how his collection came to be in Dublin. We visited the rooms displaying a dazzling array of historical items spanning the Islamic, Buddhist and Christian collections.

Amazing is an overused word today but we were amazed by the skill of the various craftspeople who produced the items on display. Among the highlights were original letters written by St. Paul, some of the oldest surviving manuscripts that exist today.

A coffee and a short stroll later, we lunched in Trinity's 1592, a venue we have visited in the past. Food, as always, was excellent. Some wine (but not too much) was had by some (but not too many), courtesy of NAPD.

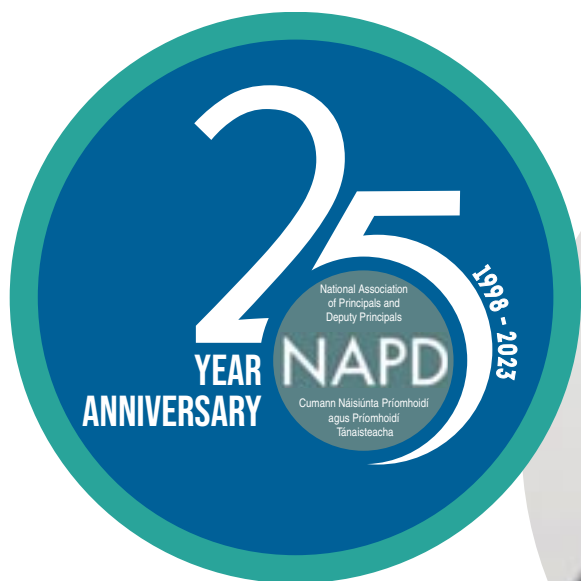
It was a lovely opportunity to meet retired colleagues again. Others, who had wished to come, had emailed their regrets. Our next venture was a visit to Westport in May for a tour, dinner and overnight stay. We'll report on that in Autumn Leader.



Members not receiving emails from NAPD-R should contact us at napdretired22@gmail.com

CATHNIA Ó MUIRCHEARTAIGH

President 2016-2017



I strongly believe in the great work that NAPD has been doing over many years. I also feel that without the cross sectoral network that NAPD provides, as well as the influence that it has garnered, the life of a school leader would be a more difficult one. As the only cross sectoral association at post primary level, it has a pivotal role and unique position in both supporting and influencing school leaders. This ultimately leads to better, more effective teaching and learning in our schools.

From the time the founders of this Association brought together the different bodies representing Principals and Deputies, all of who had recognised the importance of having a united voice for school leaders, NAPD has gone from strength to strength, giving school leaders a voice in supporting our schools and our students. That has always been at the heart of what we do.

NAPD has and continues to play a

greater role than the sum of its parts in influencing educational policy, mainly as a result of NAPD being a progressive, solution-focused and forward-thinking organisation.

As we strive to protect, nurture and support school leaders in our fast-moving world with an ever-increasing workload, we need to develop and adapt the Association towards our common goals. In our schools the student remains central to our work

and our vision. In the same way, the student needs to be at the core of what NAPD does, supporting and developing our school leaders.

Bhí sé de phribhléid mhór agam a bheith tofa mar uachtarán ar an eagraíocht seo a chuireann guth na gcinnirí scoile chun cinn i gcónaí, chomh maith le cinnireacht a thabhairt trí thuairimí nua agus athruithe tábhachta a chur chun cinn sa chóras oideachais. Déantar iarracht an guth ciallmhar, proifisiúnta a chur chun tosaigh i gcónaí. Is minic ná féidir an athruithe beaga agus móra ar éirigh leis an eagraíocht a fháil a chraobhscaoileadh ach is cinnte go mbeadh rudaí i bhfad níos measa do chinnirí scoile mura mbeadh an eagraíocht ann. Is minic gur focail bheaga agus tuairimí tábhachta a dhéanann an difir ag deireadh.

It was a great honour for me to serve

as President of NAPD. It was a time of change in education, with the ripple of industrial strife still strong. We all walked the tightrope of those tensions, leading the Association through the storms, while trying to support each other as school leaders. For me, it was three years (as Vice-President, President and Past President) of learning and getting to know the intricacies of our education system and how NAPD manages to influence positive change.

NAPD launched two fantastic books during the year I was President: Jacinta Kitt's wonderful book *Positive Behaviours, Relationships and Emotions ... the Heart of Leadership in a School* and the other edited by the late-great stalwart of Irish education, Professor John Coolahan, *Towards a Better Future: A Review of the Irish School System* (published in partnership with IPPN).

There was an important need to continue the work of those who set up the Association in 1998. Internally, we felt that we needed to look at our systems and ensure that we were fit-for-purpose into the future. Developing the Association's strategic plan and setting structures for succession and development was to the forefront of our minds. Like our schools, NAPD needs to keep adapting and changing, developing and improving what we offer members. We have developed a strategic plan and a vision for what we want, as well as our communication systems. We are also investing in aspiring school leaders.

One of the key issues that came to a head was that P-POD in its original state was not fit for purpose. We put forward a vision of what we, as school leaders, felt would work, while also providing a conduit to send state exam results back to schools electronically.

NAPD decided in many years ago to support Teaching & learning within our schools by bringing in many guest specialists to work with school leaders

“ There was an important need to continue the work of those who set up the Association in 1998. Internally, we felt that we needed to look at our systems and ensure that we were fit-for-purpose into the future ”

and their staff. This has led to partnering with Mike Hughes for another great book, *The Magenta Principles*, which we hope will support what is at the core of what we do as we lead Teaching & Learning within our schools.

Teacher supply or – more precisely – the lack of teachers is still a major issue for our schools. We began highlighting this issue with a conference for Gaelcholáistí in the Clocktower in the Department of Education a number of years ago, highlighting the shortage of teachers in many subject areas and taking every opportunity to raise the issues we have within our schools.

Is ceird uaigneach uaireanta í an chinnireacht scoile. Braitheann sé uaireanta go bhfuil ualach na scoile, ualach na daltaí agus ualach na múinteoirí ar fad á n-iompar againn. Ach is post an freagrach agus an luachmhar é, ní amháin dúin féin ach d'ár scoileanna agus do na daltaí go léir atá faoi n'ár gcúram. Dá bhrí sin tá sé fíor thábhachtach go mbeadh líonra tacaíochta gníomhach ar fáil dúin ar fad. Líonra ina bhfuil na cinnirí scoile ar fad agus líonra ina bhfuil baill ann ó gach earnáil agus gach saghas scoil. Is óna chéile a fhoghlaimíonn muid. Líon agus líonann NAPD an bearna sin le deiseanna plé earnála agus treas earnála a chur ar fáil dúinn, chomh maith le guth láidir a chur ar fáil dúinn.

I am confident that that the progressive voice of the school leader will be at the heart of nascent OIDE. Our Conferences and Symposiums offer an opportunity to vision and to

think, to discuss and to network. I have always found the NAPD Conferences uplifting and informative, with the right mix of local and international speakers, as well as the most important opportunities to network and converse with colleagues across all sectors.

Ba mhaith liom an deis seo a thógaint chun ár mbuíochas a chun in iúil d'ár iar Clive Byrne agus ár stiúrthóir nua Paul Crone. Gach rath ar an mbóthar romhainn. Buíochas mor leis do Paul Byrne agus do Rachel O'Connor atá ag teacht i gcorba ar agus do gach aon duine a thugann go flaithiúlach don eagraíocht. Gan iad ní bheadh NAPD chomh láidir.

The progress of NAPD over 25 years has been remarkable: in the advances in networking, formal and informal; the growth in provision of Continuous Professional Development for members; the consistent and increasingly respected advocacy in high places on behalf of school leaders; the growing influence of NAPD on educational policy-making; the extending recognition of, and respect for, Irish leaders in international educational circles, which keeps on growing.

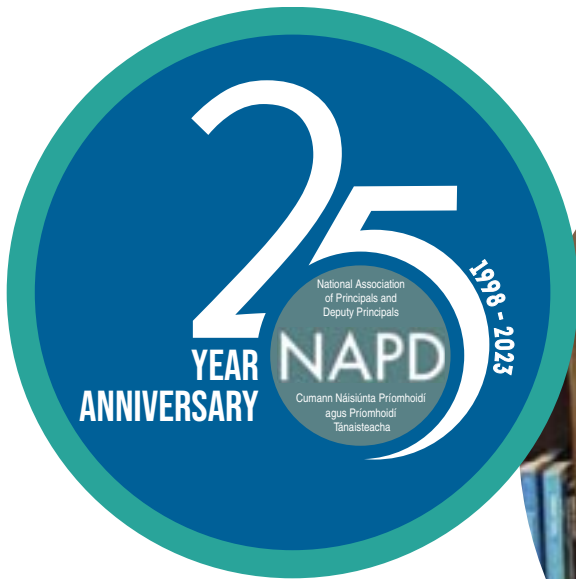
Go raibh fada buan tú NAPD.

Tá **Cathnia Ó Muircheartaigh** ina Phríomhoide ar Phobal Scoil Osraí, Cill Channaigh.



MICHAEL CREGAN

President 2021-2022



There was never a year like it – not in my time anyway – and never such a severe challenge to our education system. Schools were thrust into the front line of the Coronavirus pandemic and, if you ask me, school leaders, the teachers, the support staff and the students acquitted themselves magnificently.

The students had to adapt to this unprecedented situation, both socially and technically. They were suddenly deprived of the company of their classmates, which – whether we like it or not – is probably the prime purpose of schools for the vast majority of students. They want to 'hang out' with their friends, they want to be part of the team, be it hockey or hurling, camogie or running; they want their Debs and graduation evenings; they want to be together.

All that suddenly stopped.

They were now required to learn online, alone at home, to have the

self-discipline to sit at the kitchen table or at a desk in the bedroom for hours and hours every day. The temptation to switch off, or skive off, was great. The isolation and the loneliness was terrible.

For many of our teachers – especially those computer-savvy younger ones – communicating through a screen was familiar and relatively easy. But for others, trained up for, and accustomed to, the cut and thrust and interaction of the live classroom, this was a whole new ball game. A lesson is not a lecture; learning is what the students do and the teacher needs to know what is happening. Most people

– students and teachers – longed to return to school. Yet the majority of our teachers rose to this challenge and kept the show on the road.

The key to all of this was the dedication of school leaders, who drove the project tirelessly through lock-down. We need to acknowledge that – we in NAPD know about it – but the Department needs to acknowledge it. They have heaped new responsibilities, new tasks on the shoulders of our school heads week by week, day by day, through spring, summer and autumn terms and through the holidays. It is common knowledge in our own ranks that there were virtually no holidays for Principals at this time; what is not appreciated is the weight of expectations on school leaders, the unceasing requirement for them to respond to instructions, documents (and revised documents) – often at impossibly short notice – and a great

deal of this happening behind the closed doors of an empty school in the summer months.

As I look back on my year as President, I try to inject a mood of celebration into our lives. We should be marking with loud fanfares what school communities have done for the country. From Michael D to Micheál M and through the national institutions, let us applaud and toast and celebrate.

The children went back to school and those fortunate enough to still have jobs were able to get on with their work and to keep the economy afloat. That was no mean achievement.

Finally, I see that the role of NAPD President is to fight for the acknowledgment of the work of our schools' senior management teams at

“As I look back on my year as President, I try to inject a mood of celebration into our lives. We should be marking with loud fanfares what school communities have done for the country. From Michael D to Micheál M and through the national institutions, let us applaud and toast and celebrate”

a practical level and to campaign in every way possible to reduce the workload of school leaders, by putting in place a layer of school administration that allows them to lead Teaching & Learning, which is their core mission.

I know that all members fully support NAPD President, Shane Foley, and the National Executive in this endeavour.

Michael Cregan

resigned as Principal of Laurel Hill Secondary School FCJ, Limerick, in 2022.

He is currently a Building Advisory Consultant with the JMB.



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Creative ENGAGEMENT

Dermot Carney



Process images from workshops in stencilling with Kevin O'Brien



Wall Mural Creative Engagement Project, GaelCholaiste Mhuire AG, Corcaigh
Teacher: Nollaig Ní Loinsigh



Creative Engagement Felt Project, St. Jarlath's College, Tuam
Teacher: Thérèse Kenny

These images are a cross section of the 112 projects completed by second level schools in the 2022-2023 school year. There is grant support to schools of €1000 from NAPD, funded jointly by the Departments of Education and the Department of Tourism Culture Arts and the Gaeltacht Sport and Media.

The Creative Engagement programme works as part of Creative Youth, which is Pillar 1 of Creative Ireland, operating in parallel to Blast and Creative Schools.

NAPD has developed a partnership with Creative Ireland, the National Museum of Ireland, the National Gallery and the Irish Museum of Modern Art and with other groups. An exhibition of Creative Engagement projects takes place each year, usually in Autumn.

WHAT IS THE NAPD CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME?

The Creative Engagement Arts in Education programme, an initiative of NAPD, is now in its 18th year and is overseen by NAPD's Arts Culture and Heritage Committee. An artist – or artists – comes to the school to work with the students, bringing an extra dimension to the arts lives of the students and the school. The range of the arts involved is broad, with schools choosing which of the arts best suits its needs. Any subject department in the school can lead this programme. It is often done through the TY.

The work done in Creative Engagement is at www.creativeengagement.ie



Application Forms for Creative Engagement 2023-24 can also be found here under FORMS. The closing date for applications for the next school year is 14 October 2023.

Dermot Carney retired as Principal of St. Ciaran's Community School, Kells, Co. Meath in 2010. He has been NAPD's Arts Officer since 2012.





ANALYSING EDUCATION

By Sean McDonagh

SOME
COMPARISONS
OF IRELAND AND
SCOTLAND



SCOTLAND

Scotland is the nearest country to Ireland and the histories of Ireland and Scotland are strongly interwoven.

Neither Ireland nor Scotland were parts of the Roman Empire. The Romans gave the name "Scoti" to Gaelic speaking Irish people. Scoti moved from Ireland to western Scotland from the third century onwards. Their influence and territory grew. In the 6th and 7th centuries the Gaelic kingdom of Dal Riata included both Argyll and North Antrim. By the 8th century, Gaelic-speaking Scots ruled most of Scotland.

Centuries later, at the beginning of the 17th century, under the reign of the Stuart King James I and VI, the Plantation of Ulster began with a flow of Scottish settlers – largely from the Lowlands – to Ireland. They conferred an Ulster/Scots inheritance on Ireland.

This note, for discussion, makes some comparisons between Ireland and Scotland.

UNITED KINGDOM 1800-1920

Ireland and Scotland, following the 1800 Act of Union, were part of the same State – the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland – for 120 years. Both Ireland and Scotland sent MPs – all male and elected by limited franchises – to the same Parliament in Westminster. During this period, that State, the UK, consolidated, exploited and colonised the largest global Empire in human history.

Population change can be an important indicator of a region's economic progress. Ireland was included for the first time in 1821 in the official UK census. In that year, Ireland was recorded as having a population of 6.8 million while Scotland at 2.1 million had less than a third of that. Table 1 gives census figures showing population trends – strongly contrasting – over the period of common statehood.

Table 1: Population – Ireland, Scotland, 1821-1911

| Year | Ireland (I) | Scotland (S) | Ratio I/S |
|----------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| 1821 | 6.8m | 2.1m | 3.2 |
| 1841 | 8.2m | 2.6m | 3.2 |
| 1851 | 6.6m | 2.9m | 2.3 |
| 1891 | 4.7m | 4.0m | 1.2 |
| 1911 | 4.4m | 4.8m | 0.9 |
| Change % | -35.3% | +128.6% | |

In the early 19th century, Ireland had three times the population of Scotland, which had endured some clearances. The Irish famine of the 1840s began a major decline of the Irish population. Famine, disease and emigration contributed to that decline. The population of Scotland continued to grow and in 1911 exceeded that of Ireland.

The 6 counties that later become Northern Ireland were more industrialised than the rest of Ireland in the late 19th century and reached their low population point in 1891. From then they have grown, reaching their 1841 level again in 2001. The 26 counties that later become the Free State continued to decline until 1961. From then it grew – it now exceeds its value in 1851, but not yet its 1841 value.

During this 1800-1920 period, the population of England grew massively. Its population in 1851 of 16.7 million was double its population of 8.3 million in 1801. By 1911, its population of 33.6 million had doubled again. Emigration from Ireland and Scotland contributed to this growth.

LANGUAGE

That growth of the population of England, the strengthening and colonisation of the British Empire and the growth of the United States of America caused the growth in global importance of the English language in the 19th century. For inhabitants of Ireland and Scotland – or those emigrating from those countries – a fluency in English became a major asset.

The famine in the 1840s dealt a major blow to the Irish language. In the 1851 census it was estimated that 1,525,000 spoke Irish, with about 320,000 mono-lingual in that language. Census takers in 1861 estimated a reduced number, 1,077,000, of Irish speakers. The 1831 Education Act for Ireland provided for schools teaching English only and with English as the language of instruction. By 1911, the census recorded 680,245 Irish speakers, making up 13.3 % of the population then.

In Scotland, the 1881 census reported that of 3,736,000 people, 231,600 declared to be "habitual" speakers of Gaidhlig. Almost all lived in the Highland counties. In the 1891 census an increased number 254,000 claimed to be Gaidhlig speakers, with 47,738 claiming to speak no other language. By 1911, those claiming to speak Gaidhlig reduced to 184,000 or 3.8% of the population. The 1872 Scottish Education Act – drafted by the Scottish Education Board – excluded Gaidhlig and provided for instruction solely through English.

EU MEMBERSHIP 1973-2020

Scotland and all Ireland were both parts of the European Union for almost 50 years between 1973 and Brexit in 2020. Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in those years elected MEPs to the European Parliament. In that period the EU expanded to include eastern European countries resulting in the free movement of people, goods and services across a 28 nation EU.

Table 2, drawn from census information illustrate the different patterns of population change in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland during this period of common EU membership.

Table 2: Population – Scotland, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, 1971-2021/2022

| | 1971 | 1991 | 2011 | 2021/2022 | % Change |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|----------|
| Republic of Ireland | 3.0m | 3.5m | 4.6m | 5.1m | +72% |
| Northern Ireland | 1.5m | 1.6m | 1.8m | 1.9m | +24% |
| Scotland | 5.2 m | 5.1 m | 5.3 m | 5.5 m | +5% |

The Republic of Ireland's (26 counties) population grew strongly, by 72%, during this period of EU membership, exceeding its value in 1851. Northern Ireland grew more slowly from being 33% of Ireland's population in 1971 to 27% in 2021/22. Scotland's population declined in a number of the years in this period. Over the period it grew by about 5%.

Now, as in most developed countries, the fertility rates in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic are below the replacement rate of 2.1. Amongst the many challenges now to be faced is the retention of qualified citizens and the attraction of talented immigrants. In this, the educational and higher educational systems have a major role to play.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Ireland and Scotland face major future challenges in a strongly competitive global knowledge-based, digitalised and green economy and society. Demographic change raises issues in relation to longer productive working lives and life-long access to skilling and up-skilling. The comparative excellence of the educational system – at all levels – and, importantly, its inclusiveness are key elements in the response to these challenges. New delivery methods and formats need to be fully exploited.

Scotland now faces these challenges outside the EU, the Republic of Ireland as an EU member and Northern Ireland outside the EU but with special EU access. An economy and society require advanced levels of productivity to meet future challenges.

PRODUCTIVITY

The Productivity of a region as measured by, say, the output per head is an important indicator of the education and skills of the population and the investment in the use of knowledge and technology by its economic sectors.

- In recent years, the Republic of Ireland has been ranked by the OECD as one of its most productive countries reflecting, in part, the important role of the multi-national sectors that have located here.
- The ESRI, in a recent study of productivity levels in Northern Ireland and the Republic, examined 17 sectors in both economies. The Republic, they found, was more productive in 14 of these and Northern Ireland in 2. They revealed that while productivity in both was about the same in 2000, productivity in the Republic had grown to be about 40% higher than Northern Ireland in 2020.
- A recent ESRI study of Educational Systems North and South found that “the return to education in the (Republic of) Ireland substantially exceeds that in Northern Ireland at all levels of educational achievement, which may suggest that productivity levels in Northern Ireland are considerably below those in the Republic”.
- A 2021 study by the Productivity Institute into Scotland's Productivity Challenge found that while Scotland's productivity had increased in recent years it was still just below the UK average in 2019.

- The UK Office for National Statistics, in a study of regional productivity change in the years to 2019, revealed Northern Ireland as having the lowest regional productivity of 12 UK regions in 2019, noting that the London region outperforms by far all the other regions, with the South-East in second place. All other regions are below the national average.

SENIOR SCHOOL LEVEL

The senior level in secondary education, of vital importance, exhibits contrasting arrangements – in level, choice and duration – under the three jurisdictions Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

- In the Republic of Ireland, after a Transition Year – taken by 73.8% in 2021 – students undertake a two-year Leaving Certificate programme where, typically, they take 7 subjects, choosing between two levels for each subject (or three in the cases of Irish and Mathematics). Participation for the 2015 school entrants was 86.1% for DEIS school pupils and 93.7% for non-DEIS schools. It was 93.8% for females and 90.5% for males.
- Northern Ireland adheres to a grammar school system with selection at age 11. The ESRI report states that “being channelled into non-grammar schools leads to low educational expectations – particularly for boys”. Also “those who are more socially disadvantaged are more inclined to leave school after lower secondary”. In 2020/21, when 77.7% doing GCSE achieved 5 Grades A*-C (including English and Mathematics), 96.9% of grammar school students achieved them, in contrast to 62.4% of non-grammar school students. Also, 82.5% of females achieved them, while 73.1% of males achieved that standard. At senior level, the A-level programme involves the study of 3-4 subjects over a 2-year programme.
- In Scotland, the Attainment Challenge to 2025/2026 sets as policy “to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap”. In Scotland, after a broad education in the first three years of second level, S1 to S3, pupils can take National level 5 tests in S4. Highers are one-year courses studied at S5 where typically students take 5 subjects. That can lead to University entrance and, typically, four-year degree courses. In Higher Education in 2021/22, females comprised 59.1% of students, males 41.8%. Some students continue to S6 where they can study Advanced Highers. Typically, they study three subjects at this level in a one-year programme.

International tests, such as PISA tests for 15-year-olds, provide an opportunity to compare the performance of pupils in different educational systems and schools and with different backgrounds.

PISA 2018

The PISA tests conducted in 2018 included tests in Reading, Mathematics and Science, with Reading that year as the main test. Table 3 contains the average results for Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Table 3: PISA 2018 – Scotland, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Averages

| | Reading | Mathematics | Science |
|---------------------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Republic of Ireland | 518 | 500 | 496 |
| Scotland | 504 | 489 | 490 |
| Northern Ireland | 501 | 492 | 491 |
| OECD Average | 487 | 489 | 489 |

Scotland has a proud tradition of University education. Its oldest University, St. Andrews, was founded in 1413.

Table 3 shows the Republic of Ireland’s average score in Reading as being significantly above the other results, which are in turn significantly above the OECD average.

Table 4 illustrates the Reading results by gender.

Table 4: PISA 2018 – Reading Averages, Gender

| Reading | | Female | Male | Difference |
|---------|------------------|--------|------|------------|
| 518 | Rep. of Ireland | 530 | 506 | 24 |
| 504 | Scotland | 511 | 497 | 14 |
| 501 | Northern Ireland | 519 | 482 | 37 |
| 487 | OECD Average | 502 | 472 | 30 |

In all OECD countries, the female average in Reading in 2018 exceeded the male average, with an average difference of 30. It is significant that the Northern Ireland gender difference exceeds this. The Republic of Ireland’s gender difference is less than the OECD average. The gender difference across the UK was a low 20 and the Scottish gender difference at 14 was exceedingly low.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprentice formats, combining relevant work experience with formal learning, have many advantages and can be a major weapon in addressing future skill needs and advancing inclusiveness. The work/study format motivates learners, addresses skill needs, facilitates year-long learning and encourages adult learners. Importantly, it avoids student debt.

All three jurisdictions in Ireland and Scotland are now actively promoting apprentice recruitment at a variety of levels and across a growing range of disciplines.

In Scotland there are three types of apprenticeship – Foundation, Modern and Graduate. Foundation level is aimed at those still at school and can be taken alongside National 5s and Highers. Foundation offers 15 discipline choices. Modern Apprenticeship offers 100 choices across a range of sectors. In the period April to December 2022 the 19,957 starts in Modern Apprenticeship were 80.8% at SCQF Level 6 or above. 19.2% were at Level 5. The majority, 59.8%, of starts in this period were aged 16-24 while, importantly, 40.8% were aged 25+. Construction skills accounted for 26.9% of these starts and were largely male (97.3%). Of the remainder, females accounted for almost half, 48.9%. Graduate Apprenticeship offers work-based learning and study up to Masters level in 14 different broad subject areas.

In Northern Ireland there are three levels of Apprenticeship – Level 2, Level 3 and Higher – considered respectively to be equivalent to 5 GCSE passes, 2 A-level passes and a HNC.

In the Republic of Ireland, a major expansion of Apprentice provision by level and discipline is underway. Apprenticeships can lead to qualifications from Level 6 to Level 10 in the NFQ. The Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025 targets 10,000 new entrants every year by 2025.

Craft apprenticeships in the past had a tradition of being strongly male preserves. The promotion of female participation in apprenticeships at all levels is of major importance. In the Irish Republic, as part of the Action Plan for Apprenticeship a bursary scheme was launched in 2022 to promote female recruitment to apprenticeships. At the launch, females constituted only 6% of apprentices. An IBEC statement then said “Fully addressing gender imbalance in Apprenticeship requires early intervention at Primary and Secondary level to address gender stereotyping”.

UNIVERSITY SECTOR

Scotland has a proud tradition of University education. Its oldest University, St. Andrews, was founded in 1413. Three further Universities – Glasgow (1451), Aberdeen (1495) and Edinburgh (1583) – were founded before the foundation of Ireland’s first University, TCD, in 1592.

In the 2023 QS Ranking of Universities, Edinburgh was ranked at 15th globally. Other Universities ranked in the top 200 globally were: Glasgow (81), St. Andrews (96), TCD (98), and UCD (181). Ranked between 201 and 250 were Aberdeen and QUB.



The UK student admission system UCAS reported in 2022 a Higher Education entry rate of 18-year-olds of 37.5% across the UK. The UCAS entry rate was 40.6% in Northern Ireland and 30.1% in Scotland. (Some degree courses in Scotland in FE Colleges are not in the UCAS system.) England had an entry rate of 38.4% and Wales 32.4%.

UCAS reports that of Northern Ireland's 13,550 entrants in 2022 about 9,500 (70.1%) did so in Northern Ireland, 3,140 (23.2%) in England and 690 (5.1%) in Scotland. 220 (1.6%) choose Wales. Previous reports suggest the two thirds of those who leave Northern Ireland to study will not return.

UCAS also reports that of 30,490 Scottish acceptors in 2022, 29,630 (97.2%) accepted in Scottish institutions. Scottish students have free tuition fees at Scottish Universities while students from the rest of the UK and the Irish Republic can pay up to £9,250 per annum to study in Scotland. In 2022, 39% more females than males were admitted - a narrowing of the gender gap from 50% in 2019.

About 650 from Northern Ireland were admitted in 2022 through the CAO to study in the Republic.

Eurostat reports that in 2021, 41% of the population aged 25-34 of the EU had completed tertiary education i.e. Higher Education or post-secondary Further Education. They report that the Republic of Ireland's tertiary completion for that age group was 62% - 57% for males and 66% for females - the second highest in the EU after Luxembourg.

The OECD reports that in 2021, 48% of the OECD population aged 25-34 had completed tertiary education. The figure for the UK was 57% for that age group. The figure for Northern Ireland was 47%, a figure explained by the lower participation in Further Education and Training compared to, say, the Republic of Ireland. The ESRI report on education in both jurisdictions comments that while graduate rates were broadly similar, only 10% of the Northern Ireland population had a further level qualification compared to 30% in the Republic.

FOOTNOTE

As the title of this note referred humorously to Q-Celts it must be recalled that Manx Gaelg is also a Q-Celtic language. In the 1901 census, 4,419 speakers of Gaelg – largely in rural areas – were recorded, 8.1% of the 54,752 population then.

In 1911 this had reduced to 2,382 and by 1931 to 531. In 2011 1,823 people – largely revivalists – claimed some capability in Manx Gaelg.



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

Email: sean.mcdonagh44@gmail.com



Paul Crone

NAPD recently partnered with Cornmarket to provide pre-retirement advice to Principals and Deputy Principals. Good planning recommends that we begin our detailed retirement planning a minimum of 5 years ahead of the retirement date.

Retirement is what we work towards from the first day we start working. Along the way we get used to making comments beginning with “when I retire ...”. When the time eventually comes we owe it to ourselves to ensure we have properly prepared, financially and emotionally.

Owen Meade of Cornmarket, gave a detailed explanation of the tax implications of retirement and how to make sure you are taxed correctly when you commence receipt of your pension. In addition, he covered various implications for the retirement “lump sum” and around inheritance tax.

Philip Collins also of Cornmarket, provided excellent information on Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs), to help maximise both retirement income and lump sum. Conor Johnson offered advice on investments and investment opportunities - making

your money work for you in retirement is easier than we all thought.

Financial security in retirement is critical, while it is also vitally important that we have planned properly for when the phone stops ringing, the routine of going to work every day changes and the emotional drain of the job disappears.

We need to prepare to fill the space previously occupied by the job. Patricia Hayden, recently retired Principal from St Josephs, Rush, Co. Dublin, gave us her insights into the challenges she faced, the unexpected issues she encountered and spoke about the lessons she has learned to help inform those beginning their preparation for retirement.

Retiring is a huge personal decision and we must ensure we make decisions regarding retirement with all available information. NAPD is delighted to continue working with Cornmarket to help provide this information for members. We are thankful to Cornmarket who have committed to individual consultations with all the webinar attendees.

For further details and individual consultation with Cornmarket advisor, please contact owen.meade@cornmarket.ie

Mindfulness for School Wellbeing

Orlaith O'Sullivan



Orlaith reading from her book We Are All Flowers which helps us to learn the art of appreciation

In recent years, mindfulness has been an explosive trend. Is it a fad that will come and go like so many initiatives - or can it offer deep nourishment to leaders and their educational ecosystems?

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is an energy that we generate in this moment. It has the qualities of openness, curiosity, clarity and kindness. Mindfulness helps us to live happy and ethical lives.

Mindfulness research is a young field – about 50 years old - but the findings are encouraging. Research shows that our easily-distracted minds can be trained to focus. We can make a habit of experiencing gratitude, connection, love, hope – and a host of other positive states that are key for our wellbeing.

As leaders, mindfulness practice protects and replenishes our energy; it increases our cognitive function and keeps us connected with the deeper meaning of our lives. Mindfulness can be an effective counterweight to our human negativity bias.

Simply put, it makes us happy. And we don't need extra time or special equipment. Mindfulness meets us, just where we are, whatever we're doing.

MINDFULNESS FOR TEACHERS

I train leaders and educators around the world in mindful living – from a kindergarten director in Vietnam, to a secondary school PE teacher in the Philippines, to a professor in Harvard. All describe similar benefits of their mindfulness practice: they notice they're more present for their students; more able to 'surf the waves' of daily, chaotic life. They can enjoy the good moments more – and bounce back more easily from the tough moments. Nothing on the outside has changed, but life feels very different to them. They are more free.

BENEFITS TO TEACHERS

Teachers who regularly practice mindfulness report:

- greater life-satisfaction and calmness
- reduction in stress, depression and anxiety
- more supportive relationships with students
- more self-confidence and self-compassion
- improvement in cognitive performance (focusing, making decisions, facing challenges)
- higher levels of classroom management and organisation

MINDFULNESS FOR STUDENTS

As school leaders, we know the importance of regular physical exercise for our students. We can think of mindfulness training as PE for their hearts and minds. It develops abilities that bring multiple benefits to their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. Young students develop critical thinking skills and the ability to emotionally regulate. And in this time of ever-increasing addiction to technology, mindfulness helps children develop the skill of choosing where to place their attention.

Research in this young field is promising: when taught well, mindfulness is effective in reducing children's mental health problems and has a clear impact on academic achievement. Bullying tends to lessen as young people learn to befriend themselves and strengthen their empathy and care. There's a boost in creativity, happiness and collaboration. Simply put, there's a lot to play for.

WHERE DO WE START?

Each school ecosystem is unique, so we need flexible, creative ways to allow mindfulness to grow. You don't even need to use the word mindfulness if it is a barrier. It's less about *what we do* and more about *who we are* as we do it.

In terms of basic good principles:

1 Invite rather than force

Starting with staff, identify your 'early adopters' and offer them something appealing. A deep relaxation on a Thursday or Friday? A spacious day retreat to refresh their energy? Maybe there are one or two members of staff who are eager to learn – could you try a small pilot project?

2 Give it time to grow

Mindfulness tends to be contagious, when given time. In the American School of Bangkok, four staff members began a weekly mindfulness group. Over several years, the group grew to 70 adults. Now, the 850 students, 120 teachers and 200 support staff all have opportunities to train in mindfulness and learn good habits of self-care.

3 Include everyone

Staff, students and parents make the perfect trifecta for co-creating a mindful school. For a thriving community, all cohorts need suitable peer practice opportunities.

4 Use your imagination

Mindfulness doesn't have to be sitting cross-legged and chanting. It is how we enjoy our food, how we walk as a class, singing a song that nourishes our hearts. It's how we listen to each other and how we speak.

For example, self-compassion training can help our sports teams when they lose – and gratitude will make their wins even sweeter! One secondary school in France created a 'drop your bag' listening space. Students arrived anxious and stressed and went away smiling and relaxed. The quality of relationship between staff and students vastly improved and the listening space helped prevent several dropouts.

FOR YOU

Explore ways to aerate your day, interrupting the tension and momentum that builds:

- a five-minute practice in the car before you head into school
- a short walk outside during lunchtime
- a short meditation to let go of the working day so you can enjoy your evening

FOR YOUR STUDENTS

You can choose a practice to test out (like scientists). Repeat for a month and then discuss, 'Does it support the school environment'?

Here are a few possibilities (note that getting bored is natural - it doesn't mean it's not effective!):

- **Simple breath practice** – The American School of Bangkok began their morning assembly with five mindful breaths to ground and calm. Over time, 'take five' spread into multiple learning activities, sports activities and school exams.
- **Happy Lunchtime** – choose a room to be a quiet space for people to chill and enjoy their lunch. One school in Hong Kong transformed their noisy cafeteria with their 'Quiet Meal, Happy Meal' initiative, with soft classical music and gentle conversations.
- **Enjoy the earth** – in 2019, UNESCO stressed the importance of nature for our happiness and highlighted the role of educators in offering positive nature experiences. You can try a sensory walk outside (barefoot if possible) or you might like to cultivate a school garden together.
- **Use transitions well** – for younger children, singing a mindfulness song after their break helps to channel and calm energy. For older children, a three-minute practice to come home to their body helps them transition into focused time.

If you yourself can embody the energy of mindfulness, you are already doing a lot. Our students know when we are calm and stable. Our first and greatest teaching to our students is our true presence.

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



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

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

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

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





The Education Welfare Act: Time for a Rethink

Brian Fleming

Traditionally, enforcement of school attendance legislation was the responsibility of An Garda Síochána, with a school attendance service dealing with the issue in a limited number of urban areas. Evidence that the service was increasingly ineffective led the Department of Education (DE) to establish a Working Group which produced the School Attendance/Truancy Report (1994). Strangely, it contained no really in-depth study of the problem, either by way of an extensive literature review or otherwise. Yet, some useful recommendations emerged. The main thrust of the report was that a welfare service should be established. In due course, legislation to deal with the problem was introduced.

The Education Welfare Act (EWA) became law in 2000. In matters of school attendance, the legislation applies in the case of students between the ages of six and sixteen, since these are the parameters of the School Attendance legislation. The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) was established in 2002 to implement the provisions of the EWA. One of the requirements is that schools are required to make annual statistical returns. These include details of the total number the number of days 'lost' by their student cohort. In addition, they specify the number of students in the school who were absent twenty days or more in any given year. These are analysed by staff in the Educational Research Centre which produces figures expressed in

percentage terms under each heading for the system as a whole. So, we can compare the situation over a ten year period by considering the analysis by Millar (2010) for 2007/2008 and by Denner and Cosgrove (2020) for 2017/2018, the latest year for which an analysis is available

At post primary level the figure for days lost in 2007/8 was 7.7%. Under the chronic absentee heading (missed more than 20 days out of a school year of 167), the figure was 16.9%. The corresponding figures ten years later were 7.4% and 14.6% respectively. So, there was an insignificant change in the number of days 'lost' during the decade, but an improvement of 2.3 percentage points under the chronic absentees heading. The figures also give us a useful insight into the impact of poverty and disadvantage on school attendance patterns. The figure for chronic absentees for DEIS post-primary schools in 2007/8 was 26.54%, whereas the figure for non-DEIS was 14.76% (Millar). Ten years later the corresponding figures were 23.6% and 12.9% (Denner and Cosgrove). So, some improvement has occurred in relation to the percentage of those whose attendance is chronic but, relatively speaking, the difference between DEIS and non-DEIS schools has not changed.

These figures are disappointing, especially in the light of the hard work of Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) and school personnel. In DEIS schools particularly student absenteeism is an ongoing challenge that requires constant attention

I recall participating in a meeting of Principals of schools serving disadvantaged areas shortly after the Rochford Report was issued and the consensus was that the suggested staffing level was a serious underestimate.

from school leaders, Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) personnel and their colleagues.

THE NEWB

One of the first steps taken by the NEWB was to commission a study on the organisational and staffing needs of the new Education Welfare Service (EWS). It suggested a staff complement of 360, of whom 300 would be EWOs working 'in the field' with others as Senior EWOs and administrative staff (Rochford, 2002). I recall participating in a meeting of Principals of schools serving disadvantaged areas shortly after the Rochford Report was issued and the consensus was that the suggested staffing level was a serious underestimate. Aside from attendance issues, EWOs have responsibilities in the area of suspensions and expulsions, as well as an important role to play in relation to educational provision in out-of-school settings and home-schooling.

The current staffing level is than one hundred EWOs working in the field, that is, on average, one for every forty schools. The latest figure for chronic absentees is in excess of 113,000 children and young people between primary and post-primary. That represents over one thousand cases of chronic absentees on average for each EWO. In addition, in any given year, there are thousands more who don't reach the 20 day threshold whose absenteeism is problematic and where intervention is needed before it escalates. It can be argued that there are school personnel working on the issue also. To look at that in context, take the case of an average DEIS post-primary school of 700 pupils, Denner and Cosgrove's figures suggest that, on average, such a school will have 165 chronic attenders. Chronic absenteeism is an extremely complex problem. In many cases the underlying factors require skilled professional help way beyond what is readily available in schools. It is important to bear in mind that in most individual cases, ongoing support will be necessary and no end point is likely. Can anyone seriously argue that one HSCL with some help from

The latest figure for chronic absentees is in excess of 113,000 children and young people between primary and post-primary. That represents over one thousand cases of chronic absentees on average for each EWO.



colleagues and access to an EWO who has, on average, responsibility for something approaching 40 other schools, is in a position to bring about significant change in such circumstances?

A STRANGE SAGA

The story of the State's actions regarding school attendance is an odd one. School attendance problems were identified as an issue needing action and, in response, a comprehensive piece of legislation was introduced. The NEWB was established as a standalone organisation in 2002. Nine years later it was placed under the aegis of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. In 2014 its functions were assigned to Tusla, whose budget is determined by the Department of Children. In early in 2021 responsibility for legislation, policy and budgetary matters was assigned to the DE but operationally the service remains under TUSLA and all its employees are staff members of that organisation. The whole saga seems like a game of pass-the-parcel. The DE will have power without responsibility and Tusla will be in the reverse situation. Meanwhile, successive governments have declined to resource the service adequately, including during the so-called Celtic years, when funds seemed to be readily available. It seems that the number of EWOs employed to work in the field never exceeded 100.

The Education Authority in Northern Ireland employs about 50% more EWOs for a student population about one-third the size of that here. So, our service is grossly understaffed and early misgivings about the suggestions in the Rochford report being an underestimate were well-founded. Former NEWB board and staff members, to whom I have spoken as part of this research, all maintain that from the very start there was no real commitment on the part of the DE to

A school where, every effort is made to meet the needs of the student, diversity is respected, relationships are positive, parental involvement is encouraged and strong links are built with the local community, is likely to have a positive impact on attendance.

provide the necessary resources to the organisation. Whilst under-resourcing is common in Irish education, the lack of any real effort to address the issue in the case of the NEWB is difficult to rationalise. Did the authorities realise that the problem was more complex and intractable than they had anticipated and decide it would be too difficult and expensive to tackle? Alternatively, did the reluctance to fund the service properly arise once it became clear that it is largely, although not totally, a problem affecting children and young people living in poverty and attending schools in disadvantaged areas?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Society has a duty to vindicate the rights of all its citizens, including children and young people. In that context, responsibility for tackling the problem of student absenteeism lies primarily with the State itself, supported by the schools. The school has a duty to meet the needs of all its students to the maximum extent possible. The Principal must try to ensure that a positive school culture is in place.

A school where, every effort is made to meet the needs of the student, diversity is respected, relationships are positive, parental involvement is encouraged and strong links are built with the local community, is likely to have a positive impact on attendance.

Effective leadership and management and comprehensive pastoral care structures are hugely important. Staff members, individually and collectively, have a vital role to play in building strong and trusting relationships with students and in ensuring they have a sense of belonging to the school as a place where they are safe and cherished.

Supportive relationships with caring adults, such as those who work in early care and education settings and schools, are vital contributors to the healthy development of students and an essential ingredient if the child is develop educationally. Schools have, over the years, devised attendance policies. These are designed to impact on the student body in general and it is important that they are in place.

When it comes to individual students, teachers and other school staff such as special needs assistants are well placed to recognise an emerging absenteeism problem at an early stage. However, they may not have the necessary skills and qualifications when it comes to identifying the root causes

in any particular case. Aside from that, they may be inclined to highlight factors relating to the individual student and his/her family while underestimating school influences.

Whilst schools have a huge role to play in tackling absenteeism, essentially this is a problem that requires a response at national level. The extent to which schools can impact is dependent to a degree on the resources it has at its disposal. In particular, DEIS schools needed to be resourced adequately to meet the needs of their students. This not the case currently.

More fundamentally, the root cause is poverty, particularly as it impacts in disadvantaged urban areas. If that is not tackled by the government in a meaningful and effective manner the problems that reflect that reality will persist. Whatever the explanation, the failure to implement the EWA effectively has serious consequences.

Firstly, we know that irregular attendance at school can have a life-long impact on the individuals involved under various headings. These problems can result in a cost to the State as well as the individual. Secondly, often overlooked is the negative impact that the poor attendance of some students can have on their peers. If, within a group of students, erratic attendance is pervasive, at a very minimum the rhythm of teaching is disrupted to the detriment of those who rarely miss a day.

Finally, erratic attendance at school may be a symptom of deeper problems that need to be addressed. There is evidence that the current generation of our younger citizens are more prone to experiencing mental health challenges than their predecessors. An effective EWS could provide a valuable early warning system in such cases.

Twenty one years on from the introduction of the EWA, a review is now overdue. A useful first step would be to commission a report on the staffing levels needed to provide a comprehensive school attendance service in the light of the data now available. Then we need the DE and the Government to be honest about the response. Ideally it will decide to resource the EWS properly but the history of the issue suggests otherwise.

Alternatively, the status quo will remain, with possibly some small incremental increases in staffing levels. If the latter, the EWS should be allowed prioritise where the need is greatest rather than maintain the pretence that it can provide an effective national service involving all schools.

Brian Fleming is a former Principal of Collinstown Park Community College, Dublin. He is a former member of the NAPD National Executive.



REGIONAL AMBASSADORS' FEEDBACK

Paul Byrne

The Regional Ambassadors initiative is progressing well with 61 schools visited in this academic year. Each Ambassador produces a report on the visit, capturing the various issues that affect the functioning of schools.

The key issues identified include lack of administration staff, ever-expanding workload, difficulties in staff recruitment and retention and a shortage of qualified substitute teachers. Other key challenges include elevated levels of stress are highlighted below.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS/ ACTIONS BASED ON FEEDBACK

NAPD REPRESENTATIONS

- Major concerns about teacher supply
- Support and communication of available resources for Ukrainian students in JC/LC 2023
- Recommendation that PME becomes one year as a temporary measure
- Suspend the redeployment scheme for the coming school year
- Reduce incidental inspections
- Maintain the Covid cleaning grant
- Trauma-informed teacher training required
- Streamline building projects
- Facilitation for schools rolling out DEIS

REGIONAL REVIEW

- Online/hybrid regional meetings should be available in all regions
- Smaller local cluster meetings and develop regionally based CPD
- Update blog for regions on NAPD website
- Give members the opportunity to attend the closest region meeting
- Address how Covid has interrupted regional in person attendance
- Need for better communication channels at local NAPD level

VUG/WELFARE

- Feedback on VUG is positive and schools are using the VUG
- Share practical measures to promote well-being and mindfulness
- Schools visited are willing to share policy plans and templates through the VUG
- Develop a Guidance Handbook for finance management

- Develop handover guidelines/templates for new Principals & Deputy Principals
- Communicating to Regional Ambassadors about internal school issues is highly valued
- Investigate the possibility of providing supervision for Principals and Deputy Principals
- A database of speakers/facilitators for regional meetings should be developed by NAPD

WORKLOAD

- Additional administration support is needed ASAP
- Full allocation of Deputy Principals in all schools
- NAPD needs to work with all bodies to reduce workload of Principals and Deputy Principals, as time is the limiting factor, not money
- Workload/complexity of job in a voluntary secondary school does not seem to be fully understood by NAPD
- Differences in the responsibilities of the Principal and Deputy Principal need to be highlighted.
- Extreme difficulty in sourcing teaching and substitution staff is a high stressor
- Extend coaching and mentoring services for Principals and Deputy Principals
- Review of Book Rental Scheme is required
- Extend DEIS status to more schools
- DE to make positive strides in employing IT to lessen school leader workload

CAREER GUIDANCE

- Advocate for more ex-quota guidance provision
- Lobby the DE for ex-quota positions

for SENCO roles in all schools

- Advocate for a full-time Psychologist/Counsellor for every school
- Case conferences, special classes, student support files, RACE needs, special centres and managing SNAs increases the workload for Principals and Deputy Principals
- Increased NEPS support required in school refusal/Covid-induced anxiety

Feedback also emphasises the value of networking through NAPD membership and highlights the impact of social issues in the surrounding community on schools. Also suggested is the need for clearer definition roles within schools, more classroom accommodation and the need for more innovative teaching practices.

Reports also highlight the need for greater recognition of the complexity of the role and the workload attached to school leadership. Furthermore, feedback proposes practical solutions to the teacher supply crisis, the need for provision of more guidance and better communication channels at the local NAPD level. Suggestions for the provision of supervision for Principals and guidelines for the incoming Principals/Deputy Principals were also reported. Overall, the feedback highlights the need for better support and guidance for the effective leading of schools.

A number of innovative ideas have also been highlighted. It is planned to feature some of these in the future Leader publications.

NAPD extends its sincere gratitude to all of our Regional Ambassadors for giving of their time and experience and to Shay Bannon for co-ordinating this very worthwhile initiative.

Anyone thinking of retiring this year or next who might like to continue to contribute NAPD as a Regional Ambassador please contact welfare@napd.ie.



Bitesize Biodiversity

Patrick Kirwan

When I was teaching in inner-city London, my students had no preconceived notions about nature. Many of them lived in tower blocks and spent little or no time in parks or gardens. One student who came down to the school garden quietly commented on the beauty of a yellow flower which was poking out from under the greenhouse. I turned around to see that she was referring to a dandelion. Inwardly, I laughed.

This child knows little about nature. This is a weed and weeds are not beautiful. Years later I found out that dandelions are a superfood for bees. If you observe bees feeding on dandelions, you'll notice that they spend longer on these wildflowers compared to others because they have so much food. Their seed heads are food for goldfinches, bullfinches and other small birds. Growing up, I had been conditioned to see these golden wildflowers as weeds, something to be rooted out of the ground, carefully, using a trowel to ensure I got every part of the long tap root.

In Tramore, Co. Waterford, the council has left the verges on the roadside unmown and it fills me with hope and joy. As I journey to school, I see the roads awash with sunshine yellow mixed with the whites of daisies, all I see is food.

That's the power of education.

It can change our values and it can influence our actions. When wild bees emerge from hibernation, they are hungry. At this time of year, a queen bumblebee can visit thousands of flowers every day in order to get enough food to prepare nectar pots and pollen loaves for her first batch of eggs.

All those years ago in London, I didn't have this knowledge. I didn't know that when we mow our lawns, we are inadvertently



The community space with pollinator flowers and unmown lawn.

starving our wildlife, taking food away from butterflies, moths, hoverflies, beetles, goldfinches and other small birds. We are sleepwalking towards a silent Spring. Insect numbers have fallen by 75% in only 27 years. When I was a kid the windscreen and fender of our car would be covered in bug splat during the summer, even after a short drive.

Do you remember that? Now, our windscreens and fenders are clean because there's hardly any insects there. When they eventually disappear, so too will all of the other living things that depend on them, including us.

We can easily change this trajectory.

I grew up in a council estate in the countryside where there are about 1.5 acres of mown grass. It hadn't changed much. There are no trees or shrubs, no nourishment for humans or any living thing. On moving back to Ireland, I moved back into the family home and planted about 70 trees, pollinator plants. I took cuttings of buddleia, willow, dogwood, and elder and created



Students out picking blackberries as part of the Bitesize Biodiversity Programme.

a hedge along various boundaries and I convinced the neighbours to let the grass grow in certain areas.

I saw cuckoo flowers for the first time. These wildflowers were everywhere but never had a chance to grow. Orange tipped butterflies lay their eggs on them. Last year I saw five species of butterfly in this space, tortoiseshell, peacock, meadow brown, red admiral, and the rarer comma butterfly. It's not rocket science: create the habitat, provide the banquet and they will come.

The hardest thing is changing mindsets. Letting the grass grow was genuinely torturous for my parents. They thought it looked untidy and ugly. They were worried about what the neighbours would think. I felt awful that I was the cause of their anxiety. Nevertheless, we need to change, we need to value nature, there's just too much at stake. I've communicated all of this to my students. I invited them to let a strip of their own grass grow but they are coming up with the same problem that I had, how do you convince your parents? I've told them to be resilient. This isn't the first or last time their parents have refused them. They need to use their powers of influence!

Schools can make it easier for them. We can let the grass grow in areas where parents can see it and we can highlight this action with signage. Put up display boards in school with pictures of staff and their unmown lawns. Set the challenge and share positive stories of the pollinators and birds that are now feeding on your wildflowers. We can also improve our own knowledge of nature.

Since last September, every Monday at 4pm, teachers from all over Ireland meet online for Bitesize Biodiversity. For 15 minutes Codie, Mary, Laura, or myself, teachers in Irish Schools Sustainability Network (ISSN), talk about one living thing. We provide teachers with a PowerPoint that has facts about that organism, we suggest classroom and outdoor activities and we share our own successes and failures. Every week we're joined by about 50 teachers (nearly 400 have registered) and we share ideas.

Carmel Ribbon, an inspiring teacher in Wolstan's Community School, Celbridge, Kildare uses the Bitesize Biodiversity resources for 'Species of the Week'. Every week Carmel focuses on one species. She creates slides for their plasma screen on that species and her Deputy Principal reads out a

Unfortunately, when it comes to nature Ireland is at the bottom of the European league table.

fun fact about that species every day on the intercom. Carmel shared this fantastic idea in a Bitesize Biodiversity CPD and now many of us run 'Species of the Week' in our schools.

Catch up with us on Mondays. It's only 15 minutes. Before Bitesize Biodiversity I didn't know that there were 3,500 species of woodlouse in the world, that a swallow weighs as much as an empty plastic punnet, that a wasp was intentionally introduced from the Mediterranean in the 1800s to form galls on our oaks, which were useful for tanning leather, and now I know, at the age of 41, how to tell the difference between a rook, a hooded crow and a raven.

We tend to treat the climate emergency and the biodiversity crisis as two separate issues. They are one in the same, inextricably linked. The media and government emphasise the need to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy. Wind turbines and solar power plants are a crucial part of addressing climate breakdown. They reduce the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) we are emitting into the atmosphere but they can't remove the CO₂ we have already emitted. Only nature can do that.

Unfortunately, when it comes to nature, Ireland is at the bottom of the European league table. As an example, with 11% tree cover, Ireland is 3rd from the bottom in Europe.

Education can change this.

We need to provide our students with an education we didn't receive when we were in school. If we don't know what nature is, why it is important, how can we value and protect it? Let's break the cycle. Let's embrace nature and give biodiversity a boost while addressing the climate crisis at the same time. It can start with letting your grass grow. Join the movement.

Teachers can register for Bitesize Biodiversity CPD sessions on www.issn.ie.



SCAN ME

I am also running place-based climate and nature training days in schools.

To register interest Email: patrickkirwan@ardscoilnamara.ie.

Patrick Kirwan founded the Irish Schools Sustainability Network in March 2021. The network has run a series of national initiatives including the Climate and Nature Summit, 5 Minutes of Sustainability, and Bitesize Biodiversity. Patrick is now running place-based training for teachers on climate and nature education in Ardscoil na Mara, Tramore, Co. Waterford where he teaches.





Leaving Cert 1973 Clive Byrne

My parents were convinced of the benefits of a good education and I happily moved to St Vincent's CBS Primary School from Stanhope Street Convent, where I did Junior and Senior Infants. I was good at school and remember being happy there.

Benefitting from Donogh O'Malley's free secondary education initiative, I moved across the yard to the Secondary School and began to study for my Intermediate Certificate, having missed the Primary Certificate by a year (offered for the last time in 1967). Along with the other boys in class I studied for the Meanteist completely "as Gaeilge". There was no such thing as Transition Year in those days, so I jumped from 3rd to 5th year and began to study for the Leaving Cert, "as Béarla" on this occasion, although my studies "as Gaeilge" for the Intermediate stood me in good stead over the years ahead.

Career Guidance was non-existent then and your subjects were based on what your teachers considered your ability to be. In my case I studied Gaeilge, English, Latin, French, Maths, Physics and Chemistry. Students of "weaker ability" studied Biology and Commerce – something which made no sense at all, since most went on to become wealthy entrepreneurs, whereas many of my class group went to work in the public service. I enjoyed study and generally got on with things and although I struggled with certain topics,

I knew what I didn't know and was able to seek help when needed from a very committed cohort of teachers.

My memories of the exam itself are quite hazy but I was confident that I knew enough about King Lear and Shakespeare to get me over any hurdles that might arise, and in those days I covered all the poets, so that wasn't an issue either. Cicero's "*Pro Archia Poeta*" had been drummed into us and I was confident I could cope with whatever emerged about the battles between the Romans and whoever they were fighting at the time. Walking or cycling to and from the exams meant I could run over things in my mind and I always had several points I needed to jot down by way of prompts as soon as the stationary was handed out to help me wend my way through the paper. Chemistry wasn't my strongest subject, but it was my last exam, and I was very grateful to have a week beforehand to enable me revise.

No celebrations for me after the last exam. I had a summer job which involved shift work and I knew I would have to build up some savings to help me get through the next year. I went to collect my results that August after my shift ended, and was surprised that the Principal, Brother Bourke, had remained long after most results were issued to hand mine to me. I was nervous but he shook my hand with a broad smile and congratulated me on getting honours in every subject and remarked that both I and my parents should be very proud.

My results also meant that I qualified for a County Council

Scholarship, so funding my time in College was easier. Brother Bourke was a wonderful educationalist – known as “the Building Brother” in St Fintan’s, St Vincent’s and St Declan’s where he has left his mark. In my later life, I was thrilled to meet him walking through the grounds in Marino, when I was attending another meeting. Yes, he was older but to me, just as impressive.

There was an element of happenstance after the results were issued. CAO pressures weren’t as oppressive then. Most people who knew me assumed that I would go to University and my parents were anxious for me to avail of the opportunity – being the first of my family to go to College. And so, when I got a letter of offer from UCD, I immediately sent off my acceptance. The very next day I got a similar offer from Trinity College. Living as I did in Cabra, I could have walked to Trinity, but I don’t regret my decision to go to UCD nor the hours spent on the number 10 bus from Hanlon’s Corner to Belfield, which was a mainstay of my life over the next number of years.

Belfield is fabulous campus now but in those days the campus was just beginning, comprising the Science Block, the Arts/Commerce/Law Block, the Library, the Administration Building and the Students’ Union Bar. Not that I drank then, but I remember that the Belfield bar sold more pints of Smithwicks than any other venue in the country (at this at a time you could buy five pints for under a pound).

The friends I made and the experiences I had in UCD since 1973 have shaped me. I became very involved with the Students’ Union and a multitude of Societies which helped me grow as a person, honed my leadership skills and enabled me to fully experience and appreciate Mount Temple School, Presentation Brothers College Glashule, St Mary’s College C.S.S.P. Rathmines before moving to NAPD.

Things have moved on in the 50 years since I did my Leaving Cert in 1973. Doing the exam certainly shaped me, as it will for the current students. My advice to them is that you’re much more than a set of grades on a sheet of paper. You have so much to give to all those around you and don’t be reluctant to do so. To a younger me I would advise “what’s for you, won’t pass you”.

Never lose sight of your goals, but don’t be afraid to revise them if you need to.

Clive Byrne graduated from UCD with a BA in 1977 and a HDip in Ed in 1978, immediately commencing his teaching career in Mount Temple Comprehensive. In 1994 he was appointed Principal of Presentation Brothers College Glashule and three years later was appointed Principal of St Mary’s College, Rathmines. In 2006 he was President of NAPD and in 2008 was appointed NAPD Director. He served as President of ESHA in 2014 and retired from NAPD in 2021.



Leaving Cert 1972

Katherine Donnelly

Against the 625 points by which many of the current generation will remember their Leaving Cert, my standout recollection of a D grade feels a bit inglorious.

My results, if unremarkable, weren’t only about that D, but when I rattled my brain, it was the first thing that came back to me. Some moments you never forget.

I had the joy of a second-level education that was not driven by, and reduced to, a single points score at end.

I pretty well loved school for school itself, the friendships, camaraderie and all the extra-curricular stuff. While the exams were a necessary milestone, the Leaving Cert did not have the all-or-nothing ring to it that it has today, not for me anyway.

Generally speaking, I was considered an “honours” student. I never gave aspiration or achievement much thought and must have decided that being at that standard was enough, and that the results would look after themselves.

What I didn’t take on board was that that was the starting point, and a certain level of effort was required to maximise achievement. Call it lazy or lack of ambition, but I wasn’t bothered and I coasted along. More than one report featured ‘could do better’.

It was in post-school studies that I learned to appreciate the joy of reading widely and absorbing as much as I possibly could about a chosen subject.

It was a different country back in the 1970s. The CAO had not been born. Transition to university was not the norm. Direct entry to the workplace to institutions such as the civil service, local authorities or banks was considered an honourable career path.

Having no idea what I wanted to do post-Leaving Cert probably contributed to my lack of focus on the endgame. In any event, there was too much to enjoy about school life to be worrying about the next stage. Sport, for one.

What competitive and high achieving streak I had, was reserved for the basketball court. Jump? How high? No problem stretching myself there. It brought its rewards. A year or two before the Leaving Cert, we won our schools’ league. Before the final, against a school well-known for its intake of international students, we were treated to a “haka” by the opposing team. We had never seen the like, but we were not to be intimidated.

A team mate who found her Leaving Cert diary in a recent clear-out of her mother’s attic could tell me that those basketball matches continued right up to final weeks of sixth year. In my current role, I’m always dismayed to read reports from school inspectors and others about how sport is sometimes sacrificed in exam years.

Back in the classroom, the exception to my higher level uptake was tackling 'honours' Maths for Leaving Cert. I gave it a run for a couple of months in fifth year and, when I hit a particular wall, decided that there was more to life. In the early 70s, Leaving Cert 'honours' Maths was an unusual enough undertaking for females. Very few girls' schools even offered it, so there was no shame in abandoning it.

In contrast, I was adamant that, along with all my other subjects, I did want to study History at 'honours' level. The teacher had other ideas and actively encouraged me and a pal to join the 'pass' class.

'Honours' History had a particular reputation for being tough and, urban myth or not, you frequently heard about high fail rates. If I considered A grades the preserve of swots, of which I was not one, neither was 'fail' in my lexicon.

If memory serves me correctly, without the two of us, the honours History class would have had three or four big academic hitters. Myself and my pal refused to budge and were tolerated.

I don't recall the exams themselves and there was no nail-biting about grades. My mother passed on my results in a phone call, while myself and the other History rebel were on a post-school visit to the Gaeltacht. We couldn't bear to think that those days were behind us and we gave it one last whirl. Our former *Bean an Tí* let us pitch a tent in the back garden.

Despite my relaxed approach to study, some bit of me thought I would clock up four 'honours'. There were two. In the cool light of day, post the exams, I was vexed with myself that I hadn't picked up a couple more Cs at least.

History was one of the Ds, but there was no disappointment with that. In fact, I remember a certain delight. Most importantly, it was not an E.

A week or two later, on a visit back to the school with our parents for a farewell cup of tea, I met the History teacher. "I got the D" I exclaimed. I was genuinely happy so I wasn't expecting the reply: "But it wasn't an honour".

So, in whose crosshairs of aspiration and achievement was there going to be an 'honour' for me in History? The teacher had made it clear that she felt I wasn't up to it, and I regarded anything above an E as success.

Years later, someone dropped the penny for me. This teacher was a high academic achiever herself. Educated in the UK, she had also taught A-level History. So, wittingly, or otherwise, it seems she may have pitched her standards for us at that level.

The other History rebel, who also achieved a D, went on to have a career in politics, public affairs and academia, vindicating her resolve to pursue higher level study in the subject. One of the big academic hitters, whose results were typically A/B, told me that she got a C. That left me in the happy position of being only a grade behind, even if that narrow gap was in only one subject.

Five decades on, it's ancient history, but it's funny the things that stick.

Katherine Donnelly embarked on the study of journalism a few weeks after her Leaving Cert results. She is currently Education Editor of the Irish Independent and independent.ie.



Leaving Cert 1983

Ciaran Mullooly

Follow your dreams.

My father almost died three months before I sat my Leaving Certificate in 1983 at Lanesborough Vocational School on the Longford-Roscommon border. Given the last rites that day, he was not expected to survive. Thankfully he made a full recovery and, despite prostate cancer, went on to live to the hearty age of 84. I, however, was traumatised after that: my studies became irrelevant and contributed to my poor exam results. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

English, inspired by the brilliant Sheelagh Stafford, was by far and away my favourite subject. A gifted teacher who brought this group of innocent Midlands' teenagers and our curious imaginations to places we had never been before, she challenged us to look at the curriculum differently.

Hamlet comes to mind. Instead of a monotonous read through of it day after day, she hauled us off to the Abbey Theatre to experience a contemporary adaption of the production. It was an entirely different portrayal that soon motivated us to read much deeper into the real meaning of the play. I can still remember a fresh-faced Stephen Brennan on stage in the lead role, with Catherine Byrne as Ophelia, while a very modern-day helicopter emerged from the stage and hovered over the cast and a very excited auditorium of teenagers, the piercing noise sticking in our minds for months and years to come.

Another visit organised by the school was to a workshop in Longford with a novelist by the name of Maeve Binchy. After a session of reading, revision and composition tips, she challenged us to show off our skills by writing something about ourselves. I produced a short story about a fictional Italian spy called Spinelli who conquered criminals throughout Europe. Calling me aside, the lady from the Irish Times later remarked, "You have quite an imagination, Mr Mullooly. I would advise you to keep writing". Thankfully, the folks at RTE News were none the wiser of these hidden talents, when 30 years later I retired from the national broadcaster.

The exams themselves are a blur. I recall the strictness of the regime and the sunny weather. If memory serves me

well, this was the first year Engineering had become an honours subject, with a project making up the majority of the marks. I created a weighing scales in the workshop where the devoted metalwork teacher Tom Nohilly was in control, spending weeks on the design process and weekends carving, cutting and blending the final project to scale.

The stench of the lathe fluid and the burning metal remain in my nostrils. It was a lot of hard work and plenty of fun, although it was later to be a sober day when the late great Clare-born school Principal Bart Clancy informed me that although passing English, French and Irish, the only honour I had achieved was Engineering.

I was devastated that my first choice of heading to Rathmines College of Commerce for a career in journalism was now in shreds. My mother, however, spoke in soothing tones of the turmoil of my father's illness and its effect on my efforts to knuckle down to revision. Much as I appreciated it, deep down I was not too keen on the idea of repeating the year. Career Guidance teacher Albert Gill was the one who saved my sanity.

My late brother Pat brought me into Albert's home to review the exam results and look at the choices before me in the cool and calm of day. Albert was relaxation personified. A heavy smoker, he rarely got excited or raised his voice. He came to the conclusion that my results held the foundations for two career paths.

Initially, I accepted the offer of Mechanical and Plastic Engineering at Athlone Regional Technical College, but also began the search for what Albert had called an apprenticeship in life. Shortly after Christmas, I abandoned my studies to take up the post of a very junior reporter at the Longford Leader newspaper under the close watch of one Eugene McGee, master football manager and Sunday Tribune writer in those days.

McGee was a very straight character who said it as he saw it most of the time. That included his observations on me, the budding writer in the midst of his newsroom. He paid me 32 pounds and fifty pence a week, with a subsidy from the State, and I began a career in journalism that was to drive on for almost another 40 years, leading to a role in television and radio, three national journalism awards and a lot of decent stories on health, politics and crime which I remain very proud of to this day.

Just before my departure from RTE News, I returned to third level education to study more about those other great passions of my life - community development, tourism and social enterprise in rural Ireland. Completing a BA in Business in Social Enterprise, Leadership and Management, I followed this up with a Postgraduate Diploma in Tourism Management. I'm still threatening to sit for that Masters in the coming years, but enjoying the day-to-day rough-and-tumble of community life and family time far too much.

Nowadays, I speak to second and third level students about their own career choices. I encourage them to follow their

dreams, reminding them of the challenges we have all faced in finding our way through the rough waters of education and emphasising the need to pursue our calling without the fear of failure.

I am not a fan of the Leaving Certificate in its present format and the stress it presents to students and families. There's a lot to say for the evaluation system that happened during the Covid pandemic. Perhaps not all our results should be left to this, but I certainly believe that every child is entitled to more than one day of destiny. I hope I have shown that success in life can be attained in other ways.

Above all, I look back with a sense of great admiration for the teachers who had the patience to guide us through those testing days. To them we owe such a deep debt of gratitude, a perpetual word of thanks for their direction and tuition, and a hope that some day the State will properly recognise their selfless sacrifice and service.

Ciaran Mullooly is a journalist and former RTÉ News correspondent. A STEM enthusiast and community development activist with Ballyleague Village Renewal and multiple rural groups and communities, he works nowadays as a community and enterprise officer with Roscommon Leader Partnership.



Leaving Cert 1975

Brigid McManus

My Leaving Certificate exam in 1975 brings memories of a sun-filled long blue room, the ritual of tense anticipation before the signal to turn over the exam paper, the chatter of friends gathered in corridors after exams comparing notes, and teachers curious about the questions and supportive of those in negative post-mortem mood. Unlike students today, we had very little exam paper information or examination practice and there was something of a lucky dip feel about whether topics or questions suited our preparation.

There were stressful moments. Cycling to school through St Anne's Park on the already inauspicious Friday 13 June I saw a sole magpie and felt the "one for sorrow" was definitely a bad omen for my paper - getting one of my best marks cured future superstition!

I had a complete panic the night before Physics, fearing I hadn't done enough work to take the Honours paper. Notwithstanding such moments, we did not have the worrying sense that the Leaving Certificate was the determining factor in future pathways. There was no CAO

– individual institutions had their own applications systems.

In any event, participation in higher education was much lower then, particularly for girls, where the presumption was that marriage and motherhood would put an end to many careers. Primary teaching and nursing had separate recruitment processes. While certain minimum qualifications had to be achieved in the Leaving Certificate, the pressure to achieve high grades across all subjects was more an exception for those wanting to study Medicine or Veterinary than a pressure across the board.

Unlike many girls' schools of the period, my school, Manor House School in Raheny, Dublin, run by the SMG order, offered all the Science subjects up to Leaving Certificate level, as well as Honours Maths and so I studied Physics, Chemistry and Honours Maths. We took Applied Maths on a Saturday morning with the local Boys school, St. Paul's, but I was not attracted by the subject, I dropped out with no thought for the easy Honour it represented. While I chose to follow my passion for History at university rather than any scientific path, I still recall the excitement of science conveyed by teacher Mrs Allen's tales of her work as an Industrial Chemist.

I regard myself as very fortunate to have attended Manor House because of the strong sense of expectations it fostered, the encouragement to consider diverse career options and the sense of potential to achieve anything we wished. While a very traditional girls' school, the School Principal was ahead of the curve in encouraging student participation with the Head Girl and School Prefects elected by student and staff votes.

I have many warm memories of debating competitions, of trying to get the Gestetner stencil machine to run off the school magazine, of choral singing with Sr. Eleanor, of learning to solder wiring as part of the backstage crew for the fifth year *Sing Out* show, of basketball and summer tennis and untalented athletics competitions, of charity fundraising events, of film and art appreciation and great schoolfriends, myriad experiences and learning that enhanced the formal Leaving Certificate work. I had the privilege of returning in recent years as Chair of the Board of Management and know the school continues to support and develop a breadth of student experience and achievement, albeit in a very different world.

Results day for the Leaving Certificate did not mark a giddy gathering of schoolfriends, let alone a celebratory holiday. The date for results was not known far in advance and we all had Summer work, which we couldn't leave at short notice. Having decided to go after work to collect my results, my mother eventually persuaded me to let her collect the results envelope with promises not to open.

She phoned me the results with the disingenuous excuse that she hadn't opened the results envelope but Sr. Brenda had told her what they were. I'm not sure which I begrudged more – her unapologetic breaking of the spirit of our agreement or her passing on of Sr Brenda's honest but

unnecessary assessment that I had done well but I'd have done better if I'd worked harder.

Her joy in her first-born's achievement made it easy to forgive.

I went on to study History and Economics in UCD. My parents supported my university choice, though my mother would have preferred me to accept the offer of a secure Executive Officer post in the Civil Service. Having already tasted College life before the offer arrived, I was not for turning. I'm not sure how much of a preparation my Leaving Cert was for university studies, though my Honours Maths was useful for Economics. However, the breadth of interests, curiosity and approach to learning fostered by my school and teachers and my home allowed me take full advantage of, and enjoyment in, my time in UCD.

Following my time in university I joined the Civil Service and over my career worked in interesting and diverse areas such as the National Development Plan for EU Structural and Cohesion Funds, Cultural Institutions projects including Collins Barracks Museum, the establishment of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development following the fall of the Berlin Wall and responsibility for the taxation measures in the annual Budget, before becoming Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills in 2005.

It was an immense privilege to lead the Department of Education and play a leadership role in Education more generally, despite hugely challenging times following the financial crisis.

I chaired the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment from 2012-2019. Having been involved in Junior Cycle reform and the early development of current Senior Cycle review, I know well the sensitivities and complexities involved. I hope all working currently on this project succeed in charting a way forward that marries existing Leaving Certificate strengths with the urgent changes needed to better support the education and development of today's students, that encourages diverse talents and pathways and reduces the pressure and impact on individuals and on the broader education system of our high stakes terminal examination.

To my former self and to today's students all I would advise is to take any opportunity that presents, have faith in yourself and value your friendships.

Brigid McManus is a former Secretary-General of the Department of Education and Skills and a former Chairperson of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. She is a member of the Board of Children's Health Ireland, a member of the Governing Authority of National College of Ireland, chairs the National Inland Fisheries Forum and the Health Research Consent Declaration Committee and recently chaired the Judicial Planning Working Group.



Leaving Cert 1984

Fiachna Ó Braonáin

I sat the Leaving Certificate in the early days of the summer of 1984 in my beloved alma mater Coláiste Eoin/Íosagáin on the Stillorgan Rd in County Dublin, a short cycle from where I grew up in Blackrock. Coláiste Eoin/Íosagáin were sibling schools that fostered and supported their students' creative impulses, as they grew from boys to men and from girls to women. And while that may well have ultimately benefited my life as a musician, it more than likely reduced potential study hours for the Leaving Cert in favour of rehearsal times for feises and leadhs and young people's arts festivals like Slógadh!

Ach bhí an saol acadúil sách taitneamhach freisin. Thaitin sé liom a bheith ag foghlaim agus bhí spéis mhór agam sna hábhair i gcoitinne. Bhí suim agam sna pearsantachtaí éagsúla a bhí againn mar mhúinteoirí. Bhí múinteoirí paiseanta uathúla againn a spreag muid cinnte. Bhí an t-ádh orm gur tógadh le Gaeilge mé agus gur fhreastail mé ar scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge, idir bhunscoil agus mheánscoil, i mBaile Átha Cliath. Ba Ghaeltacht dár gcuid féin í an scoil agus bhí an spiorad sin a bhain le saol na Gaeilge, mar shampla, an ceol, an chaint, an fhilíocht, an litríocht agus an chumarsáid fite fuaite inár saol dá bharr. Ta cuimhní cinn agam ar na laethanta úd sin agus chothaigh siad meas agus grá don teanga agus don scoil ionam.

So given the richness of my education, I felt instilled with a certain level of confidence leading up to the Leaving Certificate exams. And at the time I also knew I could have a second crack at things by also sitting the Matriculation, whose results could be combined with Leaving Certificate results, potentially ensuring higher points score for university entry! And indeed, this is how it works out ... I got an A in History in the Matric compared to a C in the Leaving Cert.

Bhí an t-ádh orm freisin mar ghasúr go raibh bá agam le teangacha. Nil aon cheist faoi ach gur chabhraigh an taitní a bhí agam leis an nGaeilge agus mé óg, leis an bhFraincis a fhoghlaim laistigh de shé seachtaine agus mé ar saoire sa Fhrainc le cairde clainne a mhúin an Fhraincis dom ag aois a seacht. Chaith mé gach aon Samhradh as sin amach ag labhairt Fraincise agus sula i bhfad bhí leibhéal ard cruinnis agus líofachta bainte amach agam, rud a chabhraigh go mór liom grád 'A' a bhaint amach san Ardteist. Anuas air sin, thaitin an Ghaeilge go mór liom, na dánta agus na gearrscéalta Gaeilge go háirithe agus ní raibh aon deacracht agam grád 'A' a bhaint amach sa Ghaeilge ach an oiread!

I have little or no memory of the specifics on each of the papers – those details are lost in the mists of time. I remember we studied Shakespeare's Hamlet and learned several soliloquies by heart. My friend Cian and I still quote "so shaken as we are so wan with care" to one another when we meet. And laugh every time.

I remember seeing a modern version of Hamlet in the Abbey Theatre in the weeks running up to the Leaving Certificate but I made the fatal error of having two pints of Guinness in the Flowing Tide (and yes, I was over 18) and rushed into my seat without visiting Seomra na bhFear beforehand. Hamlet is a very long play - very long indeed! The pain was quite something!

Thaitin filíocht Sheáin Uí Riordáin go mór liom. Fiabhras an dán a sheasann amach dom i measc na ndánta ar fad a bhí á bhfoghlaim agus á staidéar againn ar scoil. Is dán é a chum sé agus é in isle brí ó thaobh a shláinte de agus tá an mothúchán seo le haithint go smior tríd an dán. Ach ní cuimhin liom an raibh sé ar an bpáipéar Gaeilge fiú! Nó an é don mheánteist a léigh mé é sin? Ach cinnte chuaigh Adhlacadh mo Mháthar i bhfeidhm orainn ar fad chomh maith. Bhí mé féin agus dlúthchara liom, Colm Ó Snodaigh, ag plé na seanlaethanta a bhí againn le chéile agus chuir sé friotail an dáin i gcuimhne dom, "Grian an Mheithimh in úllghort, Is siosarnach i síoda an tráthnóna". File amháin ag aithris file eile dom. "Ba mhaith liom breith ar eirbeall spideoige," a dúirt an Riordánach ag druidim i dtreo dheireadh an dáin. "Ba mhaith liom sprid lucht glanta glún a dhibirt, Ba mhaith liom triall go deireadh an lae go brónach." Tá cumhacht na bhfocal snite go fileata ag an bhfile sa dán seo.

It's funny how with the passage of time some details remain permanently etched in memory and others disappear completely with the mists of time. One line from T.S. Eliot's "Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock" has always stood out:

*"I grow old, I grow old
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk
upon the beach"*

Many 's the beach I've walked since wearing white flannel trousers quietly reciting these lines to myself in moments of romantic escapism.

And then of course one could never forget William Butler Yeats' "Easter, 1916", where his deeply conflicted emotions came to the fore and uttered a line no English student could ever forget:

*"Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born"*

Is iomaí oíche fhada a chaith mé ag staidéar go dian don Ardteist, ag ól tae nó caife agus ag ithe píosa tósta. Is cuimhin liom a bheith ag déanamh nótaí gonta, ag iarraidh aicearraí a chruthú dom féin agus pointí urchair a chur le chéile chun go mbeadh an t-eolas ar fad a bhí de dhith orm a choimeád i mo chloigeann go dtí go raibh an scrúdú thart! Dár ndóigh dá mbeinn á dhéanamh arís seans go n-aimseoinn modh eile! Ach d'oibrigh sé dom ag an am. D'éirigh liom na pointí a bhí uaim a bhaint amach chun dul

go Coláiste na hOllscoile i mBaile Átha Cliath agus tabhairt faoin dlí! I mo chroí istigh bhí sé i gcónaí de rún agam mo shaol a chaitheamh leis an gceol, agus anois, beagnach dhá scór bliain i ndiaidh dom an Ardteist a chríochnú, táim suite anseo agus mé fíorbhuíoch gur éirigh liom é sin a dhéanamh! Tá mé fós á leanúint gan aon dabht, níl aon teorainn leis agus níl aon éirí as!

In thinking back now about my Leaving Certificate, I wish I could remember the essays that I wrote for the English paper, or the theories and opinions I might have expounded during the History paper, or indeed theories and thoughts in relation to Shakespeare or the Irish, English and American poets.

It strikes me that after fourteen years of learning and studying, the least the Department of Education could do would be to return the exam papers to each individual student so they could have and hold the results of a lifetime's learning as a testament to the years, months, weeks and long hours spent preparing for it ... that would be only fair, right?

Fiachna Ó Braonáin is a musician and a member of Hothouse Flowers, Ireland's greatest Rock 'n Soul Merchants (his words!). He is also a broadcaster and radio presenter. He has worked on several Irish and American television shows as a featured guest and presenter. He has produced several award-winning music documentaries. Fiachna currently presents *Late Date*, every weekend on RTÉ Radio 1, between midnight and 2am.



Leaving Cert 1981

Emily Logan

In truth I was a messer in secondary school. A mischievous middle child of seven, for which my mother had often praised me. It was clear to me that she didn't see me as bold but smart and this was not a bad thing at all.

Emboldened by the success of my mischievousness, at an early stage in secondary school I found myself outside the door of my Maths class, a punishment imposed for mimicking my teacher. While lapping up the plaudits of friends, I failed to notice that I was falling behind. When I did, I stopped.

Summer holidays were spent with loving aunts, uncles and grandmothers in Limerick city. Limerick was a city of freedom, a place where you could buy anything from Geary's, broken biscuits to single cigarettes.

Later, summer jobs with close friends in Dunnes Stores and Lambe's Fruit Farm brought money, independence, music, boys and a sense of my potential to function beyond my family.

I finished that summer of work feeling that I needed to get through another year of school to work again - that was what I wanted to do - work. While I liked school and loved spending time with friends, I loved the liberation of summer holidays even more and returned to the Leaving Cert year distracted and utterly unprepared.

I distinctly remember what I perceived as an obsession with Honours or Pass in our school. 'The nun' - as all nuns were referred to in our house, stood me in front of the blackboard and proceeded to tell the class of the genetic deficiency in mathematical ability that ran through the blood of my family, in particular my sisters. In fact, so stupid were the Logan girls at Maths, there should be an Honours, a Pass, and another level again for us Logans.

In fairness she was right about me. To this day I have a block about maths, believing it to be an inherent skill or talent that only the chosen few, one of whom is my younger brother, was blessed with.

However, at this stage, both my sisters had proven their intellectual prowess by securing great Leaving Certs, with one in St. Pat's in Drumcondra, following her long love of children and desire to teach and the second off to UCD to study Social Science. We always knew my sister would be a teacher.

We were all of primary school age when she developed a unique Ogham type alphabet, a clandestine code that only we siblings could use to communicate with each other, away from prying adult eyes. It was beyond exciting to hold your own copy of the code, written flawlessly in a handmade passport type notebook. We used to write each other simple messages as if part of Enid Blyton's *Famous Five*. I imagined I was George.

Across school subjects, I related to stories that spoke to me about life. Heavily influenced by my mother's love of drama and my father's interest in philosophy, I was consumed by strong protagonists and moral lessons.

In English, I loved Shakespeare and the strength of the characters and lessons of King Lear. A big story about justice and injustice. Lear had three daughters, I had three sisters, we had a connection. His foolishness in banishing the lovely Cordelia and dividing his land between Goneril and Regan who betrayed him was beyond my comprehension. The eye gouging by Cornwall as he shouts 'out vile jelly' - yes - disgusting, but I got the drama of it. I came away with the lessons of metaphoric blindness. Lear's blindness to reality. I vowed never to be blind, like Lear!

In Irish, I loved the tale of *Tóraíocht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*. I could sense the freedom of riding around Ireland as they fled from Fionn McCumhail. While I was wallowing in Janis Ian's "Seventeen", Gráinne had two boys after her!

While I felt comparatively useless at oral French in class, secretly I loved the short stories of Maupassant, in particular "Voyage de Santé".

In Spanish, a novel called *La Barraca* gripped my attention. Again, another tale of social injustice. I don't recall any exam question on it and think this may simply have been something a passionate teacher took us through in Fifth and Sixth year to improve our vocabulary.

I found Science, especially Biology, intriguing. I found a place for this love of Biology through the family path worn to Temple Street hospital, not surprising for a family of seven children. This led to a desire to work with and for children and this, compounded by an instructive conversation with my father about the imperative to bring money home, lured me into paediatric nursing.

Now that I look back on the themes for which I seemed to have the greatest affinity from the many readings across subjects, I can see a pattern revealed to me for the first time of social justice, human rights and equality.

Emily Logan was Ireland's first Ombudsman for Children. She also served as Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. Emily currently is a full time Commissioner with the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC). She is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Law in UCC.



NAPD Appointment – Deputy Director

Following a national competitive recruitment process, the National Executive of NAPD is delighted to announce the appointment of Rachel O'Connor as Deputy Director of the Association. Rachel has been the Principal of Ramsgrange Community School, Wexford, since 2013 and will take up her new role on 1 September 2023.

Rachel is a past-President of NAPD, having served in the 2021/22 academic year, which culminated in the Galway Conference in October 2022, our first in-person conference since 2019 and our best ever attended. Rachel inspired us all at Conference and since then has continued working tirelessly within NAPD to deliver for members.

Rachel brings a wealth of experience, knowledge and expertise to the role. She has worked in the three post-primary sectors and has leadership experience in two of them. Rachel worked as a Whole School Associate with JCT. She is a Leadership Associate with PDST, delivering on both Misneach and Comhar for newly appointed Principals and Middle Leaders respectively.

Rachel is a co-founder of the WILL Network, launching a series of workshops 'Aspiring Female Leaders in Education', WILL Chats and WILL Brunch for aspiring and inspiring female leaders. Rachel is also a qualified life and professional coach and a CSL Mentor also.

Rachel's leadership style and her excellent interpersonal skills will continue to unite school leaders nationally, thereby improving the processes for NAPD members. Her drive, dedication and commitment to school leadership are second to none and will raise the profile of our Association in the best interest of members. Her passion in the area of pedagogy will undoubtedly bring a renewed energy, as will her passion for sustainable leadership, in supporting school leaders to deliver in the job that they love.

I am looking forward to working with Rachel over the next number of years and it is my belief that we will work excellently together to deliver for Principals and Deputies, embedding the position that NAPD occupies as the key strategic support for leaders of learning. And to deliver on the Statement of Strategy 2022-2027. I am sure members will join me in wishing Rachel every success. Her experience to date has brought her to this point and it is her time to shine.

Paul Crone



THE BIG iDEA

Fiona Byrne

Supporting 21st Century Skills in a Fully Inclusive Learning Environment

As never before, the students currently in our classrooms will need to be innovative, creative and skilled at managing information. Are students prepared for future challenges? Can they analyse, develop their thinking and communicate effectively? Do they have the capacity to problem solve, reason and innovate?

Through our creative education programme, *The BIG Idea* supports teachers and students to explore their creative potential and the role of creativity in the classroom. Students develop critical thinking skills through socially

conscious, co-created projects that challenge students to come up with big ideas to solve national and global issues through inquiry-based learning.

To ensure equitable access to the programme for all students *The BIG Idea* has established a collaborative partnership with the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD) to embed Universal Design for Learning (UDL) throughout the programme. We endeavour to provide a fully inclusive learning environment and create a culture of engagement and inclusion that works for both



Students from Desmond College taking part in the programme

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teachers and students. UDL and differentiation are embedded into the programme in subtle but effective ways. For example, the typeface, colour choice and contrast on all our workshop presentations, resources and videos improve the accessibility of our visual resources.

Subtitles are included and available in addition to the transcripts of all videos. Throughout the programme, information is presented to students in multiple ways to accommodate different types of learners. Students are given a choice in how they can represent their thinking, with specifically developed resources to support students to reflect on their learning. In collaboration with CEUD, we

“ Through the B!G Idea, I would say what we have all collectively learnt is that no matter how young you are, you can make a difference and that our voices should be heard. The B!G Idea has empowered us to make a difference and has taught us to be more creative when approaching a problem ”

**Emma,
TY Student,
Coláiste Pobail Setanta, Dublin**

have developed a physical tool to guide the students through their creative journey. The programme itself offers a range of flexible teaching methods, with suggestions on how to structure and facilitate creative discussions within the classroom.

The *B!G Idea* uses UDL as a framework to improve the educational experience of all students by introducing more flexible methods of teaching, learning and formative assessment to cater for the diversity of learners in our classrooms. This approach is underpinned by research in the field of neuroscience and is designed to improve the learning experience and outcomes for all students. The integration of UDL is explicitly highlighted to students participating in the programme and students engage in tasks to help them apply their understanding of UDL to their projects.

The *B!G Idea 2023 Creative Education Programme* was launched in early January and we are looking forward to supporting our 4,000 students on their creative journey as they tackle one of this year's five Project Challenges; Climate Change, Displaced People, Hidden Poverty, Diversity and Inclusion and Mental Health. The programme will culminate in May with our Showcase which celebrates the innovation and creativity of participating students.

To find out more about The *B!G Idea*, see our website www.thebigidea.ie or email teachers@thebigidea.ie to register your school for our 2024 programme.



Fiona Byrne is Head of Education at The B!G Idea. She is a creative advocate with over twenty years' experience in the areas of Design Technology and Creative Education at second-level, with particular focus on curriculum development.



WILL - WOMEN IN LEARNING & LEADERSHIP

Kathryn Corbett
Rachel O'Connor



“Networking is not just about connecting people. It’s about connecting people with people, people with ideas, and people with opportunities”
– Michele Jennae

On 8 March 2022 (International Women’s Day), Kathryn and Rachel launched a network for aspiring and inspiring female leaders from all sectors in education, which was a first of its kind in Ireland. WILL – *Women in Learning & Leadership* – Network aims to provide opportunities for women in education to share, support and to learn from each other. After one year, the network continues to go from strength to strength, with almost 1,200 WILL members, providing an honest and supportive space for women in education to discuss a range of topics relevant to their leadership journey. The main objective of the WILL Network is to encourage women to apply for senior leadership roles.

- There are 42,000 primary school teachers in Ireland, 84% of whom

are females. 1 in 16 females are school leaders; 1 in 6 males are school leaders

- There are 22,000 secondary school teachers in Ireland, 68% of whom are female. 1 in 71 females are school leaders. 1 in 26 males school leaders

These figures are based on data available on the Department of Education website.

This was the starting point of a panel discussion, as part of the Irish Teaching Council’s Féilte (Festival for Teaching & Learning) in October 2021. The focus for the conversation was on the barriers, both perceived and real, for aspiring female leaders in education. The response to the topic was significant. It was the first time for a public conversation on gender diversity in school leadership in Ireland.

Following on from this, we designed and facilitated a series of online workshops for aspiring female leaders in education, to provide a space to explore and to share leadership journeys, the barriers and the bridges. Topics included reflections on concepts and core principles of school leadership, the imposter syndrome and the creation of a leadership portfolio with participants. Inspirational female leaders from both within and outside education were invited as guest speakers to share their stories and their vision for leadership.

The response to the workshops was hugely positive. Participants’ feedback indicated that they wanted more opportunities to engage in discussions around female leadership and more time to connect with other like-minded women. As a result, we

decided to create the WILL Network, launched via Twitter almost one year ago. The network aims to be both responsive and creative in providing a range of connection opportunities for members:

- **WILL Chats** is a live online podcast style conversation with female leader guest speakers from a range of sectors, such as education, politics and business. Topics have included role models, motivation, sustainable leadership and women's health.
- **WILL Clicks** is a monthly e-newsletter with relevant leadership finds (new resources or information), book reviews and a spotlight on a members' leadership journeys.
- **WILL Brunch** is an in-person event that takes place three times a year. Exclusive to WILL members, guest speakers are invited to have a conversation on a particular theme. To date, these have included creativity, authenticity and nurturing leadership.
- **WILL Chapters** is the network's book club. Leadership reads are discussed and shared on a live Instagram feed.

The vision for the WILL Network is to reach out to aspiring female leaders in education, to share the many different ways of what leadership looks like and to have important conversations about the sustainability of the role, with the view to bringing about change for the benefit of our education system.

Every connection opportunity is underpinned by CLICK: Connect, Learn, Inspire, Communicate, Kindness. In recognition of the increasing impact of social media on the


narrative of education and leadership, communication about all WILL Network events is via social media: Twitter @network_will and Instagram @networkwill.

Future goals for the network include website and app design and development, a range of in-person networking events, and innovative opportunities for online connections.

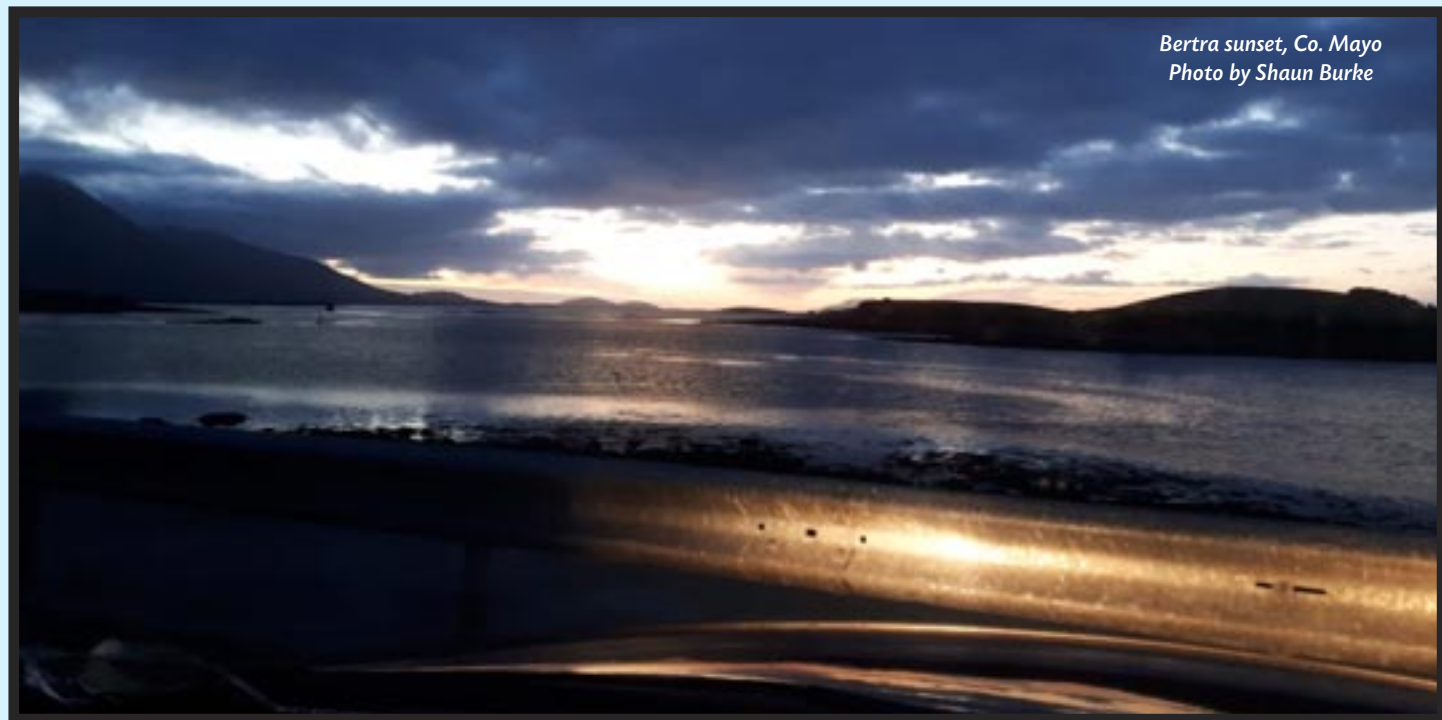

As busy school leaders with young families, WILL network encompasses our passion for education, leadership and the power of peer support. We believe that *true leaders don't create followers – they create more leaders.*

For further information, contact Kathryn and Rachel at networkwill2022@gmail.com

Kathryn Corbett is Principal of Bishop Galvin National School, Templeogue, Dublin.



Rachel O'Connor is Principal of Ramsgrange Community School, Wexford.



*Bertra sunset, Co. Mayo
Photo by Shaun Burke*

Recruitment You only get one chance to get it right



David Ruddy
B.L.

The final term of school coincides with the recruitment of teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff. A starting point is whether the Board of Management (BoM) has sanction for the post in question. In the case of permanent posts, you should be clear as to, if any, entitlements serving members of staff have to contracts of indefinite duration or panel rights. The BoM must be mindful that it adheres to its obligations in relation to the panel operator in each relevant patron body.

In advertising a post and in any subsequent interviews, one must be careful not to offend against the Equal Status Acts to include issues concerning gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the travelling community. The interview process needs to stand up to scrutiny in the event of a

In its simplest term, a contract is a bargain struck between two people, the employer and employee. This is a crucial document as it is the reference point when there are any disputes. Management bodies have employment templates that are very helpful.

dispute or legal action. Notes recorded by the interview panel should be on the basis that the data subject is looking over your shoulder. Ensure that the independent assessors are from a list approved by the relevant patron. After the interview process, references should always be checked, – never take short cuts.

When the BoM has approved the selection board recommendations, the Patron, and Department of Education approval should be sought. Another issue is the contract of employment. In its simplest term, a contract is a bargain struck between two people, the employer and employee. This is a crucial document as it is the reference point when there are any disputes. Management bodies have employment templates that are very helpful. Good practice dictates that any staff should only commence employment after signing the contract.

The Mason, Hayes & Curran Education team regularly represent schools when disappointed job applicants take cases to the Workplace Relations Commission. One such case involved a gender discrimination case where a male teacher complained that he was discriminated against when a female teacher was the successful candidate, even though the male candidate had more experience. The male

Employment legislation is complex and strongly tilted towards staff. Employing staff is probably one of the most important tasks that a school leader undertakes. Additionally, the current job market very much favours the applicant. Better leave a post unfilled on a temporary basis than select an unsuitable candidate.

teacher claimed that it was a forgone conclusion that the female teacher would be successful, that the notes of one assessor were minimal and that the BoM was improperly constituted. The BoM replied that when an assessor is asking questions at an interview, they tend to take less notes than the other assessors. Ultimately the claim against the BoM failed.

Another teacher who unsuccessfully applied for a full-time temporary post took a case. Her complaint was that her non-appointment and the way that her application was treated by the school constituted discrimination on the grounds of age and religious beliefs. The teacher was 37 years of age and claimed that successful candidates were

in their 20s and that age discrimination is endemic in schools. She also claimed that an interview question was discriminatory in that it undermined her strong religious beliefs. The claim failed. It was held that the teacher's skills on paper alone were not sufficient to get her the job. It was also held that taking offence to a remark is not the same as being discriminated against.

Employment legislation is complex and strongly tilted towards staff. Employing staff is probably one of the most important tasks that a school leader undertakes. Additionally, the current job market very much favours the applicant. Better leave a post unfilled on a temporary basis than select an unsuitable candidate. Always seek advice if you're unsure or inexperienced.



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



Further Education and Training Colleges Ireland

The Voice of FET College Leaders | A Committee of NAPD

March 2023 – Portlaoise, Co. Laois



**REPORT
WILL
APPEAR IN
AUTUMN
LEADER**





ANTHEM FOR DEELE

“Think of Me”

Joe Boyle & Caitriona Bonner

Deelee College, Raphoe, Co Donegal has become one of the first schools in the country to create an original school anthem, “Think of Me.” The genesis of the project came at the end of the 2021-22 school year and matured over the subsequent summer months. In September 2022 “Think of Me” further evolved under the guidance of renowned musician and former Deelee College student Matt McGranaghan.

The Deelee College school anthem, which is now sung at all school events, was the culmination of much hard work from the music department and the school choir under Matt’s direction. While Matt was composing the music for the anthem, We were recruiting some of the College’s most talented singers to perform it. Together with our College soloists and choir, they developed a collaboration under Matt’s direction, which celebrates the core values of our College and its pride of place in the local community.

Speaking about the anthem, Matt who works with artists such as Nathan Carter and Mary Black said, that “Think of Me” was for Deelee College, for the staff and pupils, past and present, for the community that has supported the school and everyone who has had a link or association to the school over the past 50 plus years.

In developing the lyrics, students, parents, staff current and past as well as key community personnel were consulted. They, together with a number of other sources, provided insights and understanding of what should be part of the anthem, which would truly reflect the College. Caitriona, together with the College Music Department teachers, Con McFadden and Laura Stewart, arranged the lyrics and music.

Much work was done to ensure that the anthem reflected the very best things at the heart of our school. With meticulous rehearsing and fine tuning by staff and students we have produced a widely admired anthem which, we believe, will stand the test of time.

The anthem was launched in November 2022 in the school in front of a large audience. With a proud history in music, the College put on a fantastic show for those in attendance, with pupils, past and present, performing on the night.

The anthem is an example of what can be achieved when students get the opportunity to work with a talent musician such as Matt McGranaghan. The joint venture is testament to the great work that goes on in Deelee College and the surrounding local community.

We are so proud of the finished anthem. Hearing it performed on the launch night was a proud moment for everyone associated with Deelee College. We cannot thank Matt, and the Music Department enough for the hard work and dedication.

It is very important that we continue to foster links between the school and the wider community, and this project highlights the potential that exists when students get the opportunity to work with talented people or groups.

The anthem can be found on the Deelee College website, www.deelecollege.ie



Footnote – the development of the College’s Anthem coincides with the ETBI’s Schools’ Anthem competition.



Joe Boyle is Principal of Deelee College.



Caitriona Bonner is the College’s Choir Director



Jigsaw

Youth Mental Health in Schools

Carmel Halligan

Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health, recently co-hosted an online event with NAPD to explore mental health supports in post-primary schools. The event allowed school leaders to share their experiences in promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing.

Jigsaw welcomed the opportunity to speak about our work in schools, highlighting the importance of mental health promotion, the impact on students and the success of the *One Good School* Initiative in its most recent implementation.

We provided an overview of the clinical support and services available for young people in local communities and the nationally available Live Chat and Group Chat Services.

Alan Mongey, Principal of Coláiste Bhaile Chláir, Claregalway, described how the *One Good Schools* programme aligns with their curriculum and school self-evaluation process and, importantly, how it enables the school to share the responsibility for mental health and wellbeing across the whole school community and creates a culture of care across students and staff.

One Good School provides an opportunity to support mental health and wellbeing for everyone in the school and embeds a culture where the whole school community shares the responsibility for promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing. *One Good School* provides an integrated approach to mental health promotion with a programme of supports for young people, teachers, parents and school leadership teams.

The initiative is a multi-component, evidence-informed programme which supports, complements and contributes to a planned approach to wellbeing promotion, as recommended by the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (DE, 2018).

The programme includes mental health workshops and programmes for students, which take an early intervention/prevention and health promotion approach which aims to increase students' mental health literacy – understanding of mental health, beliefs about mental health and help-seeking intentions) and managing emotions.

In Jigsaw, we recognise that schools can provide a safe and supportive environment for building life-skills, resilience and a strong sense of connectedness. Fostering healthy relationships among peers, school staff and parents is critical to a young person's overall experience of school and their social, emotional and cognitive development.

The wellbeing of teachers, school leadership and school staff must also be considered and is supported through our programme of work in *One Good School*, by providing a range of self-care and mental health promotion courses and supports – both online and via webinar, as well as the Jigsaw Schools Hub which also provides schools with resources and training to contribute to their wellbeing curriculum.

The Jigsaw Schools Hub can be accessed here
<https://jigsaw.ie/schools-hub/>



Jigsaw look forward to continuing this collaboration with NAPD in prioritising the mental health and wellbeing agenda, so that we can achieve better mental health outcomes for young people and continue to share our vision of an Ireland where every young person's mental health is valued and supported.

Carmel Halligan is Jigsaw's Youth Mental Health Promotion Manager for schools. Carmel has a BSc in Public Health & Health Promotion and an MA in Child, Family & Community Studies.



Nano Nagle College, Cork – a School of Sanctuary

Adrian Gibbs & Mary O'Connell

A School of Sanctuary is a school that is committed to creating a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment that benefits everybody, especially families seeking sanctuary.

In 2020, Nano Nagle College, Cork, formerly known as North Presentation Secondary School, embarked on a journey of change with our teachers, students, parents, Board of Management, and our school trust CEIST.

After much questioning and reflection, we had come to the realisation that our school's proud tradition of education should evolve to respond to the changing educational needs of our diverse city. As part of our change process, we applied to become an accredited School of Sanctuary in order to demonstrate our commitment to creating a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for our diverse school community. We wanted all our students to feel welcome and supported, ensuring that our school was a safe environment for everybody.

We believed that our school could demonstrate the positive contribution that diversity brings, not only to educational environments, but also workplaces and communities. In doing so, we could create an alternative view to the anti-immigrant protests that are taking place in many communities to enable young people to challenge the extremist views that are often attractive to younger members of our communities. The surge of racist anti-immigrant sentiment in Ireland is contrary to our school ethos and to our tradition as a country.



Taking on the goal of becoming a School of Sanctuary is a long-term project, requiring the school to adopt a culture that ensures that everyone feels welcome, safe and included, in the school and beyond.

It begins with 3 core pillars:

1. Learning

- Attend webinars and workshops about the refugee journey to Ireland.
- Find out about all the languages spoken in the homes of students.
- Invite Sanctuary Ambassadors and/or refugees to share their experiences.
- Make connections with local refugee support NGOs.

2. Taking Action

- Invite newcomers to share their culture and stories in diversity celebrations.
- Prioritise English language and other supports for newcomer students.
- Invite Sanctuary Ambassadors to describe their experience of arriving in Ireland and of direct provision.
- Create 'Welcome Packs' in different languages for parents.
- Make displays reflecting the languages and cultures represented in the school.

3. Sharing

- Schools reach out to other schools in their areas to encourage them and to share good practice, successes and stories.

- Students share their SoS journeys on their website and social media platforms.
- Some schools contact media outlets and produce video and audio campaigns around Schools of Sanctuary.

After several months of work by teachers and students and several visits by the School of Sanctuary monitoring team, on 22 November 2022, we became the first Cork city secondary school to become a School of Sanctuary.

On 3 February 2003, we attended, along with 13 Champion Schools, a ceremony in Technological University Dublin (TUD) and officially received our "Champion School of Sanctuary" award.

Schools were presented with certificates and award plaques by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman and the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Caroline Conroy.

The School of Sanctuary accreditation process complemented our actions to become a truly inclusive school. Led by key teachers and our Student Council, we were able to identify other areas where our school needed be more inclusive. The first area was special educational needs. Our Special Educational Needs Organizer identified a specific need in our community for places for boys with a diagnosis of autism, who were being transported out of our community for school. We have responded to this need and are delighted that this coming September our school will be refurbished to accommodate a suite of three special classes for children with a diagnosis of autism. We have plans for more classes in the future.

Our community, when surveyed, indicated a strong desire for a truly co-educational school with subject options to match. We are now delighted to say, that from September 2023, our school will be co-educational for the first time in its 53-year history. With this new status we will have refurbished rooms to ensure boys and girls can study a full range of T4 subjects in addition to the school's traditional subject offerings.

A School of Sanctuary is an ongoing process and we continue to evolve. The principles of School of Sanctuary



align with the principles of our new school, particularly principle number 2 – Take Action – which we have reflected in our new school motto 'Deeds not Words' - the Nagle family motto taken from our foundress Nano Nagle.

Uniform changes, upgraded mission statements and other forms of rebranding are all an exciting part of change, but meaningless unless real action accompanies it. In September 2022 we welcomed our first Ukrainian students to our school, starting as a small population which has grown in recent months.

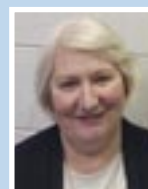
Through repeated meetings and consultation with our Student Council we have identified more areas of inclusivity and initiatives, which we have made a part of our school's remit to promote, such as LGBTQ rights, Development Language Disorder Awareness, Wear Red (anti racism initiative) in support of the Irish Immigrant Council and a wheelchair accessibility campaign with University College Cork.

Nano Nagle College students and teachers recently ran 10Km with Sanctuary Runners (www.sanctuaryrunners.ie) during the Cork City marathon. The purpose of this run was to reflect the diversity and welcoming nature of our school and city as a place of sanctuary for those in need, while championing another organisation that provides safe and meaningful community connections for newcomers to our community.



As John F. Kennedy remarked "Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future".

Adrian Gibbs and **Mary O’Connell** are Principal and Deputy Principal respectively of Nano Nagle College, Cork.





Affordable and Sustainable

Past, Present and Future –
Why Apple is the best choice for education



Authorised
Education Specialist

Preparing children for life beyond school is a vital part of education. Digital devices are intrinsically linked to all our futures, and so making the right technological choice is paramount. Ultimately, every post-primary school will ask the same questions. Does the technology have a proven track record? What is the best option for our classrooms right now? Which devices will stand the test of time?

At Select, we can answer every question and support schools to make the best possible choice. As an Apple Authorised Education Specialist, we partner with schools to create a more affordable and sustainable future.

PAST

In years gone by it was not uncommon to find broken or obsolete machines in every classroom coupled with devices that did work but were slow and unreliable. Unsustainable products ended up costing schools far more money in the long run. iPad and Mac undeniably changed the landscape. Apple's instantly accessible, mobile, and intuitive technology has made an incredible impact in the classroom. Sustainable and hardwearing materials mixed with future-proof design (with fewer moving parts), mean that the technology easily outlives its counterparts. During the pandemic, every teacher and student tackled the murky waters of

online learning. Schools with Apple technology could seamlessly engage with a range of digital workflow tools such as Google Classroom, Microsoft OneNote, Showbie or Schoology. Those without unintentionally limited their teachers and learners.

PRESENT

Technology is now more important than ever. Students need devices that can match their digital skills and help stretch their imaginations. iPad and Mac provide all the power a learner or teacher will ever need. Multimedia capabilities increase accessibility, and it also enables students to approach objectives in their own way. This coupled with a whole world of engaging education apps makes for an incredibly personalised learning experience. Wireless mirroring and instantaneous content capture allow teachers to model good practice and create deeply engaging explanation videos. Technology that doesn't match up to fast-paced

Sponsored

teaching and learning simply begins to be used less and less. Not providing future-proof technology results in schools stepping back into the past and not reaching the full potential of their investment.

FUTURE

Choose technology that can grow and adapt. Apple has always been at the forefront of innovation and will continue to push the boundaries of what is possible in the classroom. As learners or teachers progress, their iPad and Mac can progress with them. New apps, new approaches, new features. At Select, we always keep one eye on the future ensuring that we can support schools when the next big step forward comes. Through bespoke Apple Professional Learning, Technological Leadership courses and evolving online training platforms, every teacher and student can continue to improve their skillset and stride confidently into the future. Ongoing affordability through flexible finance options and a range of devices means that schools can continue to invest in Apple technology, knowing that they can keep up to date. Less and less money will need to be spent on other 'one use' pieces of technology as the iPad and Mac continue to combine all sorts of different devices into one place. Paperless classrooms are becoming a reality and the future looks far more sustainable with the right technology in the right hands.

It's easy to forget how far technological teaching and learning have progressed. Technology is now a part of every subject, and in a short time, digital tools have become part of day-to-day classroom practice. The question is no longer, 'Why technology?' The question is 'Which technology?'. The only logical answer to this question is Apple. No matter where you are on your Apple journey, we can help you overcome the technological barriers of the past, improve your current practice, and ensure a more sustainable future.

Select's classroom bundles combine everything you need to embed class sets of iPad into your school. We even include training as part of the bundle to support teachers and maximise the technology's potential.

What's included in the bundle:

- 16/30 9th Gen iPad 10.2 inch Wifi 64GB
- 16/30 Rugged iPad cases
- A charge store unit
- A safe environment solution
- Education remote set-up
- Access to Apple Professional Learning Support
- Subscriptions to Select Academy

select



Authorised
Education Specialist



Get in touch to find out more

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Conduct an Accessibility Check on your School Website

Ann Marcus Quinn



In recent years there has been a lot of progress when it comes to the accessibility of online public services. An EU project, LEAD-ME (<https://lead-me-cost.eu/action/programme/>), comprises a group of researchers, engineers, scholars as well as businesses and policymakers that are collaborating to share their expertise. One aspect of the LEAD-ME COST Action looks at the existing accessibility of online content and how this can be improved. The transposition of the Web Accessibility Directive into Irish law has facilitated a better online experience for everyone using public sector websites but there is still work to be done.

School websites are public sector websites, and as such, they must comply with accessibility standards and should have a web accessibility statement published on their websites (Marcus-Quinn & Hourigan 2022). Ireland's National Disability Authority (NDA) has information on its website (www.nda.ie) relating to the Web Accessibility Directive.

If a school community would like to check the accessibility of their website there are a lot of free services that schools can use to undertake an audit of their



website. Among these options is Google Lighthouse which is an open-source online tool that can be used to measure the quality of individual web pages. Obviously, there will be the cost of the staff time allocated to carry out the work but the software will not have an associated cost. Running the check in Google Lighthouse to generate a score, based on performance across the 5 categories, takes seconds. The human cost will be in the interpretation of the data, analysis of the issues that are flagged as potentially problematic and implementing the changes required to improve the overall score.

When you conduct an audit of a webpage using Google Lighthouse the software will automatically check: performance, accessibility, best practices, search engine optimisation and performance. Each of these five categories is awarded a score (between 1 and 100.) Google Lighthouse will also enable you to check your website's compliance against accessibility standards and best practices.

Performance: The speed of the webpage is audited – how quickly the entire webpage is available to users. There is a distinction between how long it can take a webpage to start displaying key elements and how long it takes for the webpage to become interactive.

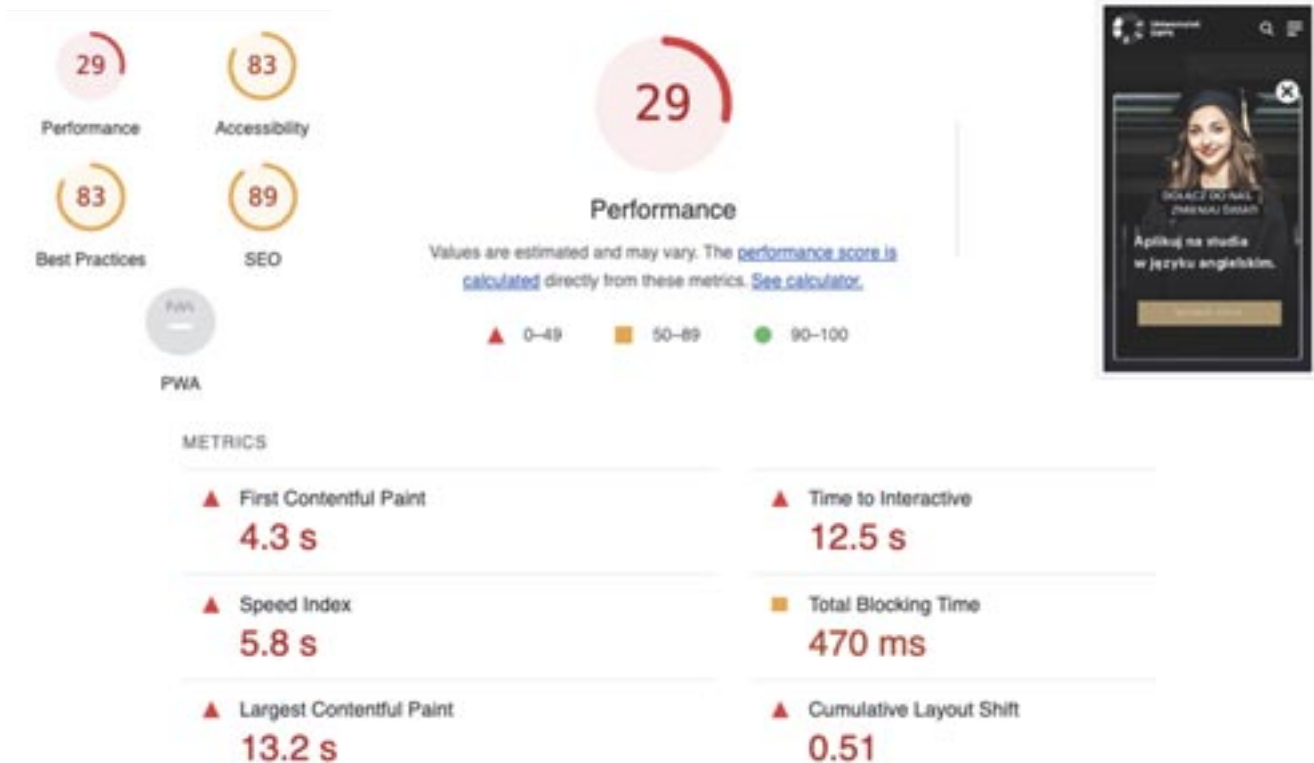


Fig 1. Sample evaluation of a webpage using the Google Lighthouse tool.

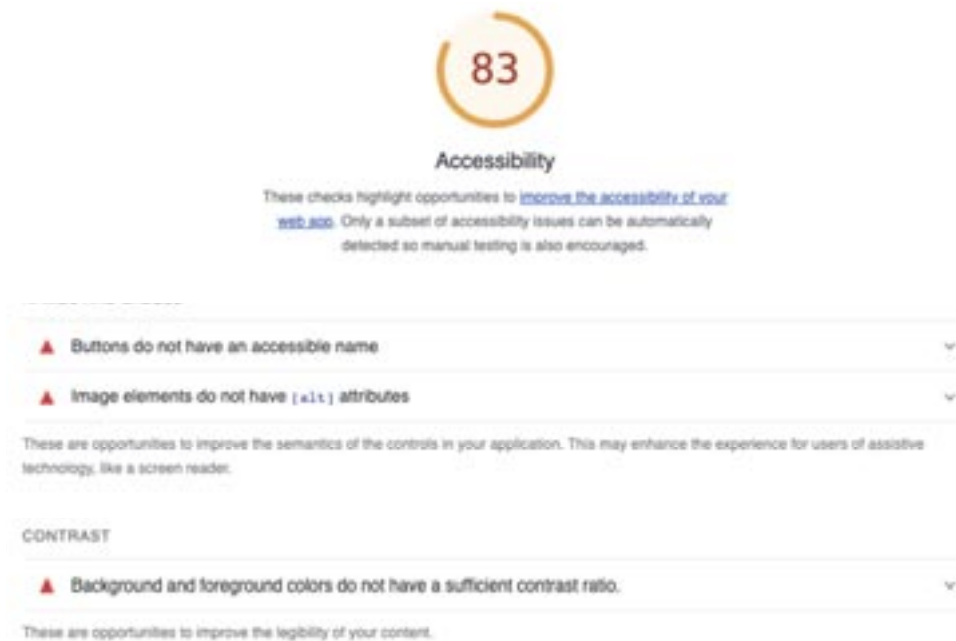


Fig 2. Sample accessibility report of a webpage using the Google Lighthouse tool (more detailed evaluation).

Accessibility: The accessibility score is based on an average of approximately 35 accessibility traits. A high score here usually means that the webpage can be comfortably used by the general public (including those with a disability).

Best Practices: The checks that are run under this category include security aspects and to what extent modern standards of web development are applied.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO): SEO is a term that many may be aware of. The score can reflect how easy or difficult it is for users to find a webpage when they conduct a search using keyword(s) in a search engine such as Google.

Performance: The overall performance score is calculated by drawing from how the webpage has performed across all categories.

A Lighthouse audit is not perfect and some are critical of how the metrics are collected. It is possible to get different performance scores depending on the device that you use to conduct the check. However, at a very basic level, the report can be extremely helpful in identifying accessibility errors that can be easily and quickly addressed by the person/company managing the school website. These errors may include missing alternative text for images or missing title attributes. Informative elements should have alternative text and ensuring that this text is present can transform how some users can use the school website. Such information is critical for users using a screen reader to locate and read information on the website.

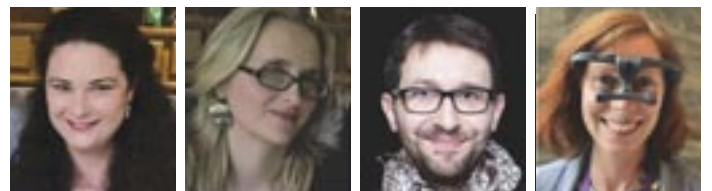
This aspect of digital accessibility could also be integrated into a short course on IT or Digital Literacies at Junior Cycle. Conducting an online accessibility check on a school website is also an exercise that Transition Year students or students taking Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate subject may enjoy carrying out. Raising awareness in this area further enables the inclusion of student voices in the

development of a more equitable school community and is another step towards building a more inclusive society for all of us.

References



Marcus-Quinn, A. & Hourigan, T. (2022) The EU Web Accessibility Directive - and what it means for school websites. NAPD Leader Autumn 2022, p80-81.

This article is based upon work from COST Action LeadMe, supported by COST (European Co-operation in Science and Technology).



Left to right:

Dr Ann Marcus-Quinn and **Dr Triona Hourigan** are the two Management Committee members for Ireland for LEAD-ME. **Dr Krzysztof Krejtz** is leading the EU funded COST Action LEAD-ME (CA19142) which aims to help European stakeholders in the field of Media Accessibility to meet legal milestones requested by European legislation. **Professor Izabela Krejtz** is an associate professor of psychology and a member of the LEAD-ME COST Action.

Dr Ann Marcus-Quinn is Course Director for the MA Technical Communication and E-Learning. She is based in the School of English, Irish, and Communication at the University of Limerick.



Modern Foreign Languages with a difference at Bremore Educate Together Secondary School

Kathy Jones and Sarah-Jane Willis

Bremore ETSS offers two schemes supported by the Post Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) to enhance the learning of Modern Foreign Languages:

- Visiting Teacher Scheme
- Languages Connect – a Heritage Language Programme

VISITING SPANISH TEACHER

We first heard about the PPLI (www.ppli.ie) Visiting Spanish Teacher Scheme from our Spanish teachers, Catherine and Nicola, who attended an information session about it and were enthused at the idea of having a native Spanish speaker join our team. Nicola was also moving into the area of Guidance and, as a developing school, we had a full-time position available in our Spanish Department. With the ever-present challenge of the shortage of language, it was an opportunity we couldn't ignore.



HOW IT WORKS

PPLI sent a variety of applications to us from interested Spanish teachers. The candidates were all very experienced teachers. Zoom interviews were held and while we were impressed by all of the candidates, we were delighted when Angeles accepted our offer of the position. Angeles is from Barcelona, an urban school with a very diverse group of students, which was an excellent fit for our school ethos.

The programme is run by the Spanish Ministry of Education and has been in place for circa 30 years. Under the scheme, Spanish teachers can avail of a career break to work in other English-speaking countries for a number of years. In Ireland, the visiting teacher can come for one year initially, with an option to remain for a second year if a post is available in the school.

All participants have a minimum of 2 years teaching experience and meet the requirements set by the Irish Teaching Council. The visiting teacher is registered and has the same Terms and Conditions as any other teacher.

THE BENEFITS

The programme allows Angeles to maintain her permanent position in her Barcelona school in Barcelona, while accepting the temporary position in Ireland. It provides a great opportunity for us to exchange practices and reap the benefits of having a native Spanish speaker on staff. In addition to her teaching her own class groups, we timetabled Angeles to team teach so that students can work on their oral language skills and our teachers can share and develop their own practice. We also have several native Spanish speaking students who enjoy the opportunity to converse with a teacher in their mother tongue.

Initially, like with all new staff, Angeles engaged in our school induction programme and was assigned a link teacher to support her to learn our system and structures. Learning about a new education system and the culture of a new school setting was certainly a challenge for Angeles but she embraced it and settled in quickly, becoming a valued member of our school community with both staff and students.

The rich exchange of culture, language and educational practice have been a fantastic experience for us in Bremore ETSS and we are thrilled that Angeles has decided to extend her stay for a further year.

LANGUAGES CONNECT - PPLI HERITAGE LANGUAGE PROGRAMME

We first learned about the Languages Connect PPLI heritage language programme in 2017. We initially applied for and were granted funding for a Lithuanian after-school class. This class is aimed at mother tongue students who have the opportunity to complete a Junior Cycle short course in their heritage language.

Since then, and having seen the huge success of the Programme, we have expanded this to now include both the heritage language classes and MFL classes. In addition to both Romanian and Polish heritage language classes after school, we also offer a rich Transition Year language module of Polish, Lithuanian and Romanian language classes on a rotational basis for all students, funded by the PPLI, who have also sourced teachers for us.

Ángeles had this to say about her experience in the programme:

"When I was asked to write about my experience in Ireland, two words came to my mind: challenge and love.

Challenges appear in many ways: the bureaucracy you face before and during the programme, a new educational system, a different language and culture (which can become a barrier in certain situations) - these are only a few examples.

However, love always hides behind these challenges, and along with care and patience, it can transform barriers into opened doors. My time in Bremore has given me the chance to learn about Restorative Practice and the significance of community beyond the gates of the school, where empathy is as important as discipline.

My colleagues and students did share with me the love and respect they feel towards my country and my culture; while the rainy days did show me some of the most beautiful landscapes I have ever seen"

Ángeles Yuste Cantón



Vaida and Laura –
our Lithuanian and
Polish Language
teachers

Having a multilingual school population, we have seen the great success our students achieve in sitting the Leaving Certificate in their non-curricular heritage languages. Our PPLI teachers are also an invaluable resource to us in this regard, supporting the Leaving Certificate students in preparation for their oral examinations, correcting mock exams and offering guidance to the students. Next year we also hope to offer a Leaving Certificate Polish class as part of our 5th year options schedule.

As an Educate Together school, celebrating language and culture is an integral aspect of our ethos. We are very grateful for the invaluable support the PPLI has offered us in actively promoting and raising the profile of heritage languages within our school community. We look forward to continued success and growth of the programme.



Students enjoying Romanian heritage food

A word from Emanuela, our Romanian Heritage Language Teacher:



"I began working with PPLI in 2022 through teaching and promoting my national language, Romanian. I work in a multicultural education setting, and the numbers of Romanian heritage students grows year by year. Our links with PPLI have given my students and I the opportunity to celebrate and embrace our mother tongue and nourish a sense of belonging.

Following a visit from PPLI, where they observed the success and interest in the Romanian language class, we were awarded additional funding to create two classes, one for Junior Cycle students which focuses on culture, pride, and heritage, while promoting the skills for furthering their studies at Leaving Cert level. Our second class is dedicated to preparing Senior Cycle students for their final exam, while continuing to promote their pride in their culture.

PPLI has had a significant impact on Senior Cycle pupils as many of them now intend on sitting a state exam in their mother tongue during their Leaving Certificate. This will dramatically increase their opportunities for 3rd level, while also promoting a sense of pride in their heritage.

Kathy Jones and **Sarah-Jane Willis** are Principal and Deputy Principal respectively of Bremore Educate Together Secondary School, Balbriggan, Co Dublin.





In 2019 young people in our Ballymun Social Innovation Hub in Dublin identified that they required greater access to professional role models, professional networks, and career opportunities. Using design thinking principles, we initiated a co-design process to facilitate them to devise their solution – Inspire Mentoring.

INSPIRE Mentoring is a unique social innovation and a holistic intervention with a simple concept - to use the power of skilled mentoring to support marginalised young people reach their full potential. It recognises the challenges around lack of social capital and low levels of social mobility.

Using our digital platform, the young person is empowered to select the best mentor and role model for them. Mentoring is online and formal, with weekly meetings underpinned by the identification and achievement of goals. Our mentors are recruited via the LinkedIn platform and screened before completing training.



OUR IMPACT

In partnership with LinkedIn, we launched a 12-month pilot in September 2020 with 35 young people from Ballymun, Finglas and the Liberties, all in Dublin. Our research and feedback demonstrated there is a demand for targeting mentoring.

Results from our pilot showed:

- 87% mentees showed an improvement in the measure of self-confidence after mentoring
- 72% identified a goal to finish their educational course

- 68% of mentees looked for career development support
- 92% of participants report satisfaction with the programme and would recommend it

We now work nationwide with over 200 young people, nine Universities and Further Education institutions and youth organisations.

THE CHALLENGES AROUND SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

Robert Putnam describes Social Capital as *“the ability to secure benefits through membership in networks”*. The challenge for the young people we work with is the significant gap in that they do not know people who work in professional companies who can share information.

The World Economic Forum estimate that in Ireland it can take five generations for those born in low-income families to approach mean income. We do not believe that circumstances of birth should be a barrier to young people seeking social and economic gain beyond their immediate society.

Some interesting facts about our young participants:

- 78% are the first in their family to enter college
- 25% look for support around personal development
- 87% wanted to become mentors themselves in the future
- 90% of our young mentees are HEAR students and many doubt their abilities and lack confidence. One said: *“before I even started, I felt like a fraud, I was only there because of where I was from not because I deserved to be”*.

THE BENEFIT OF INSPIRE MENTORING TO THE IRISH EDUCATION SECTOR

INSPIRE Mentoring is a unique social innovation project that supports inclusion in education. It addresses the real barriers around social capital and social mobility.

A key outcome for INSPIRE is economic sustainability and social equity. The mentee breaks the cycle of poverty and disadvantage, earns a decent salary, and contributes towards a vibrant society.



INSPIRE mentoring supports the young person to believe that they can complete third level and achieve their career ambitions.



He has informed me of career routes and opportunities which I did not know about and has vowed to help me when applying for those opportunities. It really is going great”



I really enjoy having the mentor experience and it’s helped me explore options to develop myself and my career that I hadn’t thought of before.



FUTURE PLANS/GROWTH

INSPIRE mentoring is a great example of a successful private and non-profit collaboration. It is a proven model that helps build participants’ social capital and promote social and economic sustainability for this and future generations.

We are working to secure core Government funding to guarantee the future of INSPIRE in order to allow us work with the relevant bodies, scale INSPIRE and adapt the model to work with adult learners. We aim to collaborate to ensure that students completing Higher Education reflect the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s population.

Recent socio-economic analysis from the HEA (February 2023), shows college graduates from affluent areas earn more than disadvantaged graduates. INSPIRE can help disadvantaged graduates secure employment in professional occupations, just like their affluent peers who have the necessary professional connections, which they lack.

For further information contact the Programme Manager Elaine McGauran

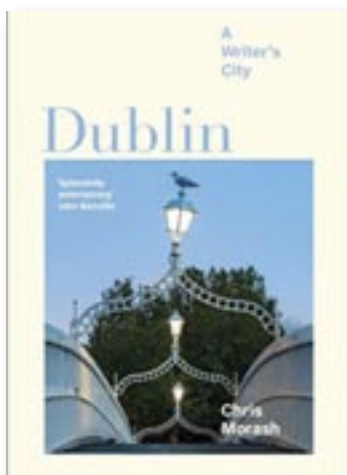
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Elaine McGauran is an experienced project manager across multiple sectors. She has a lifelong interest in social inclusion via innovative social projects like INSPIRE Mentoring which bring together multiple stakeholders to achieve impact. She established INSPIRE in late 2020 and has overseen its successful implementation and growth since then.



The Leader Reviews



Book Title: Dublin, A Writer's City

Author: Chris Morash

Date: 2023

ISBN: 978-1108831642

Publisher : Cambridge University Press

Reviewer: Tim Geraghty

Chris Morash's recently published "Dublin, A Writer's City" is a timely reminder of the depth of Dublin's literary legacy and present riches.

He observes in his preface that "*Dublin has never been a monumental city, never been the sort of place where you go to gawp in wonder at architectural edifices. The things that really gives the city, its character are far more insubstantial than concrete glass or Portland stone.*"

This is so true. Dublin does not have the towering vertical structures of the Chicago of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, although there is constant pressure from developers on town planners for ever increasing height. Indeed, we should celebrate Cesar Manrique's successful environmental campaign against high rise buildings in Lanzarote and the benefits that has bestowed on the island.

Dublin does not need to become a mini Manhattan.

Neither is Dublin only the Dublin of Leopold Bloom on 16 June 1904 in Joyce's Ulysses.

Chris Morash again: "*For me, truly experiencing Dublin means being able to read the city's collective memory in its streets and buildings; and having access to that memory from the inside means knowing the city's literature*".

He makes early reference to Louis MacNeice's wonderfully encapsulating poem about Dublin:

Fort of the Dane

Garrison of the Saxon

Augustan capital

Of a Gaelic Nation

Appropriating all

The alien brought

His exploration of the city's literary history takes us from the Dalkey of Maeve Binchy and Flann O'Brien across the city to the Barrytown of Roddy Doyle and west to the landmark Mullingar House in Chapelizod, home to the hero of Finnegans Wake, HCE (Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker or Here Comes Everybody) and his wife ALP (Anna Livia Plurabelle).

He coins the word Baggotonia to celebrate the unique literary cauldron that was the late 40s and 50s Dublin of Patrick Kavanagh, Brendan Behan, Anthony Cronin, Brian Ó Nualláin (Myles na gCopaleen), John Ryan et al.

That world centred around the pubs of Baggot Street and off Grafton Street. Indeed, up to the late 60s, literary students often believed that drinking in the legendary McDaid's in Harry Street made them poets! This world is affectionately and vividly chronicled in Anthony Cronin's memoir "*Dead as Doornails*" which I wholeheartedly recommend. My favourite short story writer, Mary Lavin, (*Tales from Bective Bridge*) also lived for a while in Lad Lane, off Baggot Street.

We travel to the North Inner City of James Stephens and Mary Makebelieve in the *Charwoman's Daughter*. We visit Brendan Kennelly and Samuel Beckett in Trinity College. We observe Sally Rooney reflecting on Grattan Bridge and Anne Enright contemplating on the beach in Bray. We recollect the riots in the Abbey Theatre over Sean O'Casey's plays. We live the rich history of the liberties of Jonathan Swift and William Carleton's memorable account of his first visit to Dublin, also reproduced in *A Dublin Anthology* compiled by Douglas Bennett – another outstanding read.



Brian Ó Nualláin's headstone, Deansgrange Cemetery, Co. Dublin.

I did miss not seeing one of my guest lecturers in UCD, Benedict Kiely, recognised. I still remember his lecture on the works of Samuel Lover and Charles Lever, a writer also acknowledged by Chris Morash. I equally remember the lectures of the distinguished poet, John Montague, who famously remarked of his neighbourhood in Herbert Street "It was said you couldn't shovel a load of coal into a basement without disrupting an avant-garde play".

But the book is not simply a conjoining of artist and location. It takes the time to appreciate the personal dilemmas that poets and writers experience, as in Eavan Boland's dilemma in trying to reconcile her experience as a suburban woman and the narratives of history and politics.

We are drawn to appreciate the extent of our cultural heritage. I remember stepping on to an empty San Francisco bus almost a half century ago and being interrogated by the driver about Irish poets and his favourite, Valentine Iremonger, the distinguished poet and diplomat, with whom I was not at that time familiar.

I recall a conversation in a restaurant in Tokyo with two young Japanese men who had never been to Ireland but had an exceptional knowledge of Seamus Heaney and Irish literature generally.

The book is an exhilarating sweep of culture and history. Streetscapes, maps, portraits and photos are woven into an engaging narrative. I had not previously seen John Speed's map of Dublin, the first detailed map of the city that was small and clustered within its medieval walls.

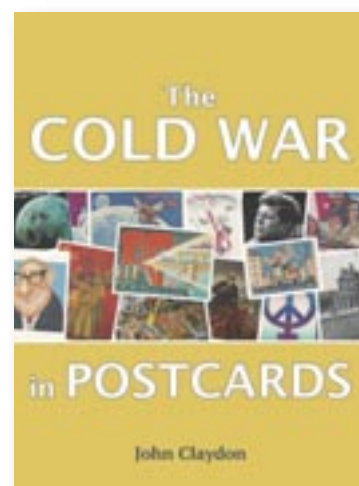
It captures, as John Banville observes, a capital that is less city than town, less town than village. Our poets, playwrights and novelists come from all sides of the religious, political and class divide – from Christy Brown to Robert Emmet, Oscar Wilde to Patrick Pearse, W.B. Yeats to Bram Stoker.

Joyce spoke of forging "in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race". Chris Morash takes us on a journey into the soul of the city and it is a voyage of exploration worth the making.

It is a book that you will return to again and again, to refresh your appreciation of places you cherish and to walk in spirit with your favourite writers.



Tim Geraghty is a former Principal of St. Tiernan's Community School, Balally, Dublin. He is also former Deputy Director of NAPD.



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|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Book Title: | The Cold War in Postcards |
| Author: | John Claydon |
| Date: | 2022 |
| ISBN: | 978-1-3999-1144-3 |
| Publisher: | Self Published |
| Reviewer: | Graham Powell |

For many of us, the Cold War and its aftermath has been the backdrop to our cultural and political lives, manifest in the attitudes and opinions that have formed us, the books we have read and the music to which we have listened. For the generation now in our schools, the Cold War is distant history, brought into sharp focus by the ongoing war in Ukraine.

As a most pertinent history book, John Claydon's 'The Cold War in Postcards' charts the events that took place in the last half of the twentieth century in an arresting, illuminating way that cannot fail to engage young and old alike.

The events that shaped the lives of those who were born in the years after the Second World War are told through the propaganda postcards that were produced, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, from the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima to the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. John Claydon, a former school Principal and respected historian, began collecting political postcards in the 1960s and has accumulated a fascinating archive of over 800 such



postcards relating to the Cold War. These are a small part of a much wider collection that he has gathered as a unique cultural, social and political archive of our own and previous times as seen through these apparently ephemeral products.

His book is written in the clear and uncluttered prose of the experienced educator that he is, itemising not just the sequence of events that shaped our world but explaining the motivations and consequences of actions as they unfolded. The chapter headings chart the key events and successive stages in post-war history so that younger readers can gain a clear understanding of how apparently disparate pieces of the Cold War jigsaw puzzle fit together. Attention is given to *The Space Race*, the protest movement, the Vietnam War, *Glasnost and Perestroika* as well as the more obvious features of our recent history like the Cuban missile crisis, the Detente of the 1970s and the Reagan-Brezhnev stand-off in the 1980s.

Running through this admirable history lesson are the illustrative examples of how different parts of the political world were presenting themselves to their own people and those on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Looking at the plethora of postcards that were produced in the Soviet Union to stir up patriotic feelings related to the 1st May, the past glories of the Revolution and 'The Great Patriotic War' (as the Russians still call the Second World War), before turning to the optimistic glamour postcards of the youthful Kennedy administration, underlines the stark differences between the two propaganda machines. In contrast, similar postcards of heroic astronauts and cosmonauts, with attendant rockets and moon landings, show how important the Space Race was

viewed for propaganda purposes at home and abroad by both super-powers.

It is hard to do justice to the wealth of visual images that are presented in full colour on every page of the book. In a way, these 800 images tell a story for themselves, but the quality of John Claydon's commentary and analysis ensures that the casual reader is challenged to notice, question and make links that illuminate this rich and easily misunderstood period of modern history.

One of the most powerful revelations comes from being taught about the history and purpose of postcards as a part of our culture. Passages such as the following, indicate to readers – young and old - that they are in the capable hands of a knowledgeable and assured historian who is able to illuminate their understanding by placing what is being presented in its wider historical context:

"Postcards of Germany's role in the Cold War are among the most abundant of any aspect of the conflict ... it owes a great deal to the tradition of postcard production in Germany in the late 19th century ... that coincided with the expansionist rule of Kaiser Wilhelm II during the build-up to the First World War ... the tradition was picked up by Hitler's Nazi Party, where artwork for the purposes of propaganda was of the highest quality and immensely prolific"

This admirable book is both timely and prescient. Written before the present war in Ukraine, it places our contemporary world squarely in its recent historical context. At the beginning of the book's *Epilogue: Memorials of War*, there is a United Nations postcard honouring Ukraine's independence from the USSR. Later in this final chapter are postcard images from the 21st century of declassified nuclear warheads and bunkers. Readers can draw their own conclusions.

Having been reading and re-reading this book over the last few months, I am convinced that it deserves to be placed on the history shelves of every school library and should be recommended reading for Leaving Cert students – and their teachers.

The book can be purchased at:
<https://www.coldwarpostcards.com/order-2>



Graham Powell is a retired educational consultant and the author of several books on leadership and learning. He was formerly a school Principal and inspector. He has been presenting leadership of learning courses for NAPD for over ten years and has worked with schools throughout Ireland.



Write a Review?

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

A photograph of several students in school uniforms. In the foreground, two young men are sitting on a bench, looking at a document together. One is smiling broadly. In the background, two young women are also in uniform, one is looking at a smartphone. They are all wearing white polo shirts and dark blue jackets or sweaters.

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Summer at Howth Harbour

Photography by Charlie McManus