



General Teaching Council  
for Northern Ireland

General Teaching Council for NI

# termtalk

The Official Newsletter of the General Teaching Council

JUNE 09

## termtalk



It is perhaps appropriate that, in this our final **termtalk** of the school year, we should feature our new Chief Inspector's first general report. Covering the years

2006-2008, and reflecting on future challenges, the report poses the seminal question: "Are we doing well enough?"

However, this question is not for teachers and schools alone; the challenges facing us in this era of financial turbulence must be faced collectively by policy makers, administrators, teachers and indeed parents.

It was in recognition of this reciprocity of responsibilities that GTCNI published its *Charter for Education* calling on all partners, "to commit (themselves) to the promotion of education as a liberating enterprise."

Success in this noble enterprise requires an openness to debate and an honest commitment to set aside self-interest in pursuit of, as the Charter says: "The development of an education service that ensures excellence for all irrespective of ability or needs."

As we approach the new era of the ESA, it is surely time for all of us, and potentially our politicians, to seek a new consensus. The GTCNI Charter offers, we believe, a firm basis for renewing discussions on the nature and purposes of our education system. We need as a matter of urgency to redouble our efforts to address the issues surrounding selection, our children deserve no less.

*Eddie McArdle*

Eddie McArdle  
Registrar, GTCNI

## The Chief Inspector's Report: Celebration and Challenge



Kirsty Adair, Antrim P.S. and Stanley Goudie, Chief Inspector, ETI at the launch of the Chief Inspector's Report, W5, Belfast

**The launch of the Chief Inspector's Report 2006–2008, on January 28, was a significant event not long after my appointment on 1 September 2008 to the post of Chief Inspector of the Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate). The European Year of Creativity and Innovation provided the backcloth for the launch, a fitting tribute to the creative and innovative teaching that many of my colleagues see across the education, youth and training sectors in Northern Ireland (NI). The venue – W5 – and the**

**presentations – by a range of children and young people, adult learners and trainee teachers – underlined the importance of all of those different elements which make up education, from pre-school through to adulthood.**

The primacy of the learner lies at the heart of the work of the Inspectorate, and is the connecting thread within and across education, youth and training provision in both formal and non-formal settings. In all of our

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**GTCNI – a new voice for teachers**

# The Chief Inspector's Report: Celebration and Challenge

(continued from page 1)

inspections and surveys for the three Departments for whom we work – the Department of Education (DE), the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) – the focus is on the benefits for the learner and the extent to which standards are raised.

Each report from the Chief Inspector identifies where there have been improvements since the previous report, and where further work is required if we are to cater adequately for the needs and aspirations of our children, young people and adult learners in a world influenced increasingly by changes on a local and global scale. The 2006–2008 report, based on the evidence from over 1,300 visits, identifies where education, training and youth provision is at its best; and I acknowledge and salute the work whereby principals, management teams, teachers, and those in the support services, achieve and sustain outstanding outcomes for those children, young people and adult learners in their charge. Many dedicated and talented individuals make a real difference to the life chances of learners from a wide range of social backgrounds.

A majority of our children, young people and adult learners continue to achieve well and there has been improvement over the reporting period. However, the data also shows that consistently, for a minority of learners, the standards of achievement continue to be too low. The raising of standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy, in order to improve the life chances of all

children and young people therefore needs to be the cornerstone of the work in schools and other educational settings. In short, we must focus our efforts clearly on narrowing the gap between the richer educational parts of our society and those where there is the poverty of social deprivation, educational under-achievement and, increasingly, mental health problems.

Based on the findings from inspection, there are three main themes which run through the report and which should guide the future work of the education, youth and training sectors:

- building more effectively on the skills, knowledge and attributes which the learner has developed in the preceding phase;
- helping learners to understand better the connections in their individual programmes of learning, and how that learning connects to a better future for them and their community; and
- including all learners and working together to help them to achieve their full potential.

Building more effectively on the skills, knowledge and attributes of the learner at key transition points – from pre-school to primary, from primary to post-primary and across the different sectors at post-primary level – requires a strong focus on pupils as individuals, school accountability and self-evaluation and the effective use of data, in the context of **Every School a Good School**. There remains the need in both the primary and post-primary sectors for the more effective use of comparative

data and bench-marking to inform planning and the work of the school.

Initiatives such as Specialist Schools and the Vocational Enhancement Programme have encouraged schools to work together more; and the current Area Learning Communities are an initial response to a very particular educational development. However, we can learn from their experience as they highlight practical problems such as governance, continuity of pastoral care, sharing expertise and resources, communication and travel, and learn from how there can be strength in sharing rather than in competition. The wide range of reviews currently underway in DE, including area-based planning, and the policies which ensue, need to be interrelated and must have as their key focus, the needs of learners and more coherent educational provision than currently exists.

Helping learners to understand better the connections in their individual programmes of learning, and how that learning connects to a better future for them and their community is a role not only for schools but for the soon to be established Education and Skills Authority (ESA). It is to the credit of those involved in education administration that, despite delays in the Review of Public Administration process, they have continued to deliver services to the NI community; the recent announcement to have the ESA in place by January 2010 has galvanised thinking and served to bring a degree of certainty to the future direction of educational services and support. The real and difficult challenge is the



Department of  
**Education**

[www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)



Department for  
**Employment  
and Learning**

[www.delni.gov.uk](http://www.delni.gov.uk)



Department of  
**Culture, Arts  
and Leisure**

[www.dcalni.gov.uk](http://www.dcalni.gov.uk)

# The Chief Inspector's Report: Celebration and Challenge



Stanley Goudie, Chief Inspector, Education and Training Inspectorate

establishment of a more sustainable system, while meeting parental choice.

There continues to be the need for the more effective integration of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. In addition, almost two-fifths of schools need to make the experiences which learners have with Information and Communication Technology more motivating and challenging. The report acknowledges the good and improved leadership provided by the principal and the area co-ordinators in many schools. It also highlights the need for improvement in a significant minority of schools. In the majority of lessons observed in both the primary and post-primary sectors, the quality of teaching was

evaluated as good or better. The challenge for leadership is how to disseminate and share the good to outstanding practice across the school to the benefit of the learners. The report is a wake-up call to promote improvement for the one-fifth of children who do not attain appropriate standards in literacy and numeracy in primary schools, and for the one-third of pupils in post-primary schools who do not attain five subjects at grades A\*- C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education.

All educational leaders need to be confident that they are including all learners and working together to help them to achieve their full potential. The pastoral issues which

often inhibit the ability of learners to achieve as well as they could are increasingly more complex and sensitive. Schools have long recognised the importance of the pastoral role played by teachers but have varied capacity to provide the pastoral support that is needed, in particular for learners whose behaviour is more challenging. Overall, schools need to improve their capacity to support the pastoral and educational needs of those learners most at risk, including those who are marginalised or who simply do not attend school. The formal and non-formal sectors need to learn from one another how to build their capacity in order to meet these complex pastoral needs more effectively.

# The Chief Inspector's Report: Celebration and Challenge

Almost 54,000 pupils are identified with special educational needs in mainstream schools, representing almost 17% of the school population and showing a rise year on year. Schools need to strengthen further their capacity to identify and meet needs early and to monitor and track the pupils' progress over time. The quality of teaching and learning in mainstream schools is underpinned by high levels of care and commitment of the teachers and a good range of teaching skills. The provision of good support for those pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools is improving but, in the majority of schools inspected, it is not good enough.

An essential part of any improvement agenda is meeting effectively the continuing professional needs of those with the responsibility of educating our children, young people and adult learners. Effective strategic leadership at all levels, from DE through to the leadership within schools, will take account of the wider social and political needs of the community but will ensure that each learner is supported well in order to play an active role in the community. To identify continuing professional needs, and to access what will support improvement in the ever-increasing range of services in both formal and non-formal education, will

require further development in the processes of monitoring and evaluation.

There are significant policy and societal changes that influence the work of all educational organisations. Staff, particularly those with curriculum and pastoral responsibilities, play a critical role in ensuring that young people are ready to learn and that the quality of their learning is of the highest standard. There is a need to ensure proportionately sufficient investment in the development of the teachers and the educational workforce compared with that invested in changing structures and systems.

Teachers, leaders and other education, youth and training providers know their communities and their young people well; they will continue to strive to do their best for them and to effect any necessary change. In doing so, they will need absolute clarity about the longer and shorter term goals for education, coupled with ongoing support, reassurance and the necessary professional development.

The essence of the report is to ask the question, "Are we doing well enough?" At whatever level we support the learner, we need to reflect on our practice. We must have higher expectations of ourselves and of our children, young people and adult learners; we must

give them and their communities the confidence to pursue the best outcomes for themselves.

I commend the report to you for further consideration of the detail. I hope that it will direct the actions towards improvement for the learners by all of those involved in education, youth and training, and not least by those in my own organisation. **GTC**



# GTCNI Notice Board

## Join up to Microsoft

Join the Microsoft Innovative Teachers Network for NI and be part of a global community of educators who share a common interest in enhancing teaching and learning through the innovative use of information and communication of technology (ICT). ([www.innovativeteachersni.com](http://www.innovativeteachersni.com))



## International Year of Astronomy 2009

As part of International Year of Astronomy 2009, the Irish Astronomical Association is pleased to announce a competition, with substantial prizes, for all ages, and in various categories.



Entries can be made in any one, or more than one, of the following subject areas: astronomy, cosmology, manned spaceflight, rocketry, unmanned space research, 'aliens' or possible life elsewhere in the universe, light pollution, telescopes and other astronomical instruments and observatories, possible future human travel to the stars, astronomy/space and the environment, astronomy/space and our culture and heritage etc.

*Age Groups:* Entries will be divided into several age groups to encourage children and young people to enter. Schools are encouraged to promote this competition, and to encourage their pupils to enter, but it is a condition of entry that the work is all that of the entrant, and not partly that of a teacher or parent or other older person!

*Eligibility:* The competition is open to anyone resident in Ireland (North and South) during the period 1 January to 31 October 2009.

For further details and conditions please visit the website of the Irish Astronomical Association <http://www.irishastro.org>

## GTCNI Student Teacher Award



Emma Culbert recently graduated from the Open University and was doubly delighted to be awarded the GTCNI Student Teacher Award at the graduation ceremony at the Waterfront Hall on 16th May.

Sally McKee (GTCNI Chair) presenting Emma Culbert with the GTCNI Student Teacher Award 2008

## Pupils making a beeline to London

Congratulations to pupils and teachers at the North Coast Integrated College, Coleraine and St Louis' Grammar school, Ballymena, who are through to the semi-finals of the Times 'Spelling Bee' Championship. The winning team from each semi-final will compete in the grand final at the West End Odeon, Leicester Square, London on 23rd June 2009.

## Bursary Opportunities!

The Department of Education has asked GTCNI to administer a small-scale STEM\* Bursary Programme. In addition, the Council will also provide a limited number of bursaries for teachers who wish to apply for financial support to help them engage in professional development activities unrelated to STEM. Application forms are available for downloading from the GTCNI website [www.gtcni.org.uk](http://www.gtcni.org.uk) The closing date for the receipt of applications is Monday 14 September.

\* Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, broadly interpreted.

# Effective teaching and learning

Following on from our coverage of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) in the March 2009 edition of *termtalk*, Diane Hofkins, former assistant editor of the *Times Educational Supplement*, looks at the data and philosophy behind principles 6 to 10 that have been developed by the TLRP based on research evidence from 22 school projects about what really makes a difference in the classroom.

## 6 Promotes the active engagement of the learner

If a key goal of education is to promote students' autonomy and encourage them to have positive attitudes to learning, it needs to start at the youngest age. The EPPE research shows the importance of encouraging child-initiated activities as well as ones set in train by adults.

The Learning How to Learn project showed – perhaps ironically – that teachers who took responsibility for their pupils' self motivation (and did not blame home circumstances or adolescence) had the most engaged groups of students. The most effective teachers organised open, fluid activities. The pupil consultation studies found that children develop a stronger sense of self-worth when they are able to talk about their learning. Classroom tasks allowed students to enter the subject community, to behave as a scientist, an historian or an artist. In addition, pupils are more likely to be engaged with schooling when they are consulted and their views treated with respect.

## 7 Fosters both individual and social processes and outcomes

Learning is a social activity. It demands interaction with other minds. TLRP studies on groupwork, teacher learning and inclusion, among others,

show that when schools function as genuine learning communities, students and teachers thrive both collectively and as individuals. Pupils who worked effectively in groups also did measurably better on individual exams than those who had other forms of teaching and learning. The SPRinG and ScotSPRinG projects found that in key stages 2 and 3, children who worked effectively together made gains in their inferential thinking and their higher cognitive understanding. Groupwork also improved social relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers. In *From Black Boxes to Glass Boxes*, experiments carried out with older students, using concept-mapping software, also showed that opportunities for students to discuss their maps with others was the significant factor in raising attainment.

The dramatic impact of teachers learning together is also being recognised throughout the world of education.

## 8 Recognises the significance of informal learning

Everyone now recognises that parents are children's first educators, but it can still be difficult to connect home learning with school learning. In the Home-School Knowledge Exchange primary pupils took photos to show the maths and literacy activities they were doing at home. Maths activities included cooking, shopping, playing board games, setting timers and consulting timetables.

Children were also asked to compile a shoebox of artefacts from home called *All about Me*, which enabled teachers and other pupils to find out about their interests and abilities.

The EPPE research has shown that when parents engage with young children in learning activities at home, children do better later on. In fact,

parents' educational and economic backgrounds are less important than whether or not they provide enriching learning environments at home for children. Tellingly, boys tend to receive less home learning than girls, and this could be one reason why they do less well when they get to school.

Children's lives outside school have a huge impact on who they are as learners. The Identity and Learning Programme, which studied small numbers of children from middle- and working-class backgrounds over time makes clear how family relationships at home and peer friendships in the community affect the self-confidence and belief in themselves as learners which children and young people bring to the challenges of school.

## 9 Depends on teacher learning

This was a consistent theme throughout TLRP findings. The need for teachers to develop their knowledge and skills and initiate their own classroom-based research should be recognised and supported both by government and within schools. Improving outcomes for pupils, however they are defined, often requires teachers to change their classroom practice, sometimes radically. But these innovations can only occur if teachers themselves have learned. It's also important for them to be willing to examine their own practice. The learning How to Learn project found collaborative classroom-based inquiry to be crucial and the project on Using Research Study Lessons shows a specific way of doing this.

Researchers also found that teachers valued materials and courses which could help them implement new

# Effective teaching and learning



superficial. However, as the VITAE (Variations in Teachers' Work and Lives and their Effects on Pupils) project emphasises, teachers' levels of commitment and resilience are a vital condition for change.

## 10 Demands consistent policy frameworks with support for teaching and learning as their primary focus

Government policy should not chop and change every year or two, and ministers should act on the understanding that good pedagogy and pupil engagement will do more to raise standards than league tables and catch-up classes.

If effective teaching and learning are the core functions of schools (and what else could be?) they should be the focus of policy at school and national level. This would give coherence to other policies.

Teachers in a number of TLRP studies believed progress was being made despite government policy rather than because of it. The Learning How to Learn studies, for example, found that "The current performance-orientated climate in schools in England seems to make it difficult for teachers to practice what they value." And the Inclusion study concluded that school leaders should be selected and developed not only on the basis of their managerial skills, but on their values. It said national policy should support teachers who are working collaboratively to use a range of evidence about their teaching (including pupils' attitudes and engagement) "which goes beyond a relatively narrow range of performance indicators". **GTC**

ways of learning or new content. For instance, many of those involved in the project on why morphemes are useful in primary school literacy had to learn about morphemes (units of meaning in words) themselves. They also learned new teaching methods. The Development of Inclusive Practices in Schools study concluded that "at the heart of this process of change were groups of staff involved

in generating and engaging with evidence about practice, and about outcomes for pupils."

The government has been told this before. A much-publicised longitudinal study it commissioned from the University of Ontario on the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy said deep learning was necessary if teachers' grasp of the new policy was to be more than

*A regular feature book-marking educational resource and information websites: this term we look at award-winning education websites.*

*The 'best of the internet' is recognised by the Webby Awards, presented in June by The International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences and by public internet vote. In the education category this year are:*

**Edutopia: the power to educate the digital native!**

[www.edutopia.org](http://www.edutopia.org)



A site from the George Lucas Educational Foundation containing a wide range of interesting and relevant articles, interviews, videos, and audio about what works in education organised round the six concepts of Integrated Studies, Project Learning, Social and Emotional Learning, Teacher Development, Comprehensive Assessment and Technology Integration: so, it's easy to see how it won The People's Voice Award.

**Exploratorium: how do we know what we know?**

[www.exploratorium.edu/evidence](http://www.exploratorium.edu/evidence)



For example, in a case study in human origins, this site, funded by the US National Science Foundation, explores what makes us human – and how we got this way, in the process illuminating the active process of observation and investigation, revealing how ideas and information become knowledge and understanding.

**Smarthistory: dissatisfied with the large expensive art history textbook?**

<http://smarthistory.org/>



Easy also to see how this attractive and informative Art History site, exploring a timeline from 'Antiquity to the Age of Post-Colonialism' won the Webby Award. Smarthistory.org is a free, multi-media, dynamic web-book including videos, pods and tweets.

**The Visual Dictionary Online**

<http://visual.merriam-webster.com/>



From the Groupe Québec Amérique, one of the largest publishing houses in Canada, this dictionary indexes 15 major themes, accesses more than 6,000 images and connects them to words in a way never seen before: easy to get hooked!

Considering the sheer enchantment of these American sites it is good to see at least one from this side of the Pond amongst the nominees.

**The Times Spelling Bee**

[www.timesspellingbee.co.uk](http://www.timesspellingbee.co.uk)

English is, after all, the country's gift to the world but also its home-grown headache! The Spelling Bee aims to help young people to practice their spelling skills and to learn to spell while enjoying a team-based live competition.



**Discovering Antarctica**

<http://www.discoveringantarctica.org.uk/>



A previous Webby nominee, also nominated for a Children's secondary education BAFTA, this interactive tool brings Antarctica to life in the classroom. From the British Antarctic Survey, the Royal Geographical Society and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Polar Regions Unit it comprises interactive activities, video and audio, images and links structured around KS3 and KS4 Geography lessons and the pilot GCSE 'Extreme Environments'.

And finally, emails to [profjohn@gtni.org.uk](mailto:profjohn@gtni.org.uk) bring two Maths favourites.

[www.mmp.maths.org.uk](http://www.mmp.maths.org.uk) a highly useful resource from the University of Cambridge's Millennium Mathematics project, designed for ages 5 to 19 and the general public. Enrichment problems, games and articles aim to develop mathematical knowledge, problem-solving and thinking. A video-conference links schools to mathematicians and scientists to engage in investigative projects. Winner of the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education for 'outstanding achievement and excellence'.



**Luke Robinson**, a maths teacher and web developer now living near Lisburn runs an A-Level maths site at [www.mathsbank.co.uk](http://www.mathsbank.co.uk) with realistic exam-style questions, advice and exam help. Plans are to extend into GCSE and Additional Maths. A subscription site, but free to register with one free access per week.

If you would like to share your favourite website, on any educational theme, please email your links and comments to [profjohn@gtni.org.uk](mailto:profjohn@gtni.org.uk)



# Promoting inclusion in a progressive school

**A ministerial task force is currently reviewing the educational provision made for children from the Traveller community. In light of this, *termtalk* asked Gerry Murphy to provide an overview of the work undertaken to promote inclusion for Traveller and other ethnic minorities children in St Mary's Primary School in Belfast, where he is the principal.**

St Mary's maintained primary school on Divis Street in Belfast is unique among primary schools, in the north of Ireland, in that the majority of pupils attending the school are from the Traveller community. The remainder of the children attending are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds including members of the Polish, Indian, Chinese and Filipino communities. The school is open to any child regardless of ethnic origin and in common with all schools, welcomes children of all faiths and none.

In recent years, the school has continued to progress and develop. The numbers of children attending has almost doubled in the last five years and this trend, in contrast to the experience of many other schools, looks set to continue into

the future. Levels of pupil attainment have also risen and the school continues to embrace change in our efforts to ensure that every pupil attending has the opportunity to access an education that is appropriate to their learning needs. In our view, such an education seeks to balance challenge and opportunities to succeed, for all the children.

As with every other school, success is the result of hard work and positive engagement by the

and traditions. As time passes, the varied ethnic backgrounds of the children, coupled with the flexibility afforded by the Revised Curriculum, has seen a learning environment emerge that is tolerant of difference, promotes respect for the individual and seeks to grow understanding of other cultures.

Although the school may be viewed by some as a type of segregated provision this view is not shared by the school or the Department of Education and the CCMS. St Mary's is a progressive school. It has a

welcoming atmosphere dedicated to providing its pupils with a solid foundation to their educational careers, sufficient to enable them to make the most of their abilities.

The school is supportive of parents' right to choose the school they feel is right for their children and St Mary's continues to work hard to be that school.

The Minister of Education, Catriona Ruane has recently established a task force to examine the way forward for traveller education across the north of Ireland and we in St Mary's are happy to be contributing to this important work. **GTC**

*"the varied ethnic backgrounds of the children coupled with the flexibility afforded by the Revised Curriculum has seen a learning environment emerge that is tolerant of difference, promotes respect for the individual and seeks to grow understanding of other cultures"*

children, their parents, the staff and our educational partners. Key to progress in St Mary's is the quality of the relationships the school has established with the parents. The Traveller community, in particular, have increasingly become involved in the work of the school and Traveller culture is reflected in the children's learning experiences. Those children from a non-Traveller background are also being encouraged to share their culture



# Education at the University of Ulster

In this edition of **termtalk**, the School of Education at the University of Ulster provides an overview of some of its current initiatives to support teachers and schools in Northern Ireland.

## A Masters Level Award

At a time when all involved in education and training in Northern Ireland are facing radical changes and challenges the School of Education (SoE) in the University of Ulster has reviewed its professional development provision in order to support teachers as they respond to the challenging demands being placed on schools. The impact of globalisation, the expansion of the European Union and the needs of a society emerging from conflict as well as the consequences of a changing demographic profile in Northern Ireland all place new pressures on teachers and schools. The SoE offers a range of innovative and flexible programmes which meet the professional needs of teachers. We also have outreach to learning centres at Craigavon, Athlone, Donegal, Letterkenny and Monaghan, as well as on our own campuses at Coleraine, Jordanstown and Magee. Central to all the work of the SoE is an emphasis placed on school improvement, leading and managing change and developing teachers as reflective practitioners.

As an example of the above, teachers who have completed a PGCE in the University of Ulster or, indeed, any other university which awards

masters (M) level credit points, can 'bank' 60 credit points towards a masters degree. Then they only need to take two more modules (rather than the normal four) for their postgraduate diploma and 'top it off' with a dissertation or two other equivalent modules, to raise it to a masters level award. Moreover, once a teacher begins teaching they can document their induction phase within an e-portfolio module, and in their early professional development stage, complete a work-focused module in Research Design and Initiation that will prepare them for the final stages of their masters degree.

For more experienced teachers a modular masters level programme is available which offers a blend of face-to-face teaching and online work in specialist areas relating to:

- Contemporary Society (Essential Learning for a Shared Society; Learning Practices for a Shared Society);
- ICT (Collaborative Learning Online; Leading & Managing);
- Learning and Teaching (Children's Learning & Assessment; Developing Emotional Intelligence);
- TESOL (Teaching English as an Additional Language; Language, Society and the Individual);
- Inclusive & Special Education (Developing Practice; Policy & Practice); and
- Specially commissioned courses in Home Economics and in Pastoral Care.

These options allow teachers to enhance their career prospects, and to see clear links between their professional practice and academic achievement. Anyone with particular needs or requests for course information should contact Dr Tracy Irwin, School of Education, Jordanstown (t.irwin@ulster.ac.uk).

## Local and Global Citizenship

The SoE is also proud of its long history of research and development work in the field of educational responses to conflict. The innovative and risk-taking tradition that was established in the 1970s through projects such as 'Schools' Apart', 'Schools Cultural Studies' and 'Religion in Ireland' has continued over the succeeding decades. More recently, the 'Local and Global Citizenship' programme within the revised curriculum has had its genesis in the UNESCO Centre located within the SOE. This year, Dr Una O'Connor (ub.oconnor@ulster.ac.uk) carried out a detailed evaluation of the implementation of the programme on behalf of CCEA and the UNESCO Centre. This also involved disseminating the experience of Northern Ireland's educators on education and conflict to an international audience through its engagement in comparative research study, conferences, consultancy and developmental work.



Members of the School of Education at a Career Celebration for Dr Jude Collins, University Lecturer, Novelist and Broadcaster



Former President of Ireland (left to right) Mary Robinson, Dr Una O'Connor and Dr Gerry Jeffers of NUI Maynooth



Liz Weir with pupils from Beechfield, Nettlefield and St Matthew's Primary School

## Forward Thinking

Dr Linda Clarke ([lm.clarke@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:lm.clarke@ulster.ac.uk)) is collaborating with Professor Valerie McKelvey-Martin (Principal Investigator, Biomedical Sciences), Dr David Hunter (Bioethics) and Dr Gill Humes (Science Advisory Officer, BELB) on an interdisciplinary project, 'Science in Society', offered to schools by the University of Ulster. It uses *Communities of Enquiry* to engage students in discussion about ethical issues in science including food production, the 'big-bang', human enhancement, and toxic chemicals in our surroundings. It promotes a focus on the cross-curricular skills of communication, using ICT, managing information, working with others, thinking, problem solving and decision making, self-management and being creative and encourages personal responsibility, concern for others, an openness to new ideas, curiosity, community spirit, flexibility, tolerance and respect. Project-related sessions are currently being piloted in a number of post-primary schools throughout Northern Ireland. They can be delivered by embedding them within a subject (for example Science, Citizenship, PSHE, Geography, RE or English); by giving separate *Community of Enquiry* classes; by offering sessions for specifically identified groups of students; by starting an after-school club; or by hosting a 'Philosophy Fortnight'. **GTC**



Forward Thinking pupils at Lumen Christi

## Sparkling the Imagination

The University Outreach Access Fund and a generous external donor have combined to fund a project to promote self-esteem in young children from disadvantaged areas. The work comprises a range of interactive, creative activities designed to offer children, teachers and parents alternative teaching and learning experiences within the framework of the revised curriculum. The activities, each spanning twelve weeks, are led by external specialists. So far, these have included: A Memorable Starting School Experience; Art and Creativity; Physical Development and Movement; Music; Storytelling; Digital Technology; and Drama. The opportunity to nurture self-esteem

amongst pupils through innovative teaching and learning approaches in interactive classrooms is welcomed by everyone involved. Evaluation of the project to date has demonstrated that the pupils have improved in confidence, ability to listen, follow instructions and work collaboratively. Principals, teachers and parents describe the project as an opportunity for children to move beyond the poverty circle and raise the positive motivation of children beyond perceived standards of achievement often associated with more disadvantaged areas.

Project Managers:  
Dolores Loughrey ([md.loughrey@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:md.loughrey@ulster.ac.uk))  
Caroline Woods ([c.woods@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:c.woods@ulster.ac.uk))

# Early Professional Development

One of the aims of **termtalk** is to encourage informed professional discussion and debate. In the article that follows, Dr David Agnew of Wellington College shares with us some of his own research findings and observations relating to early professional development.

## Early Professional Development (2) – Retain, Reform or Reject?

### Introduction

As part of the Master of Teaching (MTeach) course at Stranmillis University College, I completed my final dissertation on 'Strategies for Enhancing and Improving Effective Professional Development for Beginning Teachers at Secondary Level'.

This explored the experiences of newly qualified teachers within early professional development (EPD) and the approaches of teacher-tutors to the induction process. Of the many key issues that arose, one of the most significant was the debate on the continued need – or otherwise – for the EPD (2) year as part of the induction process.

### Do we need EPD (2) and the Professional Development Assignment?

Only three out of the twenty-seven teacher-tutors interviewed were content with the current EPD (2) Professional Development Activity (PDA) arrangements. Indeed, some teacher-tutors believed that both the EPD (1) and EPD (2) stages should be abandoned and induction teachers should move directly from the NQT year to Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD).

However, assuming that the PDAs are to remain in some form, many teacher-tutors proposed a reduction from two PDAs down to a single

PDA. These teacher-tutors felt the second year of EPD merely replicated what had been done in the first EPD year and added nothing to their progress as teachers.

A further option suggested by teacher-tutors was for the PDAs to be altered so as to link directly into the School Development Plan. Supporters of this move argue that it would have the advantage of engaging the induction teacher in a more flexible whole-school process and allow them to work with a wider range of teachers. Another alternative stated by teacher-tutors was for the PDAs to be replaced with a 'reflective diary' which would explicitly encourage reflective practice.

It should be noted that, despite criticisms of the EPD (2) process, teacher-tutors were impressed with the actual PDAs undertaken and produced by the EPD (2) teachers, commenting that the best were

those closely linked to School Development Plans.

### The way forward

My own view is that the current EPD (2) procedures – while not above criticism – do provide for a sound and natural progression within early professional development. The initial one-year Beginning Teacher induction allows the practitioner to continue to improve their teaching and learning experience as a full-time teacher. The EPD (1) and EPD (2) years that follow allow teachers to reflect on thinking about teaching and learning and to present their thoughts, theories and practice within their PDAs. The key is to make each PDA educationally significant and worthwhile; and this is where the induction teachers, their departments, teacher-tutors and schools must liaise and work together to derive the maximum benefit from the process. **GTC**



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