

termtalk

The Official Newsletter of the General Teaching Council

SUMMER 08

termtalk



Welcome to the latest edition of **termtalk**, which should reach you as this school year draws to

a close. The Council recognises that it has been a difficult and challenging year for the teaching profession and I, as Registrar, would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge your ongoing dedication and professionalism in these uncertain times.

In this edition, we report on the Council's Annual Lecture which was given this year by President Mary McAleese, in the magnificent surroundings of the Presbyterian Assembly Hall, Belfast. In addition, there are also articles on a wide range of policy and professional issues, which I hope you will find informative and interesting.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a restful and restorative summer break, and to reassure you that the Council will continue to promote and celebrate the vitally important work undertaken by teachers.

Eddie McArdle

Eddie McArdle
Registrar, GTCNI

The Importance of Teaching



Eddie McArdle (GTCNI Registrar), Dr Martin McAleese, President Mary McAleese and Sally McKee (GTCNI Chair)

On the 18 March 2008, the Council had the honour and privilege of welcoming President Mary McAleese to deliver its third Annual Lecture. In accepting the Council's invitation, the President recognised the unique and important role that teachers have played, and will continue to play, in establishing not only an economically prosperous society but also one in which values provide a sense of cohesion and community.

The President began by reminding the audience of the demands that society now places on schools. She noted that teachers are expected to deal with, among other things, the curriculum, sectarianism, racism, sex education, careers advice, suicide prevention, reporting of neglect or abuse, bullying, drug and alcohol awareness... the list goes on. While not wanting to get into the specifics of any of these issues, the President did emphasise, "the

inestimable value and importance of education and so of teaching to the past, present and future of all of us on this island." However, the efforts of the profession can go unrecognised, and President McAleese made reference to the French American cultural historian and teacher Jaques Barzun, who once said, 'Teaching is not a lost art but the regard for it is a lost tradition.'

The President went on to remind the audience that, "**teaching is a fundamental, a sine qua non, of human progress.**" However, she noted that for the vast majority of the world's children, formal education, as a rite of passage to fulfilling their potential, is still a distant dream. She stated that, "**Wherever people are mired in abject poverty you can be certain that there is educational poverty. Wherever people have transcended poverty and disease you can be sure education was the engine of transcendence.**"

Turning to the remarkable economic developments that have occurred in the Irish Republic in recent years, the

GTCNI – a new voice for teachers

The Importance of Teaching

continued from front cover



President Mary McAleese



The Chapel Choir of Methodist College Belfast in the Assembly Hall

President emphasised that the 'story' began, not in 1973, with membership of the European Union, or 1987, with the construction of social partnership, or with the introduction of a benign corporate tax regime, but with a decision taken at the end of the 1960's to extend free second level education to everyone.

The President then commented that the people who share the island of Ireland are now living in a radically altered environment, one replete with opportunity and hope. Noting the, "**quite extraordinary strides that have been made in the political arena were made against a tide of hurt and cynicism and disbelief**," she suggested that, "**Northern Ireland, with entrepreneurship deep in its DNA**," will make legendary strides in the social and economic spheres. However, she emphasised that the goal of creating a knowledge intensive economy that serves a tolerant, respectful and creative cosmopolitan community will be achieved, not by accident, but rather by design and that teachers are important members of the design team.

Turning again to the many challenges facing the teaching profession, the President referred to the newcomers to Ireland, North and South, and emphasised that, "**schools are often their first point of intersection with a new culture. The once cosy backdrop of a relatively homogeneous society has suddenly given way to a stunning new and young heterogeneity that implicates us deeply, as citizens of Europe and of the World.**"

The President concluded by noting that schools have been in the very frontline of adapting to these changes in demography and she stated, "**I want to acknowledge, with deep admiration and gratitude, the extraordinary efforts made by school staff in coping with the range of human, psychological, cultural and educational issues these profound changes have brought.**"

The Council would like to take this opportunity to thank Ruth McCartney and the Chapel Choir of Methodist College Belfast, as well as Nora O'Baoill and the pupils of Fleming Fulton School, for their respective musical and artistic contributions to the event. Once again, on behalf of the teaching profession, the Council would like to thank President McAleese for her gracious and professionally affirming lecture. **GTC**

GTCNI Notice Board



The Holocaust Educational Trust of Ireland

The Holocaust Educational Trust of Ireland is running three programmes for teachers in 2008.

1. Teaching the Holocaust

Three-day intensive course for teachers on the 18, 19 and 20 August 2008

2. Learning from the Holocaust

Five-day programme including a three-day visit to Krakow, 28-31 October 2008

3. Clergy and School Chaplains

Expenses-paid one week seminar in Israel, 7-17 November 2008

Information can be obtained from the Holocaust Educational Trust of Ireland, Clifton House, Lower Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin 2

Tel: 003531 6690593 email: info@hetireland.org

www.holocausteducationaltrustireland.org

Assessment for Learning

'Assessment for Learning' is central to the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum. This recent publication from the Assessment Reform Group, *Changing Assessment Practice*, will prove to be an invaluable resource for schools as they review and develop their assessment policies and practices.

The resource is available online via the GTCNI Research Repository ARRTS at <http://arrts.gtcni.org.uk>

It can be located in the, 'Reports from the Assessment Reform Group'.



Prestigious Award for Girls' Model

Children at Belfast Model School for Girls are at the forefront of using information and communications technology to enhance their work, and that's official!

Following an extensive external assessment, Girls' Model has been awarded the prestigious ICT Mark by Becta, the British Education Communications and Technology Agency, the government funded body responsible for promoting the use of ICT in Britain's schools and colleges.

The award recognises the school's success in developing the strategic use of ICT in both administration and across the curriculum. Parents will have proof that their children are attending a school at the forefront of modern technology.

The principal, Mr Johnny Graham, commented, "We are delighted to be awarded the ICT Mark. It recognises our positive approach to ICT and the benefits it is bringing to our children. We believe that ICT can be used in every aspect of learning and that it is essential our children are equipped for the modern world."



Neil McLean, Executive Director for Educational Practice at Becta said, "Girls' Model thoroughly deserve the accolade of an ICT mark. They clearly demonstrate how important it is to take a holistic approach to using ICT in schools. Their investment in new technology has contributed to substantial improvements in learning."

GTCNI would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Girls' Model on this important achievement.



Every School a Good School

In January, of this year, the Minister of Education launched an important and strategic consultation – *Every School a Good School (A Policy for School Improvement)* – and it is fair to say that the outworking of this policy will have significant implications for both teachers and schools in the years ahead. In the following article, the Council's Senior Education Officer, reflects on some of the concerns that GTCNI has about the consultation document.

It is important to emphasise that the *Every School a Good School* policy is, at present, only in consultation form and that the Minister, in her foreword to the document, undertook to consider the responses made, so that the policy might be amended or improved. In light of this, the Council has had discussions with the Department of Education to

ensure that its concerns are understood by those charged with revising the policy document.

In responding to the document, the Council noted that the drive for school improvement resonates readily with the profession's commitment to excellence. However, the Council expressed concern that the policy, in its original form, does not adequately address the professionalism of teachers, and the fact that school improvement is ultimately dependent on the work of teachers. Moreover, the document makes no reference to the reality that teaching is now a self-regulating profession, or to the recently published teacher competences. However, the Council notes with approval the Minister's recent endorsement of, *Teaching: the Reflective Profession* and her recognition that school improvement begins in the classroom. The Council has long argued that sustainable school improvement is predicated upon a commitment to both challenge and empower teachers, within professional communities of practice.

It follows from this that a central requirement of any school improvement programme must be the promotion of a culture of reflection and professional responsibility, and the development of programmes that suitably empower teachers to meet the challenges ahead. It is imperative that the new arrangements for continuing professional development (CPD) which emerge, in the wake of the establishment of ESA, are imaginative, innovative and fit-for-purpose. The Council, in its 2005 report on CPD, made a cogent case for a 'mixed-economy' approach to CPD funding, in line with that offered to schools and teachers in Wales. If the profession is to be challenged to deliver and sustain on the improvement agenda then it must, equally, be supported in terms of professional development.

In conclusion, the Council recognises that all children and young people in Northern Ireland have the right to receive the highest possible standard of education, and it will work assiduously with all stakeholders to help ensure that 'every school is indeed a good school'. **GTC**

Retired Teachers' Association

Members of the profession will be interested to know that the Retired Teachers' Association is active in Northern Ireland. In the article that follows Brendan McGlone provides an insight to its wide-ranging work.

The Retired Teachers' Association Northern Ireland (RTANI) is the only Association dealing solely with the concerns and needs of retired teachers. Founded in 1943, initially as the Retired Teachers' Union, it has been influential throughout its 60-year history in highlighting the inadequacies of pension arrangements for teachers.

RTANI is an active member of Age Concern and the Public Service Pensioners' Council, one of whose main functions is to put pressure on the Government on all matters affecting retired public servants.

Current priorities are directed at the cost of long-term care, the reduction of National Health provision and the continued erosion of both State and Public Service Pensions.

We have over 3,000 members belonging to eleven branches

throughout Northern Ireland, and each branch has officers who are keen to advise members on branch events and leisure activities. Members are drawn from every education sector: school, college, further education, integrated, maintained, nursery, primary, and post-primary and include members from all unions and associations.

RTANI has an active social calendar with leisure activities in all areas throughout the year. These range from visits to various places of interest, e.g. Doagh Island, the Organic Centre at Rossinver, Christmas lunches, dinners throughout the Province and addresses by local speakers on a variety of topics ranging from Salmon Fishing to Tracing your Ancestors, the Islands of Ireland and Emigration from Ulster. Entertainment in the past year has included theatre visits and visits by local artists.

We are a working organisation however, and continue to try to increase our membership and improve the conditions for retired teachers in Northern Ireland. So, when you succeed in reaching your goal, that is, retirement, after a long and successful

career, we will heartily welcome you to RTANI and thus ensure that the voice of pensioner teachers is united in pursuit of its goals!

It's so simple to become a member of the Retired Teachers' Association; all you need do is contact the Hon. Secretary RTANI, details below, who will forward you an invitation card asking for your name, address, a telephone contact number and your Teacher Reference Number.

At present, and for the last number of years, the cost of membership has remained at £5 per annum. It is deducted at source from the December pension at Pensions Branch, DENI. **GTC**

To find out more about our association, please visit our newly constructed website: www.rtani.co.uk or write to:

Hon. Secretary RTANI

Brendan McGlone

109 Stockman's Lane

Belfast BT9 7JE

or email: info@rtani.co.uk



L-R: Des Rawlings (Central Executive), Robina Atkinson (Chair) and Brendan McGlone (Hon. Secretary)

Teacher e-Portfolio Teacher e-Portfolio Teacher e-Portfolio

In the article that follows, Victor McNair of the University of Ulster and Gillian Stewart, the NIELB Te-PNI Induction Strand Coordinator, describe a new pilot project that seeks to support teachers' professional learning.

As we increasingly harness the power of digital technologies to support teaching, it seems appropriate that we should also explore how best to capture our own professional learning using a range of media. For almost two years, the Teacher e-Portfolio for Northern Ireland (Te-PNI) project has been developing the principles and concepts around which all teachers can collect, reflect, select, present and indeed support professional learning. The project is truly representative of all key education stakeholders, including Becta, C2K, CASS, DE, GTCNI, the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers and RTU.

Initially, we agreed foundation principles that include making the GTCNI competences central to e-Portfolio activities, insisting that all e-Portfolio content is controlled by the owner, securing consensus among all educationalists about what should constitute evidence of professional

learning and how to cater for a wide range of learning contexts. Currently, we are piloting the e-Portfolio across a range of contexts including ITE (involving all the HEIs), Induction (involving CASS support personnel), and teacher leadership (involving RTU). We have not attempted to change any of the current professional development activities. But, by using an e-Portfolio to complete them, we have learned a lot about strengthening what works well and what is ready for change. We have also been able to share good practice in deepening reflection and making it work better for the individual teacher. Below is an illustration of the model of the process we are trialling this year.

Working with a wide range of professionals has really helped us understand the challenges and needs of each sector, and how we can target support more effectively.

The 'Induction' strand of the pilot, coordinated regionally by the Belfast Education and Library Board and endorsed in DENI Circular 2007/24 on the *Use of Information and Communications Technology in Schools* (www.deni.gov.uk/circular_2007.pdf), involves the participation of 48 beginning teachers and teacher tutors drawn from 21 schools across the five ELB areas

on a cross-phase, cross-sector basis. To quote Julie Wysner, Principal of Gillygooley Primary School, in the WELB:

"There are a wide range of schools represented in the project: controlled/maintained, integrated/Irish medium, urban/rural, primary/secondary/ special. This provides the opportunity to exchange ideas with other teacher tutors from a variety of schools."

Both beginning teachers and teacher tutors have embraced the pilot with true pioneering spirit, engaging patiently with the new software as they have sought to assess its potential to support the development of the core Induction activities, particularly action planning and reflective practice, alongside the GTCNI teacher competences. The enthusiastic approach of Zara Wortley, beginning teacher in Tandragee Primary School (SELB) is representative of many of the participants:

"I'm very interested in this new online package and am delighted to have the opportunity to be involved in this pilot and to use the software."

This is echoed by Julie Thomas, teacher tutor in Sydenham Infants' School (BELB) who comments:

"The Te-PNI is a great idea and will hopefully make it easier in the long term for teachers to build up a career profile."

A 3 day training programme, jointly planned and delivered by Victor McNair, Senior Lecturer at the University of Ulster, and Gillian Stewart, NIELB Te-PNI Induction Coordinator, has supported the beginning teachers and teacher tutors at key stages in the pilot by providing them with opportunities to:

- become familiar with the main features of the software;
- commence uploading their Induction Action Plans and related evidence; and
- participate in discussions for the purposes of evaluative feedback.

Private content area

Invited viewing area

Secure Access

Teacher e-Portfolio Teacher e-Portfolio Teacher e-Portfolio

This has been supplemented by the production of Te-PNI reference guides for use by the participating beginning teachers and teacher tutors back in schools, by ongoing e-support through a dedicated online course and discussion forum on LNI, as well as a programme of school support visits. This has all been particularly important not only in terms of offering practical advice to the beginning teachers but also in obtaining their valuable feedback and suggestions for improvements to the software.

The emerging feedback is encouraging. To quote David McCaw, beginning teacher in Victoria College, Belfast:

"My e-portfolio is a central archive where I can collect and present work in a personal way. I think it gives a clearer picture of my progression and can be reproduced or transported quickly and easily."

Mícheál Ó Conghaile, beginning teacher at the Bunscoil Bhéann Mhádagan, also in Belfast, shares David's view:

"I think the e-portfolio has great potential – you can save all your documents and professional development evidence electronically in one place. It is available at the touch of a button and is easy to read."

So what of the future? Given the high level of interest in e-Portfolios as a tool for teachers to collate and reflect on their continuing professional development, it will be important to use the valuable feedback from the various pilots to inform future development of this innovative form of digital technology.

A UK-wide e-Portfolio conference will be hosted in Northern Ireland, in June 2008, with the purpose of reviewing what we have learned this year and to see what changes need to be made to software so that teachers' professional development needs can be more accurately targeted and supported. The conference will also be an opportunity to showcase what has been achieved this year among all students and teachers who have been supporting us by using the system to support their learning. **GTC**

Chris Murdock, beginning teacher in D H Christie Memorial Primary School, Coleraine (NEELB) is similarly excited by the potential of the e-portfolio process:



I found this e-portfolio project to be very exciting and innovative. Even though there have been some teething problems with the software, as you would expect with all pilots, I think it is really good that you can keep an electronic record of your training and development throughout your teaching career. Hopefully I will get the opportunity to continue working on this project through my early professional development and beyond.



Linda Picken, beginning teacher in Taughmonagh Primary School (BELB) also comments:



It has been interesting to actually experiment with the Te-PNI software as a means of presenting my second action plan and then to be able to compare it with the more traditional format of my first IAP. I feel I have gained a different perspective on the process and look forward to presenting both versions to my Teacher Tutor. I certainly think it is very useful to have a choice of formats and believe that the end product will be of a great value to teachers.



Una Brennan, teacher tutor in Parkview Special School, Lisburn (SEELB) is very enthused by the Te-P process:



It is very much in keeping with the concept of virtual learning which is currently being promoted throughout the entire teaching profession. This exciting pilot reinforces the value of an online environment as a means of recording and supporting continuing professional development, something which our EPD1 teachers already appreciate as a result of participation in a dedicated six week LNI course for teachers working in special schools. We, in the Special School sector, are delighted to have the opportunity to be at the forefront of such exciting developmental work.



e-Learning Resources for Schools

In keeping with the theme, ICT based support for continuing professional development (CPD), Chris McIntyre of North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) outlines a range of e-learning Resources that are now available online.

The NEELB launched eight Dissemination and Development of Good Practice (DDGP) e-Learning Resources, at a ceremony on the 13th March 2008 at Antrim Board Centre.

The DDGP e-Learning Resources, consisting of downloadable digital videos and numerous support materials, publications and web links, reflect many of the key features of the Northern Ireland Revised Curriculum and have been developed by NEELB to provide a CPD platform for reflective activity, thinking and discussion in relation to the selected areas of good practice.

The schools featured, in each of the resources, all had a kernel of an idea as to how they wished to bring about improvement in their school. Through support from the DDGP initiative the schools embarked on a process of action planning, implementation, evaluation and review. Central to all improvements were the intended benefits for pupils' learning. The digital videos and narratives from each school capture the journey the school made, and indeed may continue to be on. In each case the school is sharing their experience and are honest in their self-evaluations. Indeed, the intention is not to make claims of greatness, but rather to outline a process for continuous school improvement.

Using the e-Learning Resources within CPD

CPD enriches professional practice and is relevant to all teachers, regardless of experience or individual need. As educational practices evolve in light of extensive research, a culture of CPD amongst educators is key in moving towards whole-school improvement and reflective learning and teaching.

The DDGP e-Learning Resources are designed to support teachers and schools in moving forward with CPD on an individual, small group or whole-



staff basis. By accessing the resources, teachers and schools are making use of digital online technologies to extend their competences (attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills) within the selected area of innovative practice.

Additionally, by undertaking elements of CPD online, teachers are enhancing their competence in using ICT effectively and confidently for worthwhile educational purposes. Further benefits of using the resources with the context of online CPD include:

- empowers learners so that they can take more responsibility for what, when and how they learn;
- easy access to digital learning and teaching resources that can be customised for own use;
- self-paced flexible learning on demand; and
- enhanced collaboration between teachers through online discussion forums.

The DDGP e-Learning Resources can be accessed through the following pathways:

www.neelb.tv

www.neelb.org.uk/teachers/cass/ddgp-elearning

<https://learningni.net> (NEELB teachers only)

DDGP e-Learning Resources

Assessment for Learning

Camphill Primary School, Ballymena

Emotional Intelligence

St. Joseph's Primary School, Crumlin

Performance Enhancement

St. Patrick's College, Ballymena

Using Art and Design to Promote Independent Learning

Ballee Primary School, Ballymena

Using Digital Video to Promote Oracy and Literacy

Portstewart Primary School

Maths for All

Ballysally Primary School, Coleraine

Visual Literacy

Ballymena Primary School

World Around Us, Story Sacks

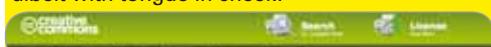
St. John Bosco, Ballynease

Prof John's Websights



<http://flickrcc.bluemountains.net/>
<http://compfight.com/>

Flickr is an outstanding source of free photos posted by the great public of amateur and expert snappers and, while it's no guarantee of quality, both *bluemountains* and *compfight* search for Creative Commons images (see below) on your selected theme – *compfight* albeit with tongue in cheek!



<http://creativecommons.org/international/uk/>

Creative Commons is a legal means of releasing digital assets and allowing their use by others while still asserting your intellectual property rights. Watch for the  symbol to stay legal.



<http://tinyurl.com/53ehej>

Those good people in Trafford Learning (NorthWest Learning Grid) have brought together, for primary schools, links to images which are 'free for use in schools' on a 'not for profit' basis from eighteen sources including 2Simple, DK, Channel 4 and some of the other Learning Grids.



<http://www.gr8ict.com/schoolwebsites.htm#images>

An educational consultant, Chris Sharples, indexes school websites for usable images and photo sites and so much more besides, collected from students.

A regular feature book-marking educational resource and information websites: this issue focuses on digital images for educational use.

A picture may well be worth a thousand words, but they don't have to cost as much, or even anything. Yet, it's always a challenge to find digital images – video or still - online which are good to illustrate teaching or suitable for pupils, and don't breach copyright.



<http://gallery.e2bn.org>

A searchable stock of high quality images, video and sounds, collected and sorted by teachers for teachers, in 27 categories from 'Animals' to 'Work and Everyday Life,' can be found at the E2BNGallery, another of the Regional Broadband Consortia.



<http://www.tasi.ac.uk>

On a much grander scale, and while written for HFE, teachers should look at 'Technical Advisory Services for Images'. It sounds yawn-dull but is a phenomenal resource.

<http://www.tasi.ac.uk/advice/using/pdf/finding.pdf>

This document is a good start point and gives an overview of all the international museum, cultural, art, scientific, current affairs, historical, mapping and stock archives and how they can be searched and used.

Finally, remember to 'Stay Safe' – always check out sites in advance to ensure they are acceptable to use – and are not blocked - before setting pupils off on their own research. And, if you'd like to share your favourites, then email profjohn@gtni.org.uk



http://wiki.creativecommons.org/Content_Curators

The 'tasi' site, previously mentioned, illustrates a fundamental point about the Internet: what you need is there, the fun is in the finding.

So, this useful wiki site lists 'content curators' - a directory of directories of creative commons content. This lists about 40 directories each of audio, video, image and text directories and about 80 each of education and geodata directories. Enjoy!



<http://tinyurl.com/45njc9>

Searching far... if you desire something oriental in your images, check out the Singapore Ministry of Education's digital resources repository offering video and audio clips, animations, graphics and photographs that can be downloaded.



www.bbc.co.uk/ni/landscapes

Searching high... remember that BBC NI series 'Sky High' of Ulster landscapes filmed from a helicopter? BBC NI Education have digitized those sequences and added educational commentaries – an excellent local studies and geography resource aimed at KS3 but useful for KS2 and KS4 as well.

New Anti-Bias Publication Launched

An exciting new publication, *ABC: Promoting an Anti-Bias Approach to Education in Northern Ireland*, was launched at the Long Gallery, Stormont on 4 March 2008. This is a resource for teachers to use in the classroom, which outlines how to deal with difficult issues such as sectarianism, racism or sexual orientation. It will help to teach children to respect difference such as religious and cultural diversity.

This resource has been developed by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) with the support of funding from the International Fund for Ireland and the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation.

The launch was attended by over 100 education stakeholders who gained an insight into how schools can be developed as inclusive environments. Emphasis was placed on how adoption of an anti-bias approach, which fosters understanding, respect and value for diversity, impacts positively on a school's ethos and practice in the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and also the more informal and hidden curricula.

Olwin Frost, Principal of Oakwood Integrated Primary School said: "Embracing an anti-bias approach has been a very rewarding process for all involved in our school. It initially required staff to evaluate their own attitudes and realise their potential so they could transmit messages about equality and bias to pupils. In the light of this we were then enabled to review our policies and practices to ensure they are inclusive of all and respectful of diversity in terms of culture, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background and differences in ability."

Michael Wardlow, Chief Executive of NICIE said: "I must stress the importance of this valuable resource and its value for all individuals engaged in the teaching/learning process, from early years through primary school to second level education. It provides an excellent starting point for all schools that are conscious of the increasing diversity." **GTC**



Michael Wardlow, NICIE Chief Executive Officer, Dominic Bradley, SDLP MLA, Paula McIlwaine, NICIE Professional Development Officer and Frances Donnelly, NICIE Senior Development Officer, were speakers at the launch of 'ABC: Promoting an Anti-Bias Approach to Education in Northern Ireland' publication, in the Long Gallery, Stormont



Copies of *ABC: Promoting an Anti-Bias approach to Education in Northern Ireland* can be obtained by contacting NICIE on 028 9023 6200, emailing pmcilwaine@nicie.org.uk or from the NICIE website publications section at www.nicie.org/publications

Peter McCreadie, Acting-Principal of Priory Integrated College, Holywood, Jill Markham, Principal of Oakgrove Integrated College, L'Derry and Gerry Jones, Principal of New Bridge Integrated College, Loughbrickland at the launch of 'ABC: Promoting an Anti-Bias Approach to Education in Northern Ireland'

Teaching and Learning RESEARCH BRIEFING

Consulting Pupils on the Assessment of their Learning

Consulting Pupils on the Assessment of their Learning (CPAL) is a project undertaken by a group of researchers from the School of Education at Queen's University, led by Dr Ruth Leitch. The project was designed to take account of the policy context in Northern Ireland, with its focus on pupil profiles and assessment for learning (AfL). It examined pupils' participation in their own assessment at KS2 and KS3 from a children's rights perspective, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In the article that follows, Ruth reviews some of the research findings.

The CPAL project is now completed and the result shows that when genuine opportunities for participating in and understanding assessment processes are presented, pupils engage more readily in the progress and outcomes of their learning. For example, when KS3 pupils were asked about their experiences of AfL, these pupils felt most positive about their assessment in classes where:

- they knew what they were supposed to do in any task, test or homework;
- the teacher discussed with them how their work would be assessed;
- they understood the language of assessment;
- they knew how to assess their own work and practised doing so; and
- they could evaluate a classmate's work and tell them how to improve.

Pupils in classrooms where teachers showed evidence of coherence between their beliefs and their AfL practices, demonstrated more in-depth understanding of assessment principles and practices than those in classrooms where coherence was less evident, or where discussion of assessment was restricted to tests and examinations.



The CPAL Research Team: L-R: John Gardner, Debi Galanouli, Peter Clough, Ruth Leitch and Laura Lundy

CPAL also indicated that when policy makers use child-centred methods to consult children directly about matters of significance such as pupil profiles, children show the motivation and capacity to be involved in decision making. For example, KS2 pupils indicated to policy makers that a pupil profile should, amongst other things:

- be seen as a personal document as well as an academic one;
- provide detailed teacher feedback to improve their learning;
- help them and their parents and guardians to make good decisions about their progress and future schooling;
- be child-friendly, attractive and colourful; and
- be written in readable, understandable language.

Most teachers and school leaders were found to be supportive in principle of children's rights in learning and assessment, but had, as yet, an imperfect understanding of children's rights as expressed in Article 12 of

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Consulting Pupils on the Assessment of their Learning

This project examined pupils' participation in their own assessment from a children's rights perspective, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It demonstrated that if when genuine opportunities for participating in and understanding assessment are presented, pupils engage in the outcomes of their learning and focus on their progress. Children show the motivation and capacity to be involved in decision-making processes where policy-makers use child-centred methods to consult children directly.

Child-centred methods allow children to be involved in decision-making processes directly, without adults intervening in the process.

- Children can be consulted directly by adults on matters of significance such as pupil profiles.
- Child-centred methods allow children to be involved in decision-making processes directly, without adults intervening in the process.
- Teachers need to ensure that children are involved in decision-making processes directly, without adults intervening in the process.
- Teachers and parents are personally responsible for rights and responsibilities in relationship to assessment.
- Children can be involved in decision-making processes directly, without adults intervening in the process.
- The focus is on the individual child's rights and responsibilities in relation to assessment.

the UNCRC. They identified lack of time, class size, accountability and curriculum constraints as barriers to full implementation of pupil consultation and engagement. Most were keen to expand their knowledge in this area and how to apply children's rights to educational practice. **GTCNI**

The main findings are summarised in the TLRP Research Briefing No. 36 (March 2008), now available for teachers to download at: <http://www.tlp.org/pub/research.html>

It is also available on the GTCNI Research Repository ARRTS at: <http://arrts.gtcni.org.uk>

Special Educational Needs: Asperger's Syndrome

Following on from the last edition's section on special educational needs Gillian Gamble, a senior educational psychologist with the NEELB, looks at Asperger's Syndrome.

Asperger's Syndrome (AS) is an Autism Spectrum Disorder, alongside its sister condition, Autism. It is distinguished diagnostically from Autism, by the absence of learning difficulty and of significant language impairment, by three years of age. Although AS is often described as, 'a mild form of Autism', this description can be misleading, as both diagnoses are based on a pervasive and life-long triad of impairments within social interaction, social communication and flexibility of imagination.

As a multi-faceted condition, AS requires diagnostic investigation across contexts by a multi-disciplinary team (involving professionals from Speech and Language Therapy, Paediatrics, Psychology and where possible, Occupational Therapy).

As pupils with AS do not experience learning difficulty they are usually educated within mainstream schools. Pupils with AS typically tend to present within social situations as pedantic, gauche, authoritarian, relentless or eccentric. These styles are not so much a matter of personality as a natural social consequence of a fundamental communication disorder. Moreover, pupils with AS do not possess intuitive social insight so that all social information must be laboriously processed through cognitive channels. This can be mentally exhausting. Anxiety is also commonplace in



those with AS and tends to jeopardise performance. Supporting pupils in the development of low-key stress management and relaxation techniques redresses the balance.

Some pupils with AS present as being indifferent to their peers while others seem desperate to be accepted. Conversational openers, closers and information seeking phrases can be taught, with repetition, rehearsal and feedback used to hone their delivery, in order that they may present as automatic. Pupils' special interests should be nurtured within areas which are socially acceptable (within the peer group), or clubs and societies could be established, based on niche interests, so that communication occurs naturally.

Any attempts to promote social interaction should respect the pupil's social tolerance level and allow for time alone as well.

Academic achievement tends to provide pupils with AS with a sense of worth. Their strengths should therefore be identified, with ongoing manageable challenges presented to them, in order to develop these further. Minimising distractions while utilising cueing, structure and time limits should promote attention and concentration on task, so activating impressive short-term memory skills. Proficiency in researching, cataloguing and

developing a knowledge-base within a particular area should be capitalised on, particularly through engaging the pupil in helping you or his/her classmates.

Possible sensory processing difficulties with heat, light, sounds, pressure and movements, may need to be investigated and addressed through educational planning.

It is worth reminding ourselves that Tony Attwood pointed out that a shift in perception could enable us to view particular AS characteristics such as complete candour, unwavering loyalty and total commitment to ideas and principles, as character strengths, rather than flaws. **GTC**



Bursary Feedback

Over the past three years, the Council has operated a very successful 'pilot' professional development bursary programme. The feedback from teachers and schools has been very positive and the Council is now convinced that, if the Department of Education was to support this initiative with additional resources, major benefits would accrue to teachers and schools throughout Northern Ireland. The following articles, from Valerie Haugh of the BELB Peripatetic Support Service and Alison Ditty of Sydenham Infants' School, give a flavour of the many interesting and worthwhile professional development activities that have been supported.

The Ruth Miskin Literacy Phonics

Following a successful bursary grant application from the Belfast Education & Library Board (BELB) Peripatetic Support Service (PSS), twenty teachers from the PSS recently received professional development training from the Ruth Miskin Literacy Project.

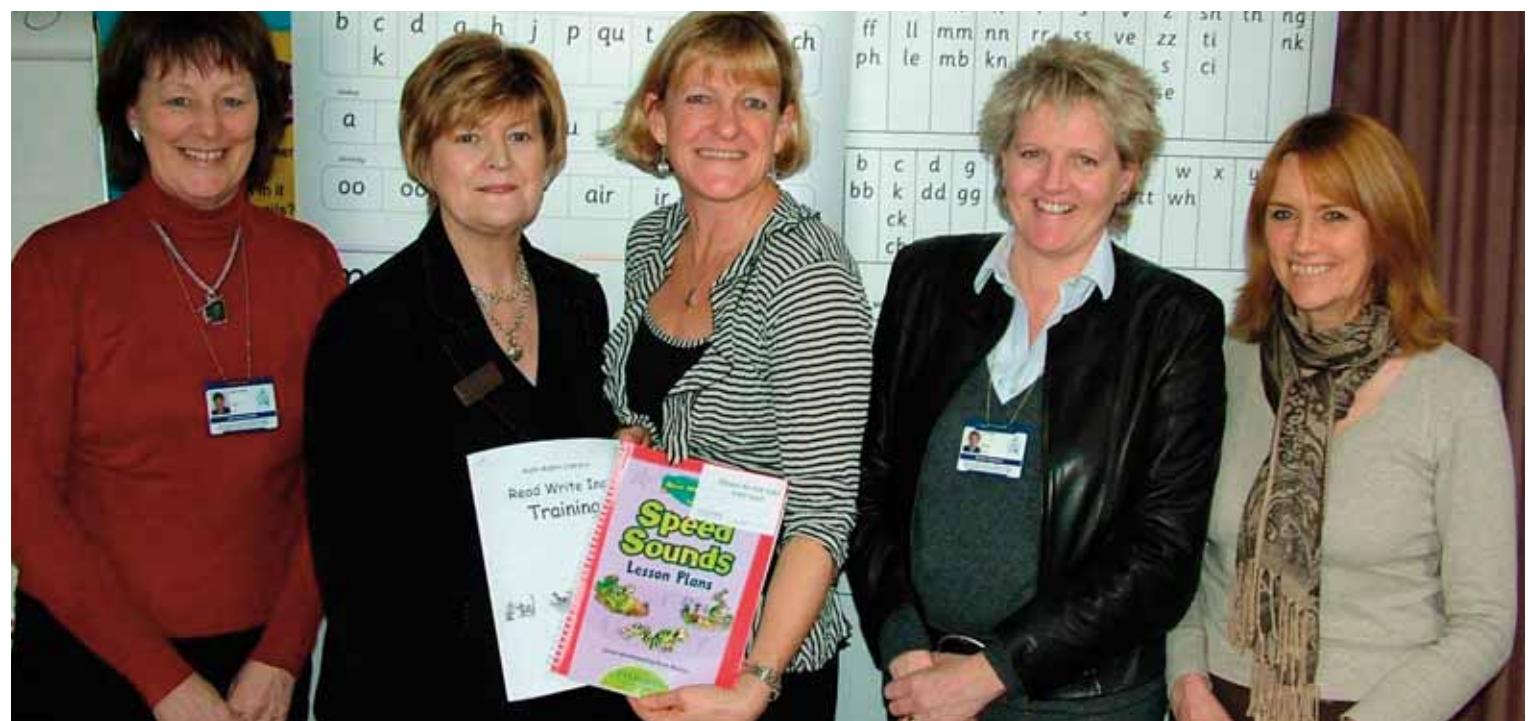


Alison Silke, from the 'project', provided two days of intensive training in the use of Read Write Inc., an engaging synthetic phonic literacy programme which 'gets children talking, reading, writing and spelling – FAST!' This programme complements the ongoing work of the PSS in schools. This was the first time the Ruth Miskin Literacy training had been delivered in Northern Ireland and the PSS were delighted to have been given the opportunity to avail of this training.

Two representatives, Edna Cochrane (NI Rep. Read Write Inc.) and Ann Tweddle from the Oxford University Press who publish the materials for Read Write Inc., were also present and

have donated an inspection pack of materials to the PSS. These materials are available for inspection in the PSS Literacy Resource Centre based in The Ulidia Centre, Ormeau Road, Belfast. Tel: 028 90690359

The PSS aim to keep abreast of current research, teaching strategies and resources and appreciate the funding received from the GTCNI. This training has given them the opportunity to enhance their teaching skills and knowledge in order to deliver high quality support to the pupils and teachers in BELB schools. All the teachers agreed that the training was dynamic, inspiring and relevant to their daily work. **GTC**



L-R: Mrs Valerie Haugh (Head of the Peripatetic Support Service), Ms Edna Cochrane (Read Write Inc. NI Rep.), Ms Alison Silke (Ruth Miskin Project), Mrs Sue Boyd (Peripatetic Support Service SpLD) and Mrs Sue McCrum (Peripatetic Support Service HI)

Bursary Feedback



Take One Picture

Sydenham Infants' is a school in East Belfast close to Harland and Wolf shipyard; our children range from 4 years to 7 years old. The introduction of the revised curriculum provided the staff with the opportunity to review our art policy, as we felt that the requirement in the revised curriculum that, 'pupils should be enabled to look at and respond to a piece of work by artists', does not receive as much attention as other areas in art and design.

In order to address this, as art co-ordinator, I attended a most inspiring course at the National Gallery in London, alongside primary school teachers from across the UK. The aim of the course entitled – *Take One Picture* – was to promote the use of one single image as a resource for cross-curricular learning in the classroom.

This was a superb course, during which we were introduced to the 'Gallery' and its collection and shown how we might talk to children about a piece of art work. We were then introduced to this year's chosen painting – *The Fighting Temeraire* – by Turner. It depicts the last moments of the glorious gunship, which fought under Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar, being towed to a London breaker's yard by a tug boat.

We attended three lectures at which the visual, historical and educational aspects of the picture were discussed. A copy of the picture was then given to each teacher.

Having led several staff meetings to discuss how everyone at Sydenham could benefit from all that I had learnt on the course, it was decided to organise a whole-school project which involved adapting the school timetable for one week, so teachers and pupils could concentrate on all areas of the curriculum inspired by *The Fighting Temeraire*.

The week began with a special assembly on the theme of famous paintings. Children then returned to their rooms where a print of *The Fighting Temeraire* was on display. The morning was then taken up discussing initial reactions and involving the children in planning the entire weeks work!

Every class produced their own mind maps outlining their ideas and what they hoped to produce over the course of the week. We were amazed at the variety of ideas that the children generated from the painting. All six 'Areas of Learning', as outlined in the revised curriculum, were represented in every class's planning. The children had opportunities to work with their teachers, with parents and with our

local community artists Sally Field and Anne Quail. We all were working towards our celebration which took place in the school hall on the Friday afternoon. This provided the children with an opportunity to share their achievements with their peers and the wider community. Children, staff and invited guests enjoyed plays, poems and songs written and performed by the children. The wonderful array of art work produced over the week was on display around the hall. The staff had worked hard to create an art gallery atmosphere and life size mermaids were displayed alongside felt collages, 3D islands, interactive board games and much more!

The open framework of this project provided opportunities for the children to develop their thinking skills and personal capabilities as outlined in the revised curriculum. Our children had numerous opportunities to work with others: the P3 children wrote and performed a pirate play; to problem solve: the P2 children needed to work out how to turn white rice blue!; and to make decisions: P1 children had to decide which resources to choose to make their life-sized soldier. Pupils throughout the school had a common theme which provided a sense of community and shared purpose.

The range of organisational approaches, such as setting, grouping and individual work ensured that individual needs were properly addressed. The activities were appropriate to different learning styles which enabled pupils of all abilities to take part in the activities fully and effectively, giving the opportunity for the pupils to experience success in their learning and a real sense of achievement.

As a result of our creative week, it was noticed that during a subsequent visit to our local art gallery, 'The Engine Room', the children were able to communicate their ideas, opinions, feelings and imaginings, using an expanding vocabulary.

Pupils reported that the creative week was, "fun because we had no work to do," yet clearly there was an immense amount of learning going on! **GTC**

eTwinning

Modern information and communications technology provides opportunities for schools to get involved in 'eTwinning' projects in a safe interactive environment. In the article that follows, Jonathan Stewart outlines the support that the British Council can provide to schools in Northern Ireland.



eTwinning is a framework for schools to collaborate safely on the Internet with partner schools in 29 European countries. It is part of the European Union's Life-Long Learning programme. It promotes school collaboration in Europe through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) by providing support, tools and services to make it easy for schools to form short or long-term partnerships in any subject area. As a school, preschool or FE college (working with students between the ages of 3 and 20) you can register your details, search for European partners and engage in a safe and secure online partnership through ICT.

Each country involved in eTwinning is supported by its own National Support Service (NSS). The British Council is the NSS in the UK, and we administer and manage eTwinning within the UK:

- eTwinning is a flexible, free, easy to use resource for enhancing the use of ICT across all areas of the curriculum;
- eTwinning is ideal for those starting out in international education, as well as for those who want to sustain long-term partnerships with European schools;
- eTwinning projects and partnerships can enhance curricular goals and national education initiatives by providing a real context for learning, where key skills are developed;



- pupils are motivated by the audience of their peers in other European countries and by creative, innovative uses of ICT; and
- we run free eTwinning Professional Development workshops throughout the school term for teachers.

eTwinning workshops are a fantastic way to get started with the programme and to learn more about eTwinning. If you are interested in attending a workshop then please contact the team.

"Having attended my first eTwinning course in October 2007, it is amazing to see the impact on school life already. Contacts were made immediately and projects started with schools across Europe using the eTwinning website. From Year One to Year Seven, pupils and teachers alike speak enthusiastically of the opportunities brought by eTwinning, whereby we have been able to bring the outside world into our classrooms.

Making new friends, learning new languages, experiencing new cultures and countries; it has all been made possible through eTwinning."

Mr Leigh Davis, McClintock Primary School, Seskinore.

"Nearly 40,000 European schools have registered on the eTwinning portal since its launch in 2005. There is also a clear synergy between eTwinning and the Comenius programme which offers a more structured funded approach to collaborative European projects. eTwinning is the perfect tool for communication within a Comenius project and may also lead to other international opportunities, such as the International School Award."

Simon Graham, British Council.

Contact the eTwinning team in the British Council in Northern Ireland on:

E: etwinning@britishcouncil.org
T: 028 90248220
www.britishcouncil.org/etwinning



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opportunities for individual teachers**

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applications must be received by
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- Teacher cover
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Want to find out more?

Tel: 028 9033 3390

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Website: www.gtcni.org.uk



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