



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

General Teaching Council for NI

termtalk

The Official Newsletter of the General Teaching Council

MARCH 09

termtalk



Welcome to the March edition of **termtalk**. In keeping with our commitment to engaging with academics and practitioners, on a range of both policy and

topical professional matters, this edition explores amongst other things: equality, the global dimension in the classroom, literature as a means of exploring differences, dyslexia, the positive aspects of assessment and the nursery experience.

In addition to the above, we continue our reflection on the TLRP's work in relation to the principles underpinning effective teaching and learning, begun in our last edition. In this **termtalk** Diane Hofkins looks at the evidence underpinning five of the ten principles; we will cover the remaining five principles in the next edition.

You can access further TLRP reports within the ARRTS section of our website: www.gtcni.org.uk

Professor Andrew Pollard will deliver our Annual Lecture on March 31st, this offers an opportunity for you to hear one of the more charismatic apologists for the teaching profession. There are still tickets available for the event. So if you are interested in attending contact us for further details.

Eddie McArdle
Registrar, GTCNI

Eddie McArdle

Every Child an Equal Child



the challenge for education

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland recently published *Every Child an Equal Child*, the Commission's statement on fundamental inequalities in education. Its annual conference, last November, was also on the theme of 'equality in education'. In the following article, the Chief Commissioner, Bob Collins, explains to **termtalk** why education is a key

area of importance for the Commission and regarded as essential for maximising equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland.

It is difficult to articulate any view of equality where education does not play a defining role. This is because of the nature of education itself. It has the most powerful potential of

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GTCNI – a new voice for teachers

Every Child an Equal Child

(continued from page 1)

all in shaping the lives of every one of us. It has the capacity to be a transformative influence, to open new horizons, to reach beyond perceived limits, to see new possibilities, to reveal new potential, to overcome the barriers, real or imagined, of inheritance or of environment.

There is something very fundamental about education. It touches the very essence of our selves and of our journey through life. It will shape us forever. It is easy, faced with that awareness, to give up the ghost and even easier still to pass the buck. The buck usually lands in the laps of teachers and schools. Teachers play a remarkable role in the development of young minds and personalities; very many are deeply committed to the active encouragement of the principles and practices of equality. They do have, indeed, a central role to play but it is all too easy to focus exclusively on the responsibilities of teachers and schools. That is much too simplistic an approach because the promotion of equality is an issue for us all.

Throughout our society, too many children are born into a life which will struggle to give them an equal opportunity to play a full role in society and develop their talents to the full. Education, however, provides a platform from which to reach their full potential, playing a vitally important role in determining a child's life chances and opportunities in terms of social and economic mobility. Equality in education is, therefore, a key area of strategic importance to the Equality Commission's work.

The history of education in Northern Ireland has been, to varying degrees, one of separate provision for boys and girls, disabled and non-disabled, Traveller and settled, and children of differing faith backgrounds. The Commission has welcomed the

growth of integrated and shared education as a means of breaking down the social, gender, religious and other barriers between children and providing a further choice for parents and children.

The Equality Commission has three overarching objectives for the education sector. These are that every child should have equality of access to a quality educational experience; every child should be given the opportunity to reach his or her full potential; and that every school should promote the inclusion and participation of all children. The Commission believes these objectives should be worked towards regardless of a child's community background, religion, age, gender, racial group, sexual orientation, political opinion, disability or caring responsibilities.

To coincide with our conference, the Commission published an important document *Every Child an Equal Child*, which sets out in blunt terms the extent of educational inequalities in Northern Ireland. Whether you look at disability, at Traveller children,



Bob Collins (Chief Commissioner), Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

race, new residents, children in care or children who are themselves care-givers you will see educational disadvantage relative to the total population. This translates very easily, almost automatically, to diminished potential in being fully a part of the society in which we all live.



Annual Conference, held at the Hilton Hotel, Belfast, 12th November 2008

the Challenge for Education



ECNI Chief Commissioner Bob Collins (*centre*) with (*left to right*) Professor Tony Gallagher (QUB), Gavin Boyd Chief Executive Designate (ESA), Avril Hall-Callaghan (UTU), Evelyn Collins (ECNI Chief Executive), and Fern Turner (NAHT), who all spoke at the Equality Commission's Annual Conference

We should also look at the high level of under-attainment to realise the impact on continuing generations of young people and of the families and communities of which they are part. Not every child will have equal capacity but that is not the issue. The key consideration is that we should not be able to predict under-attainment simply because a child falls into a particular group or category. For example, we know that boys are under-performing. There is a significant and urgent issue to be addressed in ensuring that boys benefit more from their time in school and that they realise the potential that they undoubtedly have.

In Northern Ireland gender and religion intersect and we find an enduring level of under-attainment by Protestant boys. That has long-term and significant implications for that community, for access to and advancement within employment and for social stability. The consistent exclusion of young people from any sector of our society from the full benefits of education calls out for redress.

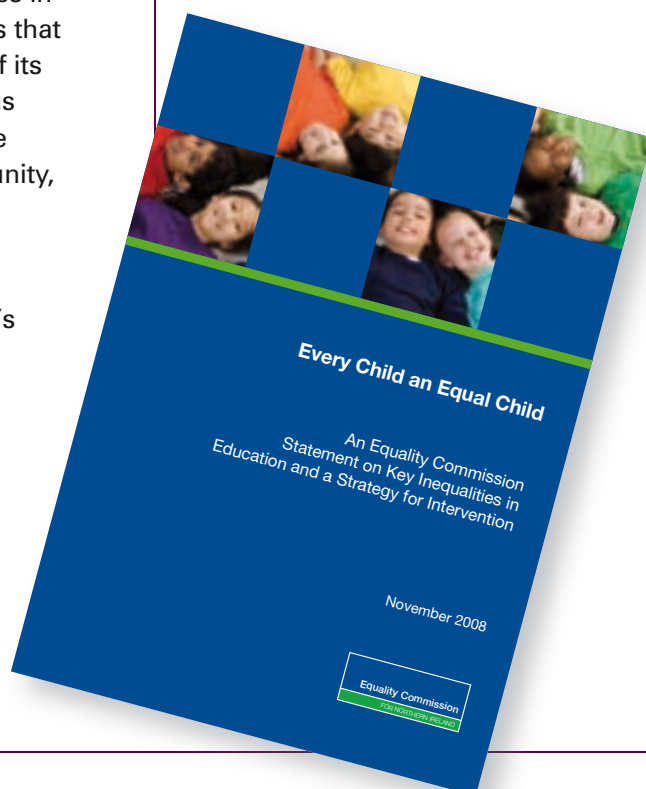
These examples represent a reality of which we cannot be passive observers. There are many reasons why we have to take action. The first is that everything has a consequence. All that we do and all that we do not do will have consequences whether we wish it so or not. Thus, doing nothing to tackle educational disadvantage is not a neutral nor a risk-free option. It will have real consequences in people's lives. The second is that little happens by accident, of its own accord. If we are serious about the notion of equal life chances, equality of opportunity, then we must do something about it. The present reality will not change itself. It was not by accident that women's participation in life was enhanced. It was by a combination of hard work and public policy. So, too, will it be with education.

This presents challenges and opportunities for the Commission, the Government, the statutory education sector

and other agencies. The Commission is committed to using its full range of powers from equality and anti-discrimination legislation, to ensure that all children and young people in Northern Ireland have the opportunity to flourish and succeed to the best of their abilities.

The first essential for a successful education must be that the community as a whole should have a true estimate of its nature and value. There is an unmistakable role for public policy and an inescapable role for elected representatives. Those who hold positions of political leadership have an unrivalled role to play. It seems to me that the same energy and the same commitment that the parties brought to the great constitutional debate are needed again in the realm of education. Now, particularly, when the constitutional issues are settled and when the people have expressed their clear view, there is the opportunity and responsibility to focus on education.

A copy of the Equality Commission's publication *Every Child an Equal Child* can be found in the 'publications' section of the website www.equalityni.org **GTC**



GTCNI Notice Board

GTCNI introduces three new Council Members

Jennifer Cornyn

Member of the Registration Committee (Appointed member: Department of Education)

Having worked in education for over 35 years, initially as a teacher in the post-primary sector for 4 years and then as a lecturer in Further and Higher Education for 31 years, Jennifer is currently working with the University of Ulster as an Associate lecturer on the PGCFHE programme.

Jennifer holds a BA in Social Sciences, Advanced Diploma in Guidance and Counselling, MA in Education, PhD in Education, Post Graduate Certificate in Management in addition to Assessors Award, Internal Verifier Award and APL Award.

Throughout her career Jennifer has had the opportunity to work with a wide range of stakeholders in education; parents, students, employers, awarding bodies, universities, community groups and has held management posts in Further and Higher Education.

Jennifer is also a member of the Western Education and Library Board, since 2001 and has been a Lay Magistrate since 2005. Jennifer looks forward to her term on the General Teaching Council and is keen to share her knowledge and experience in order to contribute to the enhancement of teaching as a profession.



He began teaching in Boys' Model Belfast and his career includes Head of English in Ballyclare High School, Vice-Principal in Grosvenor Grammar School and Principal of Wellington College Belfast (2000-2004). Ronnie is active in the Governing Bodies Association and a member of the North Eastern Area Planning Group. As an early advocate of inter-school collaboration, he is proud to have been one of the founder members of Ballymena Learning Together, the successful partnership of all nine post-primary schools in the Ballymena Area.

Ronnie was born in Fermanagh and he attended Portora Royal School. A Graduate of The Queen's University, Stranmillis College and the University of Ulster. He is married to Audrey, who is also a teacher and they have three children.

Gary Haire

Member of the Registration Committee (Appointed member: Association of NI Education and Library Boards)

Gary is the Chief Executive of a local charity that provides counselling and training throughout the island of Ireland. He is actively involved in a number of organisations and professional bodies within the statutory and voluntary sectors both at a local and national level in the areas of education and health. Gary was previously a minister in a local parish before taking up his current position. He is a member of the SEELB (having held the position of Chair), a Past-President of the ANIELB and currently Second Vice-President of that body. He is also the Chair of the Open College Network in Northern Ireland, one of the local Awarding Bodies. Gary has professional interests in adult education and mentoring, coaching and supporting those in leadership.



Ronnie Hassard

Member of General Purpose and Finance Committee (Appointed member: Governing Bodies Association)

Ronnie has been Principal of Ballymena Academy – a 1200 pupil co-educational Voluntary Grammar School with a well established reputation of academic and extra-curricular excellence – since 2004.



GTCNI Notice Board

GTCNI Annual Lecture

Prof Andrew Pollard of the Teaching and Learning Research Partnership (TLRP) will be presenting the 2009 GTCNI Annual lecture on **31st March 2009** at the Stranmillis University College. The lecture will examine how excellent teaching and learning can help ensure that every school is indeed a good school.



Andrew Pollard was a primary and middle school teacher for ten years, before moving into teacher education and research and has been the Director of TLRP at the Institute of Education, University of London since 2002. His interests include teaching and learning processes and perspectives, as well as the development of evidence-informed classroom practice. During a period of renewed interest from policy makers in school improvement, Professor Pollard's lecture will provide a timely reminder to all of the importance of the work of teachers and schools.

If you would like to attend or find out more please contact: Debra Castles dcastles@gtcni.org.uk or T: **028 90348635**.

ARRTS Update

We are pleased to report some exciting new developments in the Council's research repository ARRTS (Access to Research Resources for Teachers Space). New contributions include publications on, for example, neuroscience and education and research reports relating to improving teaching and learning in schools from the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP). Moreover, for the first time since his death in 1982, the writings of John Malone, renowned for his work on the Northern Ireland Schools' Curriculum Project, are now also a button-press away to readers on the ARRTS site. In addition, there is a new collection that focuses on numeracy and literacy. This will empower teachers to use research evidence when developing innovative approaches to teaching and learning in the important areas of literacy and numeracy. To access this repository and find resources to support reflective and evidence-informed practice why not take the time to explore ARRTS at: <http://arrts.gtcni.org.uk/gtcni/>

Diary Notice

GTCNI and RTU will be jointly running two one day conferences for school principals. The theme will be, 'Leading Reflective Practice in Schools.' The first conference is planned for the **10 June** and the second for **17 June**. School principals will receive further information in the near future.

2009 Annual Registration Fee Collection

The Registration Year runs from 1 April – 31 March and the Council's fee collection process starts in April, with a deduction of the registration fee from teachers' salaries.

This deduction from salary processes applies to teachers who are in employment in the month of April, including some supply teachers. The £44 will be deducted from your salary and a fee allowance will be credited at the same time. It is important that teachers check their pay statements in April or May to ensure the fee has been deducted.

Those teachers who are not part of the deduction from salary process will be invoiced in June; and teachers who pay their fees will be issued with a claim form to enable them to apply for a fee allowance payment, from the Department of Education.

Please note, if you are currently a registered teacher with the Council, you will remain on our register as a registered teacher throughout this process, but will be de-registered if you fail to make payment when requested.

Troubles literature: a stepping stone

Continuing with **termtalk's** series of research briefings, the article that follows by Dr Brian Hanratty, of St Mary's University College, provides an overview of his Literature of the Troubles Project.

The Literature of the Troubles Project, initiated and managed by the present writer, is a two year (2007 – 2009), school-focused, cross-community initiative, with its academic base in St Mary's University College, Belfast.

It is underwritten by a generous grant, from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation in London. Using carefully selected Troubles literature and a dialogical model of education, the Project seeks to enable Key Stage Four pupils to critically explore their identities and allegiances and to thereby facilitate possibilities for ongoing peace and reconciliation, against the background of Northern Ireland's divided history. It is also planned that materials and methodologies arising from the Project will be firmly embedded within the Northern Ireland GCSE English Language curriculum.

There has been considerable debate about, and research into, the role education can play in advancing the process of reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, some of that research, for example, Tony Gallagher's *Education in Divided Societies*¹, has pointed to the key significance of education

in all divided communities across the world. Also advanced in Gallagher's book, is the idea that using education as a means of reconciliation in Northern Ireland can provide a model for similar processes elsewhere. However, the challenge for educationalists, in helping to foster reconciliation here, cannot be underestimated. Research by Connolly and Healy², for example, has found that children's perception of 'difference' between Catholic and Protestant can begin as early as three or four years of age. The way forward, moreover, is by no means clearly signposted. The teaching of History, for example, – or, at any rate, opposing 'versions' of history – has been shown to be very problematic³. Arguably, too, the problem of conflicting attitudes, predicated on segregated communities, is compounded by the ongoing debate about the academic segregation of children at the age of eleven. However, it is also arguable that the proposed radical reorganisation of the post-primary system, linked to the current restructuring of the primary and post-primary curricula, provides a wonderful opportunity for new ideas to be adopted and creatively incorporated into the curriculum.

Undoubtedly, moreover, what much research and previous curricular thinking clearly endorse and underline, is the effectiveness of well taught literature as a potential catalyst for changing entrenched attitudes



Dr Brian Hanratty, Senior Lecturer (English), St Mary's University College.

and beliefs. As far back as 1995, for example, Cultural Heritage and Education for Mutual Understanding were embedded in the curriculum as cross-curricular themes and the teaching of named Troubles literature was a recommended part of the delivery of those themes. In *Finders Keepers*⁴, Seamus Heaney has articulated the writing (and reading) of Troubles literature as "a search for images and symbols adequate to our predicament." The present writer, moreover, in an article entitled *Sixth-formers Reading the Troubles*⁵, presented the findings of a small-scale, one-year action research project – on which the present, more comprehensive, Project is modelled – conducted in a number of schools across the sectarian divide in Belfast. The results were very encouraging. While the study of Troubles literature cannot obviously be seen as an

- 1 Gallagher, T. (2004) *Education in Divided Societies*, London: Palgrave/Macmillan.
- 2 Connolly, P. and Healy, J. (2003) *The development of children's attitudes towards 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland*, in: Hargie, O. and Dickson, D. (eds.) *Researching the Troubles: Social Science Perspectives on the Northern Ireland Conflict*, Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing.
- 3 McCully, A., O'Doherty, M. and Smyth, P. (1999) *The Speak Your Piece Project: Exploring Controversial Issues in Northern Ireland*, in: *Irish Educational Studies* 18, 49-67.
- 4 Heaney, S. (2002) *Finders Keepers, Selected Prose, 1971 – 2001*, London: Faber.
- 5 Hanratty, B. and Taggart, D. (2004) *Sixth-Formers reading the Troubles*, in: *Irish Educational Studies* 23, 19-37.

Troubles literature: a stepping stone

instant solution to the divisions within Northern Ireland, a significant number of pupils were encouraged to modify sectarian attitudes and to engage with alternative perspectives.

The current Project is now into its second year and approximately nine hundred pupils in forty schools across Northern Ireland – drawn from the controlled, maintained and integrated sectors – are participating in the work of the Project. The literature being studied includes poems by Simmons, Heaney and Longley as well as short stories and excerpts from novels by Park, MacLaverty and McLiam Wilson. Under the guidance of the Project Officer, Joanne McCauley, the exploration of the literature is preceded by a series of class workshops, during which the pupils are given the opportunity to explore symbols, slogans and timelines associated with the two main communities within Northern Ireland. Contextualising the literature in this way is seen as a valuable means of raising pupils' consciousness about contested identities. As a result, their verbal responses to the literature are better informed and more genuinely exploratory. Their subsequent written responses, furthermore, then form an integral part of their GCSE English Language coursework.

In the report written at the end of year one of the Project, participating schools provided almost

universal endorsement of the high quality of the pupils' relevant GCSE coursework. Michelle Clohessey, for example, Head of English at Lagan College, observed, "the Project offered a great opportunity for our Year Eleven English students to explore issues relating to their own cultural, political and religious beliefs ... we would certainly recommend the Project to other schools." Mel McMahon, Head of English in The Abbey Grammar School in Newry, was very impressed by, "the range of responses – diary entries, letters and speeches – which helped to extend the pupils' awareness of a range of literary forms." He added that the Project, "represented a golden opportunity for CCEA."

Schools across Northern Ireland, which have not participated directly in the Project, can access the relevant literature and associated schemes of work online, via the St Mary's website: <http://www.smucb.ac.uk/academic/education/litp/default.asp>

In conclusion, it might be salutary to recall Seamus Heaney's observation that literature has the potential, "to get at truths about who and what we are and might be ... [it is] the stepping stone [which] invites you to change the terms and *tearmann* of your understanding."⁴ **GTC**



Improving Teaching and Learning

In this article Paddy McCabe, Vice-Principal of Christ the Redeemer Primary School, outlines how the use of high quality assessment information can have a positive impact on classroom practice.

This is a short account of our journey to date which I hope will be useful to others; however, it is important to note that every school has its own unique context.

In Christ the Redeemer Primary School, we decided to see how we could utilise our data to improve the quality of our learning and teaching. We have dovetailed our current practice, in relation to the Revised Curriculum in general, and Assessment for Learning (AfL) in particular, with our existing formative assessment processes. The old analogy of not throwing the baby out with the bath water is very apt!

We currently use a raft of standardised tests including NFER and NRIT IQ tests to ascertain the learning and understanding of our pupils and to highlight areas that we, as teachers, can focus on in future learning. Our starting point was to review the data we had generated to date. We decided to use our IQ and NFER test results to identify pupils

who were underachieving. We also made sure to cross-reference our scores to look at the differentials between both tests.

We then formed a list of underachieving children, at this point the class teacher met with the Literacy and Numeracy Curricular Leaders. At this meeting, they analysed the list and set targets for individual pupils. While this sounds like a lot of work, it wasn't, the underachievers were a small minority within each class and the analysis was carried out and targets were formulated during one session.

The identification of these pupils encourages the teacher to focus on the fact that there are pupils in their class who may not be performing to their optimum, for whatever reason.

This approach has influenced staff, as a more reflective approach is required to ascertain why a child is underachieving. It has influenced classroom practice, in that the targets are addressed on 'planners' and subsequently in day-to-day practice through, for example, learning intentions, success criteria and other elements of AfL. Pupils are actively involved in the learning process whether it is in the formation of personal learning goals or through

self and peer assessment allowing the teacher to give structured, informative feedback on how a pupil can improve.

It has influenced how we use our SEN provision, in that it is now provided through inclusion in the class, closely linked to the lesson that is being taught.

This allows for a more dynamic team teaching approach and the pupils, as a whole, are not aware who the focus for assistance is. This helps remove any perceived stigma associated with withdrawals.

As stated, this is a part of our journey to date in the hope that we positively influence the learning of our children. It is our unique journey and it has come with its own tribulations; but if recent InCAS scores, which showed positive improvement in those pupils previously identified as underachieving, are reliable, then the potential positives outweighs any additional work. **GTC**



... Astronomy (International Year of)

www.astronomy2009.org



This rich website contains a universe of resources and a galaxy of cornerstone and special projects...enough to keep every science and geography teacher going for several parsecs (1 parsec = 3.26 light years) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parsecs>

...Creativity and Innovation (European Year of)

<http://create2009.europa.eu/>



As the European Commission put it at its launch in Prague on 7th January, "Creativity is a driver for innovation and a key factor for the development of personal, occupational, entrepreneurial and social competences and the well-being of all individuals in society." But whatever way you look at it – it's central to much of our revised Curriculum. One of the ambassadors is Ken Robinson, creativity guru, and if you have not seen his talk on TED ("Ideas worth spreading") www.ted.com on how schools kill creativity, this is a good moment <http://tinyurl.com/5gsyph> and, if you would like more of Ken, try Teachers TV <http://www.teachers.tv/video/5084>

Creativity and Innovation was also the theme taken by the Chief Inspector of the Education and Training Inspectorate when he launched his report for 2006 – 2008, on 28th January at W5. See www.etini.gov.uk/

A regular feature book-marking educational resource and information websites: this term we focus on the year '2009', which is the international Year of Astronomy, the European year of Creativity and Innovation and the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth. We also feature a Wiki site created and run by a Northern Ireland teacher, for teachers.

... Darwin 200 (Darwin's 200th birthday in February 2009)

www.darwin200.org/info-for-schools.html



The Natural History Museum website has evolved an education programme to celebrate the impact that Darwin's ideas, as well as his approach to the understanding of the natural world and his outstanding example as a scientist, continue to have on our lives. Supporting the programme is a diverse ecology of science shows, resource packs, workshops, lectures and teachers' courses – including interactive competitions and digital resources. Every primary school will get a Darwin Treasure Chest (from the Wellcome Trust and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) – packed with resources for children to do real science inside and outside the classroom by exploring habitats, growing plants and collecting seeds. But no need to wait – go exploring new environments online now.

Web 2 in Education Wiki

<http://web2educationuk.wetpaint.com>



Highly recommended, this site, hosted on Wetpaint <http://www.wetpaint.com> promotes the use of web tools by teachers by providing a directory of recommendations to free web tools, along with suggestions on using them in the classroom.

The creator, Darren Walker, Head of Religious Education at Campbell College has searched over 2000 websites and lists over 200 tools – as he says "that's over 200 opportunities for you to use ICT in your classroom and all for free!" He set up the site when on a Farmington Fellowship http://www.farmington.ac.uk/fellowships_and_awards/fellowships.html

A brief review and a screenshot or working example of the tool is included; Darren would like to hear from those recommending tools not on the wiki.

At the time of writing the top three recommended web tools are:

Moonfruit (Make your own website) <http://www.moonfruit.com/>

Ask 500 (Make your own poll) <http://www.ask500people.com/>

Voice Thread (Make your own commentary and share images, documents and videos) <http://voicethread.com/#home>

It's also free to join the Web 2 in Education discussion forum. If you're not yet a Web 2.0-enabled teacher, this is this place to start!

If you would like to share your favourite website, on any educational theme, please email your links and comments to profjohn@gtcni.org.uk

Effective teaching and learning

In the autumn edition of **termtalk** Professor Andrew Pollard, Director of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), explored the area of teacher professionalism within the context of evidence-informed practice. To accompany his article, we also published ten principles of effective teaching and learning which have been developed by the TLRP, based on research evidence from 22 school projects about what really makes a difference in the classroom.

In this edition of **termtalk**, Diane Hofkins, former assistant editor of the *Times Educational Supplement*, looks at the data and philosophy behind the first 5 principles and gives schools and teachers some food for thought as they reflect on what improves teaching and learning. In the summer edition, Diane will cover the remaining principles.

1 Equips learners for life in its broadest sense

School is about more than passing exams and 'delivering the curriculum'. What happens in school needs to connect with the outside world, both by relating what children are learning to events at home and abroad and by helping them develop the skills, strategies and courage they will need in an uncertain future.

Collaboration will become increasingly important. Learning should aim to help individuals and groups to develop the intellectual, personal and social resources that will enable them to participate as active citizens and as workers able to adapt.

Flexibility of mind – the ability to transfer skills and to think methodically but creatively – will be an increasingly hot intellectual property.

The TLRP's SPRinG and ScotSPRinG projects helped schools develop effective group work in which children didn't just sit together, they thought together. Activities were specifically

designed to encourage children to explain things to each other and to promote joint reasoning. Other activities developed social skills by encouraging pupils to see situations from other people's points of view.

The 'A for attitude' culture has been sneered at; it implies that the recipient really wasn't very good at the subject, but tried. In fact, evidence from across the TLRP shows that that attitude is crucial. Starting with the early years, the massive EPPE (Effective Pre-school and Primary Education) study shows that toddlers need to develop a 'disposition' to learn.

Other projects, such as ACTS II Sustainable Thinking Classrooms from Northern Ireland, demonstrated how learning and thinking skills help boost confidence, autonomy and attainment. More broadly, the 12 year Identity and Learning Programme showed how children and young people develop a 'learning identity' from the social influence of parents, teachers and peers as they progress through their school careers. Attitudes to lifelong learning are founded on each pupil's experiences of schooling and on the strategic biographies which make sense of these.

2 Engages with valued forms of knowledge

In the justifiable swing toward emphasising the processes of learning and away from the pressure to pack in content and facts, it is important to remember that every subject has at its heart elements that make it unique. Teaching and learning should engage with the big ideas, key processes, modes of discourse and narratives of subjects so that they understand what constitutes quality and standards in particular domains. This precept is well-supported by the EPSE (Evidence-based Practice in Science Education) studies. Leading scientific thinkers were able to agree broadly on what constitutes the

nature of scientific knowledge (such as what has been established beyond reasonable doubt and what is still open to debate) and the key elements of scientific method. The best way for students to understand these concepts is through classroom discourse. This means a change in teachers' role from transmitter of information to facilitator of opportunities for children to understand the various dimensions of science.

Skills cannot be taught in a vacuum; the Learning How to Learn research shows that learning practices are best developed when children are learning about something significant and specific. The process is part of subject teaching, not a course of its own.

This theme also chimes with government guidance. For instance the proposed Key Stage 3 framework says children should become successful learners who know about big ideas and events that shape our world and understand how they learn and learn from mistakes.

3 Recognises the importance of prior experience and learning

Few people these days think that children arrive at school as 'empty vessels' to be filled with knowledge. The principle of starting where children 'are' and helping them to move on is widely recognised. Nevertheless, with



Effective teaching and learning



National policy is beginning to recognise that local culture and enthusiasms can be built into the curriculum. Excellence and Enjoyment, the 2003 Primary Strategy document, encouraged this, as does the revised KS3 programme. TLRP's Home-School Knowledge Exchange aimed to tap and recognise the fund of knowledge that children can draw on in their homes, communities and ethnic cultures. Meanwhile the Scottish study, learning with ICT in Pre-School Settings found that the so called 'digital divide' between well off and poorer families is not as significant as is sometimes assumed.

4 Requires the teacher to scaffold learning

Scaffolding in teaching is like scaffolding in building work; it supports the construction until the house (or the child's learning) is secure enough to stand on its own. This scaffold is built of teachers' knowledge of how children learn.

Scaffolding is about teachers recognising when they should intervene to help the child move on to a higher level of understanding. The TLRP 's Learning with ICT in Pre-school Settings study found that young children's encounters with computers and other technology were enhanced when practitioners stepped in to guide them. Teachers in turn learned more effective ways to scaffold children's learning through CPD.

The InterActive Education study also concluded that ICT in the classroom will not help learning on its own. "Without the support of a teacher, students are unlikely to develop their knowledge of mathematical proof from their everyday reasoning, knowledge of the Italian Renaissance from knowledge of popular culture... or knowledge of science from game-like simulation software," the researchers say. They found that students working on computers on their own for an

extended period of time may come up with odd information, or misapply the rules. For instance some secondary pupils using the internet to research the Renaissance were reading about somewhere called Florence in the USA.

5 Needs assessment to be congruent with learning

Assessment should help advance learning as well as determine whether learning has taken place. This may sound obvious, but many teachers involved in TLRP projects have complained that the assessment system in England militates against good learning. When staff end up 'teaching to the test' rather than teaching to the principles they believe in (and the government says it endorses), something is not right.

However, TLRP findings have begun to influence policy. The new 21st Century Science GCSE course launched in September 2006, is based on EPSE research, and melds content and assessment in a coherent way.

The project on pupil consultation, in England, has shown that being able to talk about their own learning helps students become better able to manage it, more confident and positive about education and able to contribute to the development of the school. This pupil engagement gives teachers a deeper insight into their pupils' capabilities. A related project, on assessment in Northern Ireland, makes the point that such consultation is an obligation under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Learning How to Learn study concluded that the ultimate goal of assessment for learning is to promote learning autonomy so that pupils can reflect on where they are and where they need to go, and then act in such a way as to get there. **GTC**

a class of 25 or 30, it can be difficult to determine each one's starting point. The EPSE project has found that carefully designed tools, underpinned by solid research, can quickly 'diagnose' children's understanding of key science ideas and inform what the teacher does next.

Pressure to cover an overloaded curriculum makes it harder for teachers to find the time to diagnose individual children's needs, and a number of TLRP projects challenged teachers' assumptions about some groups of children. Teachers involved in the Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools project in England and Wales began to see that they could help change pupils' attitudes, self-esteem and engagement with learning; these were not fixed.

A Perspective on Dyslexia

Dyslexia

As part of our continuing coverage of special needs issues, Valerie Haugh, Head of the Belfast Education and Library Board Peripatetic Support Service, considers dyslexia and signposts teachers to a range of useful sources of information.

What is dyslexia?

Most children learn to read and spell with relative ease while others have significant difficulty. Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which is neurobiological in origin and persists across the lifespan. Our knowledge of dyslexia and its associated learning difficulties is evolving and changing, but there is now an established consensus that it is a type of learning difficulty affecting specifically language and reading and writing skills.

It cannot be denied that dyslexia has a genetic basis and much research is available to support this precept, see Fisher et al 2002, in Turner, T. and Rack, J. (2004) *The Study of Dyslexia*, New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers. However, environmental causes are not ruled out and children with poor language development may also develop reading problems. Moreover, brain imaging studies have shown us the neurological signature of dyslexia and intervention studies show that the brain is malleable and responds to intervention.

These implications are far reaching and encouraging. Dyslexia is not just a matter of children 'not trying hard enough', it has a real biological basis but through effective teaching neural pathways can be altered and strengthened and the development of

reading skills improved for those with dyslexia.

Defining dyslexia

The definition of dyslexia most commonly in use in Northern Ireland is presented in the *Report of the Northern Ireland Task Group on Dyslexia* (2002) and can be accessed at www.deni.gov

In understanding dyslexia in this way, there is good evidence for the efficacy for early identification and the development of early intervention programmes that address these difficulties. The need for structured, multi-sensory, sequential teaching in the early stages of school cannot be over emphasised.

“ Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, writing and/or number, such difficulties being unexpected in relation to an individual's other abilities. Dyslexia can be characterised at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically described by inefficient information processing, working memory rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing and motor skills may also be present. ”

In practical terms for the classroom teacher, this definition of dyslexia is best described by the Northern Ireland Regional Strategy Group for Special Education (Educational Psychologists), as a continuum of difficulties in learning to read, spell or write, which persists despite appropriate learning opportunities. These difficulties are not typical of performance in most other cognitive and academic areas and may be associated with difficulties in phonological processing, short-term memory, sequencing, number skills, motor function and organisational ability.

How does dyslexia affect motivation and self-esteem?

Motivation to learn is central to overcoming literacy difficulties. Students with dyslexia frequently develop negative attitudes to reading and writing activities and sometimes to the whole process of learning. They can often display difficulty in concentrating, difficulty in organising themselves, and may develop avoidance tactics in the classroom. Unidentified problems can lead to a downward spiral of declining vocabulary poor self esteem and dissatisfaction.

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Resources for teachers

It is not within the scope of this article to provide in-depth guidance but the following resources will prove helpful.

Dyslexia can be a major cause of underachievement among learners and low expectations among teachers compounds this belief. Dyslexia can be seen within a continuum of mild to severe and it is only those with a significant discrepancy between the literacy attainment and ability, who will have access to additional specialist provision offered by Education and Library Boards. It is, therefore, imperative that class teachers are given the skills and knowledge necessary to address the difficulties in the classroom. Developing a culture of inclusion through good classroom practice is needed to support pupils with dyslexia. Well planned interventions and appropriate professional development for teachers should be part of the school's aim in developing a dyslexia friendly learning environment and empowering teachers

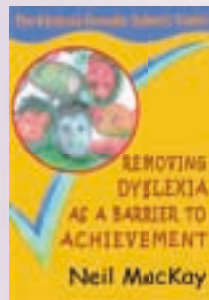
The way forward

In the near future, the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) will provide the mechanism for change. It is the responsibility of educationalists, anticipating major change in the delivery of education in Northern Ireland, to take on board the needs of all learners, including pupils with dyslexia. A framework of support will be necessary to ensure that pupils' needs are adequately met within the mainstream environment. Support for teachers in dealing with pupils with dyslexia needs to be a priority.

For further information contact:
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The Department of Education (NI) has produced *Developing a Dyslexia Friendly Learning Environment*. This handbook which gives lots of practical guidance on identification and intervention. The accompanying CD/DVD and video offers a comprehensive overview of research and practice in dyslexia. It provides a range of assessment and teaching strategies that can be applied in mainstream primary and secondary schools.



In his book *Removing Dyslexia as a Barrier to Achievement*, published by SEN Marketing, Neil MacKay states, "in the mainstream classroom, dyslexia is a specific learning difference which becomes a difficulty when ignored, dismissed or badly addressed." The book provides strategies for overcoming barriers to learning in the primary school and shows that the effects of dyslexia can be minimised with effective teaching and adaptation to tasks through differentiation.



Increasingly dyslexia is becoming a whole-school issue. The responsibility for addressing the needs of students with dyslexia no longer rests with one individual but is the responsibility of all school staff: subject specialists, support staff and school management. Gavin Reid's book *Dyslexia: Successful Inclusion in the Secondary School*, addresses this need by providing specific guidance to secondary school staff on how to support dyslexic students within different subject areas and within the principles and practices of inclusion.

Peer, L. and Reid, G. (eds), (2001), *Dyslexia: Successful Inclusion in the Secondary School*, London: David Fulton Publishers.

The Global Dimension in Schools

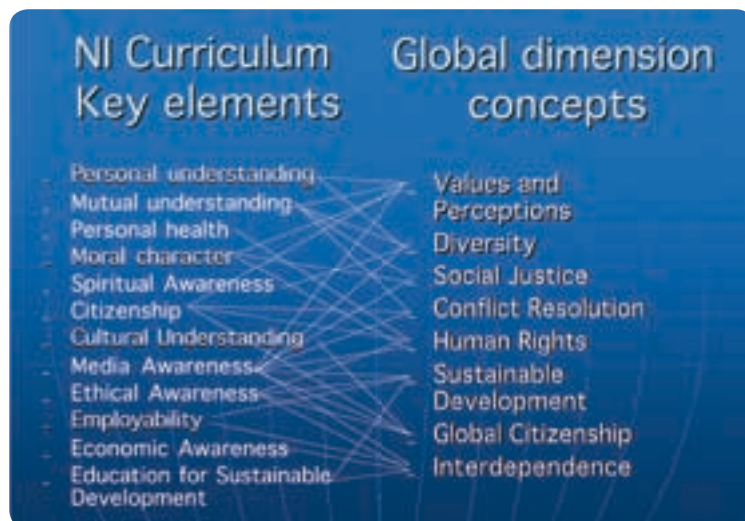
In the following article, Nora McQuaid provides an overview of the 'Global Dimension in Schools NI' project and outlines how it matches with key elements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

The Global Dimension School NI is the Northern Ireland Regional Project for the Department for International Development's EES (Enabling Effective Support) initiative. The aim of the initiative is to provide educators with effective and sustained support to incorporate the global dimension into the teaching of all the Northern Ireland Curriculum Learning Areas.

There are eight main 'Global Dimension' concepts:

- 1. Values and Perceptions:** helping young people develop multiple perspectives, including an understanding of the power of the media. This allows young people to challenge assumptions and stereotypes.
- 2. Diversity:** enabling young people to not just tolerate but understand and respect diversity in our societies.
- 3. Social Justice:** allowing students to understand the impact of unequal power, challenge prejudice and injustice and how they affect past and present politics.
- 4. Conflict Resolution:** enabling young people to develop skills of communication and negotiation.
- 5. Human Rights:** understanding and valuing our common humanity with all people all over the world.
- 6. Sustainable Development:** allowing students to understand and respect the environment; understanding that the earth's resources are finite and see the interconnections between environmental and economic spheres.
- 7. Global Citizenship:** helping young people to appreciate the global context of local and national issues.
- 8. Interdependence:** understanding that people, places, economies and environments are interrelated; causes and effects of the imbalanced nature of interdependence; choices and events that occur here have repercussions on a global scale and vice versa.

The mapping of these eight concepts to the Northern Ireland Curriculum (shown below), illustrates how the Global Dimension in Schools NI project can be used by teachers in support of lessons related to curriculum objectives.



The Global Dimension in Schools NI is currently extending its programme to provide further support for teachers in respect of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Activities involving schools directly will include the production of Global Dimension Thematic Units for Key Stage 3 and a Global Dimension Guide for Teachers. A series of Global Dimension INSET days for primary, post-primary and special educational needs teachers in each ELB region will commence in May 2009 and run until June 2010. Contributions towards supply cover will be provided.



A website that provides teachers with relevant resources materials and information on the education services offered by development NGOs and statutory bodies is www.globaldimensioninschools.org

For more information on this programme please contact:

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Online Learning and Teaching for Educators Programme

Geraldine Taggart, one of the elearning development officers at the Regional Training Unit, describes their innovative Online Learning and Teaching for Educators Programme.

The 13th November 2008 saw a unique graduation event in Belfast Castle. Over 50 post-primary teachers and officers from the education support services (ELBs, ETI, and CCEA) were presented with their certificates for successfully completing the RTU Online Learning and Teaching for Educators Programme (OLTE) by Mr Gordon Topping, Chief Executive of the North Eastern Education and Library Board.

The OLTE programme was established in 2003 by the RTU to meet the Department of Education's (DE) requirement for a continuing professional development (CPD) programme that would help address the overarching goal of the Education Technology Strategy:

“ That all young people should be learning, with, through and about the use of digital and online technologies. ”

In 2007/08 the Department of Education funded the first post-primary teachers' places on the OLTE programme to assist schools address 3 target areas:

- developing a strategic approach to ICT developments and online learning in particular;
- developing collaborative arrangements between schools in general and Learning Communities in particular; and
- broadening curriculum provision for pupils from age 14 onwards.

The RTU OLTE programme will be complemented by an ICT Strategic Leadership Programme during the spring and summer terms.



In addition to this strategic approach to schools, individual teachers involved have been required to reflect on their practice, develop resources, plan for delivery, teach and assess their pupils in an online environment. This valuable CPD opportunity allows teachers to revisit the GTCNI Teacher Competences and can be used towards Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD) requirements.

The first cohort of teachers developed and delivered a range of online courses including GCSE History Revision, GCE Science, and Modern Languages. For a full list of courses please see the Regional Training Unit (RTU) website: <http://www.rtuni.org>

Following on from the OLTE programme three post-OLTE projects are being developed for full-course delivery within a number of 'Learning Communities': GCSE Double Award

Engineering, Certificate of Personal Education (CoPE) and GCSE ICT.

This academic year two cohorts of teachers have enrolled on OLTE and have successfully completed Unit 1. They embarked on Unit 2 in January 2009, to be followed by Unit 3 in the summer term and have a target for running their online courses in September.

The Department of Education has invited a limited number of other post-primary schools to apply for OLTE for the academic year 2009/10. Priority will be given to applications from schools within 'Learning Communities' which have had no access to OLTE training in previous cohorts, which clearly identify partner schools and have begun to consider which courses could form the basis for Unit 3 of OLTE. Further details may be found on the RTU website <http://www.rtuni.org> **GTC**



Programme Management Board: Update

As part of the Council's commitment to helping teachers respond to the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum we are publishing three updates from the Project Management Board outlining recent support initiatives.

Online dimension to training goes live

A major online learning experience, involving 3,000 primary teachers across Northern Ireland, went live earlier this term as part of the ongoing implementation of the revised curriculum.

The regional support programme for Year 3, 4, and 7 teachers now incorporates a supported self-study day on Day 2, accessed online using the LearningNI environment.

This innovative addition to teachers' continuing professional development forms part of a blended approach to learning, combining face-to-face contact with online opportunities, allowing for a more personalised and flexible learning experience for teachers.

Day Two of the programme entitled, *Questioning for Learning*, focuses on reflective enquiry and teachers are invited to examine how they use effective questioning to improve children's thinking and learning.

Teachers will be prepared for the online dimension to the programme on Day 1 of their training. They will be shown where within the LearningNI environment to find the task outline, a range of resources including DVD clips and practical materials to help them think about and plan their enquiry.

A pro forma has been provided to enable teachers to record the purpose of their questioning, the approaches they used and their reflection about impact. To maximise collaborative learning, this will be used for sharing practice on Day 3 of the programme.

The online element of this programme was developed by the regional Primary subgroup of the Partnership Management Board (PMB) and builds on last year's successful pilot of online learning developed and implemented by the Curriculum Advisory Support Services' officers in the Southern Education and Library Board.

Parents' programme

A television programme produced specifically for the parents of Northern Ireland school children will be broadcast in March 2009.

The 30 minute programme, which aims to provide an overview of the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum for parents of school children across all Key Stages, will be broadcast from mid-March onwards on Information TV, a Sky Satellite Channel (Sky 166 & 167). It will also be broadcast online on North Eastern Education and Library Board Television (NEELB TV).

Principals will receive further information when the exact broadcast date has been confirmed.

This studio-based programme, recorded in the NEELB TV studio in Antrim, will have a 'Question Time' feel to it, with a panel of principals and teachers from the

primary, post-primary and special school sectors, in addition to an audience of parents who will have the opportunity to put any questions they have relating to the revised curriculum to members of the panel. Live video links will include parents from other Education and Library Board areas.

Education Minister Caitriona Ruane, Employment and Learning Minister Sir Reg Empey and Nigel Smyth from the Confederation of British Industry will also contribute to the programme.

NEELB TV is a web-based educational television channel developed and managed by the North Eastern Education and Library Board. The channel's underlying aim is to provide video and audio resources for the education community in Northern Ireland and further afield that can be accessed in a variety of formats, on demand and at a time that suits the viewer.

Currently, NEELB TV hosts a number of online CPD resources for teachers covering a wide range of topics from School Management and Development, Early Professional Development, Extended Schools, to



Programme Management Board: Update

Early Years. The latest to be added to NEELB TV is a series of ten programmes, funded by The Department of Education in Northern Ireland and The Department of Education and Science in the Republic of Ireland, reflecting key aspects of the primary curricula on both sides of the border. All ten programmes were also broadcast on Sky via the Information TV Channel.

Central to the production of programmes for NEELB TV is a new television studio in Antrim Board Centre and 'The Truck', a bespoke outside broadcast vehicle similar to those operated by mainstream television companies.

Further information can be found at www.neelb.tv



Coming soon – Big Training Calendar

The Big Training Calendar – an online directory listing details of forthcoming training courses for teaching professionals working in Northern Ireland – is due to be launched next term.

This new web-based facility, hosted by C2k, will allow principals, senior managers and classroom teachers to view all the training and support events that are available to their schools.

Users will be able to access the Big Training Calendar at school via a new icon which will appear on their C2k desktop or outside school via a link located on the Northern Ireland Curriculum

website <http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/> For security reasons all users will need to use their existing C2k username and password to gain access to the calendar.



A number of key training providers have contributed to this online resource; these include; CCEA, CASS, the ELBs and RTU NI.

When the Big Training Calendar is launched, users will be able to search for courses using a combination of drop down menus located on the home page; e.g. by board area, key stage, course theme, or area of learning. Please note that courses listed cannot be booked using the Big Training Calendar.

Full contact details for course bookings will be included at the end of each training course entry.

Further information will be distributed to schools prior to the calendar being launched. **GTC**

Nursery School and Unit Provision: A Unique Experience

Sharon Beattie, Principal of Dromore Nursery School and National Vice-Chair of Early Education, outlines some of the challenges and uncertainties facing colleagues in the nursery sector. She makes the case for a teacher-led nursery sector as a necessary condition for excellence of provision.

Nursery School and Unit Provision in Northern Ireland occupies a unique position within the overall picture of education. Nursery schools and units have been traditionally staffed by qualified teachers assisted by qualified nursery assistants and subject to ETI inspections. However, the provision is non-statutory and this leads to an anomaly unparalleled in any other sector of education. This situation arises from the onset of the Pre-School Expansion Programme in 1998. At that time, it was decided that pre-school provision should be non-statutory because only around 60% of parents chose to enter their children into a nursery place. This position has significantly changed, in the school year 2007/2008, there was as much as a 98% uptake of pre-school places across Northern Ireland. In the current school year some 22,291 children are presently being educated in our nursery schools and units.

Owing to the significant rise in demand there is not enough nursery and unit based places available to meet the government's commitment to provide a place for every pre-school child who wished to avail of one. Subsequently, funded places were awarded to voluntary and private providers. This provision is not necessarily staffed by qualified teachers and, in many cases, the nursery assistants – some of whom may be leading the practice – are only qualified to NVQ level II standard. Thus, we have a sector with mixed provision expected to deliver the same curriculum. This raises possible equality issues in terms of skills, expertise and salaries.



Nursery School and Unit Provision: A Unique Experience

From their inception, nursery schools and units have been inclusive of both special needs and across religious and cultural divides, traditionally catering for 3 and 4 year olds in the years before compulsory education commences. Most nursery schools stand in their own grounds and have their own Principal and Board of Governors, in line with primary schools.

Pre-School education has its own curriculum which presently stands outside the foundation stage, this once again places the nursery sector in a unique position compared to our colleagues in England, Scotland and Wales. Whilst all other areas of the United Kingdom, acknowledge the educational merit and long-term impact quality teacher-led nursery experience has on children, by including the nursery sector as part of the foundation stage, Northern Ireland had consistently failed to do this.

Recently, teachers in nursery education have felt under considerable threat as provision in the private/voluntary sector is increasing and this sector has gained a significant voice.

We eagerly await the 0-6 Strategy Consultation which has been promised to look at existing provision and future planning. As a body of teachers, we hope that recent research such as the OECD report, *Starting Strong, Early Childhood Education and Care* and the *Effective Pre-School Provision in Northern Ireland*, (EPPNI) findings, will form the basis for such a review. This research highlights that the benefits of pre-school education are clearly linked to better outcomes and the EPPNI report clearly identifies that children benefit more from teacher-led environments. Will this prove to be the catalyst for change or will a cheaper, less qualified workforce be favoured?

Teachers in the nursery sector appreciate the value of partnership working for the good of each individual child. However, we have grave concerns that the current policy direction is detrimental to the quality of provision in the sector. We want to see government policy shaping a future for pre-school provision, modelled on the existing good practice and wealth of expertise which already exists within the

nursery schools and units across Northern Ireland. Given that the pre-school sector will occupy one third of the 0-6 strategy, the child's right to quality, teacher-led provision must remain firmly at the centre of the new proposals; we must not lose sight of what is proven by research to be best for the child in our changing culture. Partnership working to provide and deliver an age appropriate and quality pre-school education is essential. This can only be achieved if the government in Northern Ireland is prepared to invest heavily and show a real commitment to achieving this, by making a teacher-led nursery sector a statutory provision!

Nursery teachers need to be proactive in their approach. For too long, early years teachers in Northern Ireland have quietly provided exemplary and highly creative practice, reaching a wide range of children and families with differing needs and backgrounds, with insufficient recognition. Now is the time for teachers in the nursery sector to have a united voice and showcase the excellent practice that exists across Northern Ireland. **GTC**



The Boat Factory

In the article that follows, Philip Crawford Project Director of the Lyric Theatre's off-site education programme describes the appeal of The Boat Factory, a new play by Dan Gordon written for Key Stage 2 pupils and co-funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Ulster Scots Agency.

The story of Willie McCandless, a new apprentice at the Shipyard in the late 1950s, is at the heart of this innovative project. Each school is given a budget of £1000, 15 two-hour sessions with a professional theatre practitioner, and access to costume, lighting and set designers to help them mount a production in their school, with a cast of their pupils, to an audience of their choosing.

Billy Macauley, Principal of Black Mountain Primary School in West Belfast, was quick to spot the potential of the project in delivering the revised curriculum:

"Few would question the benefits of young people working with others through drama, but this challenging and engaging project has been wholeheartedly embraced by Linda Higginson and Julia Bowers, teachers in Black Mountain Primary. Working with mentor, Antoinette Morelli, they have cleverly integrated the material into a variety of curriculum areas."

Billy goes on:

"We've all smiled at the classic tales of new hands sent for 'tartan paint' and 'buckets of steam,' However, discussion on whether these were harmless pranks or something more hurtful formed the basis of sessions on Personal Development and Mutual Understanding. In Geography, using compass points, pupils plotted the course of ships that set sail from Belfast. The history of the shipyard provided opportunities to look at the lives and roles of the workers and to consider the economic aspects of the industry in the local area. Living

history was in action when an 11 year old pupil, Stephen Spence, was inspired to visit his great grandfather to record on video his first-hand accounts of his life at Harland & Wolff."

The project encourages schools to follow the model of a small-scale theatre company; and so in art classes children design promotional posters and by writing notes for the programme they develop their literacy skills. By deciding how the budget should be spent

provides a stimulating application of mathematics and numeracy.

The project aims to enhance and support the skills of both staff and pupils. While the relationship between the mentor and the teachers will inevitably vary according to experience, it is hoped that for all concerned, the knowledge gained will be sustainable and lead to enthusiastic participation in the 'Arts' in the future. **GTC**



Stephen Spence (pupil) with Linda Higginson (P6 Teacher) and Billy Macauley (Principal).

