



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

General Teaching Council for NI

termtalk

The Official Newsletter of the General Teaching Council

JUNE 06

termtalk



Welcome to the sixth edition of **termtalk**, which should reach you as another demanding school year draws to a close. The Council, in seeking to raise

the status of the teaching profession, has sought at every opportunity to publicise and celebrate the vital work that is undertaken by teachers in Northern Ireland.

In so doing the Council continues to call for teachers to be given the resources, particularly the time, to engage meaningfully in continuing professional development, and my article opposite, has more to say on this issue.

As part of our ongoing programme of awareness raising the Council will formally launch its Charter for Education on June 22nd. It will be launched by Will Haire the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Education.

As in previous editions this **termtalk** has a distinctive theme, this time it is citizenship; there are a number of articles on this theme and I hope that you find them interesting and informative.

In conclusion, I hope you have had a professionally rewarding year and that you will return reinvigorated and renewed to face the challenges that lie ahead in September.

Eddie McArdle

Eddie McArdle
Registrar, GTCNI



The Professional Voice

The impact of globalisation and enhanced connectivity, allied to the ever accelerating knowledge explosion and the proposed RPA structural changes, will have a significant impact on the world of education and on our experiences as professionals in the classroom.

The successful implementation of the changes envisaged over the coming years will require a profession that is passionate in disposition, open to challenge and prepared to engage in debate with regard to the core purposes of education itself. The creation of a culture conducive to the development of such a passionate commitment will, to a large extent, depend on teachers having access to CPD programmes that are both appropriate and fully resourced. It is therefore imperative that we as a profession make our voices heard in regard to this issue, and effectively reject the traditional 'empty vessel' approach to CPD with its centrist agenda. As professionals we must seek access to a mixed-economy of

CPD with systemic programmes augmented by individualised professional development opportunities and school-based activities.

The recent success of our CPD bursaries pilot is clear evidence of the willingness of teachers to engage in self-directed work. Teachers and schools in other jurisdictions have access to a variety of funding in regard to CPD and the profession in Northern Ireland must also have such opportunities.

Within the next few months the Department of Education will be consulting on the future of 'teacher education' and this will afford teachers a real opportunity to make their views known, thus helping to shape the future of both initial teacher education and, as importantly, continuing professional development. If we are to be real agents of change in regard to education policy rather than mere bystanders, then we must not let this opportunity pass. In short, you must make your voice heard.

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GTCNI - a new voice for teachers

The Charter for Education

The Council is officially launching its 'Charter for Education' on the 22nd June 2006 in the Stormont Hotel, Belfast. The Charter sets out in broad terms both the purposes of education and the commitments that all involved in education should be prepared to make. How each stakeholder implements the commitments in the Charter will depend on circumstances and their individual remit and goals. The Charter aims to confirm that government, parents and teachers all recognise the centrality of education to the well-being of society.

Election of Teachers to Council 2006

Ballot papers for the Council's election, for the Primary School Principal constituency, will be issued 26th May 2006 and the deadline for return of these is the 16th June 2006. The election results will be announced on the 21st June 2006.

Refugee Week

Refugee Week is an annual UK-wide programme of educational, arts and cultural events that celebrates the contribution that refugees make to the UK, promotes understanding about the reasons why people seek sanctuary and aims to deliver positive educational messages that counter fear, ignorance and negative stereotyping of refugees.

Refugee Week 2006 is from 19th – 25th June, and it will provide the perfect opportunity to highlight refugee issues. Every year hundreds of schools put on special events, hold assemblies or explore the issues in the classroom. More information is available on the website www.refugeeweek.org.uk where it is also possible to download ideas and resources for schools.



GTCNI Website

The Council is in the process of redeveloping the existing website with added functionality to include a facility to search the Register of Teachers, a consultations section and a research repository. The new interactive website will be online for September 2006.

GTCNI pilot bursary programme – phase one



Since its establishment, one of the priorities for the Council has been to ensure that continuing professional development programmes and activities meet the needs of individual teachers. In its review of professional development for the Department of Education, (GTCNI Reviews of Teacher Competences and Continuing Professional Development, March 2005), the Council recommended a 'mixed-economy' approach to continuing professional development (CPD). It was emphasised that such an approach would ensure a proper balance in meeting, system wide requirements, school-based and individually determined CPD. The Council argued that opportunities for individualised CPD had been largely neglected and that, with a renewed emphasis on individual reflective practice, a major deficit in provision was apparent.

It was in this context that the Council launched its pilot bursary scheme to provide funding to enable teachers to embark on professional development activities of their choice and which met individual professional development needs. The Council was aware that such centrally funded provision was available in other jurisdictions. In Wales, for example, the Welsh Assembly Government has made £2.5 million available to teachers for individualised CPD during 2006/2007. It is clear that teachers in Northern Ireland are significantly disadvantaged compared to colleagues elsewhere.

In setting up its pilot bursary programme the Council applied Christopher Day's definition of CPD in order to allow for as wide a range of innovative and creative applications as possible. It is worth noting this important definition of CPD:

“ Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute through these to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which,

alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives. ”

(Day C. 1999 "Developing Teachers: The Challenges of Lifelong Learning." Falmer Press).

GTCNI pilot bursary programme – phase one

The awareness raising campaign about the bursaries attracted a large amount of interest from a wide range of schools. It was clear that there was demand for funding of this type, and that teachers wanted the opportunity to carry out their own CPD projects which were relevant to their own professional and school situation.

In all the Council awarded seventy one bursaries to a value of £48,000. The awards were made to teachers from all the school sectors across Northern Ireland, and the proposed professional development activities encompassed the whole spectrum of professional life.

One teacher is exploring how music can be used in early years to develop aspects of the enriched curriculum. This will involve spending a day working with an ELB advisor followed by visits to other schools. Another colleague is using the bursary to help in the preparation of the design for a new school. This will involve a range of

activities including visits to newly built schools and a large architectural practice where school design is a particular specialism. Another group of colleagues, from separate schools, are coming together under the auspices of a special school to observe good practice in a range of SEN contexts.

In the light of the level of interest shown in the bursary programme the Council is pleased to announce a phase two programme. This time the funding will provide teachers with the opportunity to work individually and on a group basis on CPD activities. The application period runs from 19 June until 21 September 2006. Further details can be found on page 16 of this edition of **termtalk**.



Authenticating Coursework

Most teachers in post-primary schools mark coursework as it contributes to the overall assessment in GCSE/GCE and other qualifications. These assessments require a high degree of professional expertise and commitment. Teachers are always mindful about the need to judge the authenticity of pupils' work and in some instances these judgements can be difficult. So what guidance are the examination bodies giving teachers in this matter?

A recent report on GCE/GCSE coursework was produced jointly by the Examination Regulatory Authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It confirms the value of coursework in many subjects but identifies a number of issues of concern. In particular, there is evidence that some candidates are receiving too much assistance with their coursework and, in some instances, there is also evidence of plagiarism. The latter problem has

escalated with the greater access to the internet. In response, CCEA has been working with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the Welsh Assembly (WA) to address these issues. One outcome has been the publication of a guide for teachers on how they can check that the coursework produced by candidates is their own work, or contribution. Also, the guide provides advice on what a teacher should do if there is a suspicion that the candidate has cheated.

'Authenticating Coursework - A Teachers' Guide', has been produced by CCEA/QCA/WA; it will be distributed to all post-primary schools in September 2006 and should be a very useful document for all those marking coursework.

Any questions about the guide can be addressed to Roger McCune, the Accreditation Manager at CCEA; rmccune@ccea.org.uk



GTCNI Annual Lecture 2006

The Council held its first annual lecture on Tuesday 14th March, in the Great Hall, Queens University Belfast. Entitled 'Teacher Professionalism in a New Era', it was presented by Professor Geoff Whitty, Director of the Institute of Education, University of London.

Professor Whitty spoke about the challenges facing the profession in a world characterised by accelerating social and political change. In exploring different conceptions of teacher professionalism he sought to illustrate how political ideology, as well as the socio-economic context, can shape professional self-concept and practice.

In responding to the many pressures which face the profession Professor Whitty advocated that Teaching Councils should articulate and promote a new professional narrative based around a democratic professionalism that encourages the development of collaborative cultures both within the profession and with other educational partners. Teachers, he noted, should assume an 'activist identity'. Activist professionals take responsibility for their own on-going professional learning and work within multiple communities of practice. According to Professor Whitty, it is by exercising professional agency in a modern democratic professional community,



Professor Geoff Whitty.

that teachers can once again establish narrative privilege on educational policy, that will ultimately be for the benefit of the profession itself and the children and young people it seeks to serve.

Eddie McArdle, the Registrar of GTCNI, was of the opinion that the lecture marked a key development for the Council. He commented: "in bringing together a distinguished audience representing all aspects of the education service the lecture offered a very unique insight into how politics

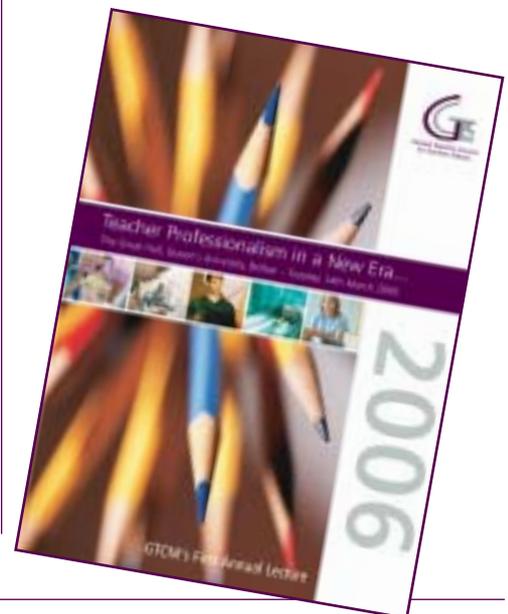
and society has impacted on the profession of teaching, and on possible implications for the future"

Congratulating Professor Whitty on his thought-provoking lecture, Chairman of the Council, Eddie Ferguson, commented: "As we approach the end of the current Council's term of office, the timing of the annual lecture was ideal, marking a significant milestone for the GTCNI. It also clearly demonstrates our commitment to facilitating debate and dialogue on professional issues"

The Council is to make a DVD of the lecture available on the website and has copies of the paper available on request.



Professor Geoff Whitty, University of London and Eddie McArdle, Registrar for GTCNI.



Citizenship Education

In keeping with the 'themed approach' to this edition focuses on 'Citizenship Education'. The following articles explore some of the key concepts associated with citizenship education and provide examples of how this important aspect of the curriculum is being approached by Northern Ireland's schools. Gerry Devlin, the Council's Senior Education Officer, begins this 'themed section' by placing citizenship education in context, and this is followed by a number of specially commissioned articles.

Citizenship Education: Professional Opportunity and Challenge

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in the potential of citizenship education to assist in the building of democratically stable societies, especially in countries that are emerging from periods of conflict and community division. Of course, the nature of divided societies can be a contentious and problematic issue in that all societies are divided, to some extent. However, in Northern Ireland, our historical legacy has rendered our society less stable than more mature democracies and, as a consequence, the challenges facing us as we implement citizenship education will be particularly acute. The citizenship requirement of the revised curriculum therefore presents the profession with both opportunity and challenge. Issues such as diversity, inclusion, equality, justice and human rights will require us to make professional judgements that challenge not only the value systems of our pupils but also, potentially, our own 'world view'.

Our historical legacy has bestowed on us a set of circumstances which now requires a curriculum that empowers young people to challenge, among other things, community division and sectarianism as well as the more recent manifestations of racism. Although, this generation of young people is experiencing a period of relative peace they are still growing up in a society in which the collective mind set is shaped by an historical backwash which, at times, appears to be beyond the control of the individual person of good will. The eminent historian F.S.L. Lyons used the phrase, 'anarchy in the mind and in the heart' to describe the situation in Ireland during the period from the fall of Parnell to the death of Yeats, which he said sprang from the collision within a

small and intimate island of seemingly irreconcilable cultures. Unfortunately, this 'anarchy in the mind and in the heart' and the existence of 'seemingly irreconcilable cultures' still casts a dark shadow over our society and young people today and it presents us with ethical and practical challenges which go to the heart of teacher professionalism.

However, many teachers in Northern Ireland have a proud record in assisting the community overcome the problems which Lyons so pointedly described. Those involved in Education for Mutual Understanding led the way in developing innovative practice in this important area. The revised curriculum, with its renewed emphasis on citizenship education and its potential for innovative teaching methodologies, should provide a more structured and supportive framework



Gerry Devlin, Senior Education Officer, GTCNI.

to guide professional practice in this important but sensitive area. The articles that follow provide a background to the policy context for citizenship education as well as some insights into school-based practice.



Local and Global Citizenship in Northern Ireland

In the article that follows Professor Alan Smith, who holds the UNESCO Chair in Education at the University of Ulster, reviews the policy context for local and global citizenship in Northern Ireland.

“The two Governments recognise the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, and accordingly confirm that their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both Governments and would not be affected by any future change in the status of Northern Ireland”.

Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland, Belfast, 10 April 1998, Article 1 (vi).

The inclusion of Local and Global Citizenship in the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum is part of a broader international trend. During the 1990s the number of formal democracies in the world increased significantly (from 76 to 117) and this has been accompanied by an increased interest in civic and citizenship education. In recent years, a Council of Europe project on Education for Democratic Citizenship has produced guidance and resources leading up to the 2005 European Year of Citizenship through Education and an emphasis on civic and citizenship education has become part of the curriculum for schools in the UK and Ireland.

The basis for the inclusion of Local and Global Citizenship in the Northern Ireland Curriculum goes back almost 10 years. CCEA included the theme as part of its preparatory work for the review of the NI Curriculum from the mid 1990s.

This included pilot work in 25 post-primary schools, initiated by the University of Ulster, that eventually became incorporated into the formal stages of the review from 2000. Since then significant progress has been made in introducing Local and Global Citizenship to all post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. A statement of the minimum requirements for Key Stage 3 was given ministerial approval in June 2004 and will become a statutory requirement for all post-primary schools from September 2007.

Local and Global Citizenship addresses four key concepts:

- diversity and inclusion;
- human rights and social responsibility;
- equality and social justice; and
- democracy and active participation.

The expectation is that citizenship education will not simply involve the transmission of knowledge. Instead, enquiry-based approaches are advocated. This might involve ‘active learning’ and project work that investigates the core concepts through a range of issues using local, national and international examples. There is therefore considerable emphasis placed on the relevance of teaching and learning through the citizenship curriculum.

The concept of ‘citizenship’ also provides significant challenges in a society where there is no consensus on the future constitutional status of the society itself. In a society like Northern Ireland it would not be viable to promote the notion that citizenship education simply involves the development of an uncritical loyalty to a single nation state; the modern world is becoming more complex than that. The pilot work suggested that teachers encourage pupils to investigate what it means to be a citizen within a diverse and contested society. Whilst national identity is undoubtedly one dimension, it is also possible to explore what rights and



Professor Alan Smith.

responsibilities are shared by all citizens who live and work within the same society. Citizenship education also encourages exploration of what it means to be a citizen within the wider context of the European Union, to consider the increasing impacts of globalisation and to investigate the role of international organisations such as the United Nations.

CCEA has produced two sets of resource materials for Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stage 3 and these are complemented by a wide variety of case study and resource materials on local and global issues produced by voluntary organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Local media, including the BBC, UTV and Channel 4, have also produced television resources.

Education and Library Boards have identified officers responsible for Local and Global Citizenship. The officers have developed a co-ordinated approach to support the phased introduction of citizenship education to all post-primary schools in Northern Ireland by September 2007. Over a four-year period, schools from each Board area have opted into a professional development programme that provides seven in-service days for up to five teachers from each school. The Universities and Colleges of Education have also adapted their initial teacher education courses to include the preparation of student teachers for Local and Global Citizenship.

What is Local and Global Citizenship?

In this article Clare McAuley from CCEA reviews some of the benefits of citizenship education for both pupils and teachers.

The Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum, which takes effect from September 2007, will provide for Local and Global Citizenship to be taught in all our post-primary schools. Extensive pilot work in Citizenship has been taking place for the past five years.

Local and Global Citizenship is not about teaching pupils what to think but how to think. The citizenship classroom is a 'community of enquiry' where pupils are encouraged to explore their own attitudes towards real life issues and also to develop an appreciation of the needs and perspectives of others.

Early research shows that citizenship education is proving to be enjoyable and engaging for pupils. It is having a positive impact on their self-confidence to participate in lessons and the wider life of the school. Citizenship education aims to help pupils develop a deeper sense of identity and belonging in their communities as well as developing the skills necessary to become involved in contributing to society.

Teachers have also reacted favourably to teaching citizenship, for example, many of them feel excited and empowered by the challenge of new teaching and learning approaches in citizenship. They also appreciate the importance of being able to help their pupils explore issues that are important to their lives in and beyond school. There are many benefits for schools in teaching citizenship. Teachers and pupils agree that it enhances relationships between staff and pupils as well as supporting learning.



Local and Global Citizenship can now be found on the timetable of many schools but it is important to stress that education for citizenship is enriched by activities beyond the classroom and in the wider community. Through school councils, many pupils have the opportunity to 'live out' the values of citizenship and have a voice in the life of their schools.

All young people need to feel that they have a valuable contribution to make to society and the 'know how' and the skills to do so. Making this vision of citizenship education real is one of the most exciting challenges facing teachers, schools and the wider educational community today.



A 'Lift Up' with 'Lift Off'

In this article Gillian Neill and Diana Kelly from Stranmillis Primary School suggest an approach to human rights education which can be adopted by primary teachers.

Collaboration between Amnesty International (U.K. & Ireland) and two teacher unions U.T.U. and I.N.T.O. led to the development of a whole Ireland primary school programme to educate children in their rights and responsibilities. The essential brief was for user-friendly materials that busy teachers could easily pick up and use without a lot of prior planning. The programme consists of three skills-based workbooks all written by teachers for teachers:

- 'The Right Start' (Y1-3)
- 'Lift Off' (Y4-5)
- 'Me You Everyone' (Y6-7)

'The Right Start' is presently being trialled in sixty schools throughout Ireland. The lessons contain no abstract concepts for the children to take on board; they are instead given real life situations and taught how to develop their skills of reasoning, persuasion and argument.

The lesson plans contained in 'The Right Start' workbook are divided into five themes. These are:

- empathy;
- communication;
- co-operation;
- respect and responsibility; and
- conflict resolution.

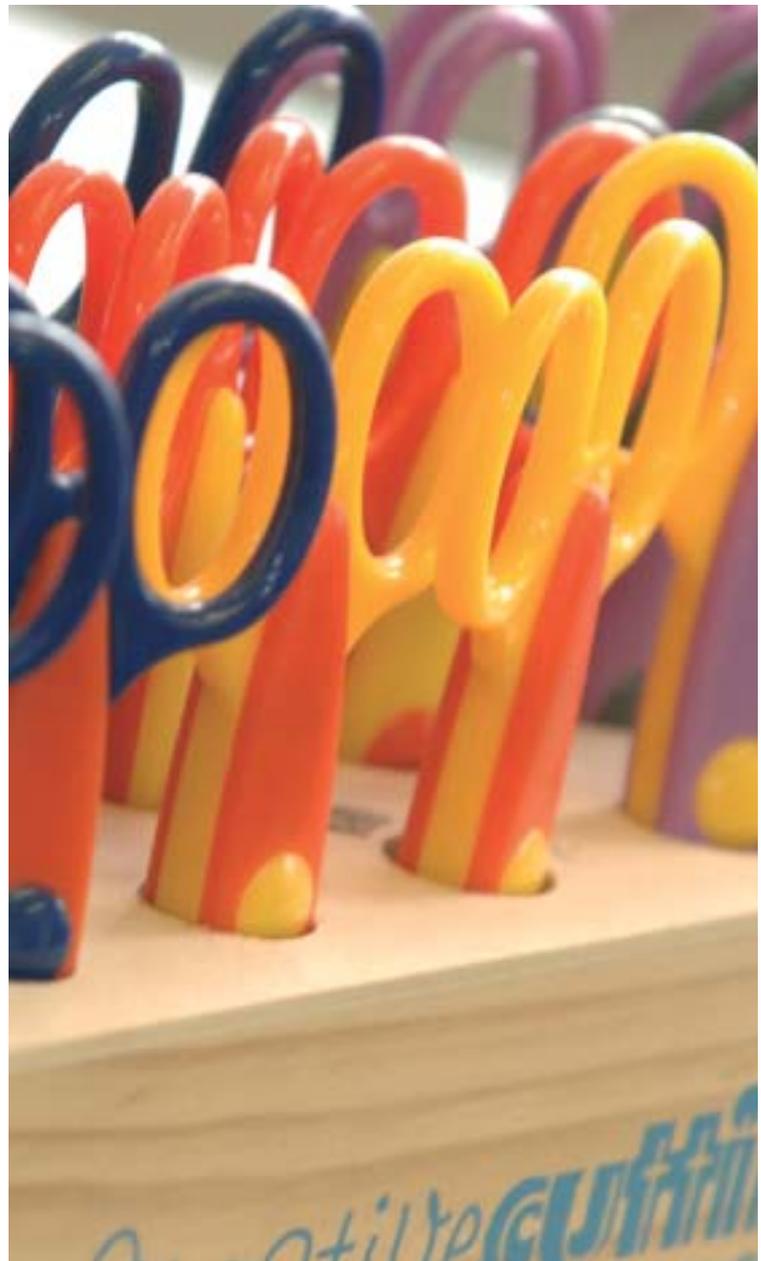
Each lesson plan contains aims, learning objectives, and suggested equipment to use, if necessary, and worksheets ready to be run off for class use.

'Lift Off' is the original workbook of the series and deals with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It contains ten lessons but the teacher does not have to follow slavishly each one. Discussion, reasoning and argument are important skills being developed so lessons can take more than one session to complete.

Once the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been introduced specific articles can be researched in detail involving individual and collaborative work.

'Me You Everyone' introduces the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It's a natural progression on from 'Lift Off' and again the lessons are designed to provoke discussion and reasoned argument. The children are encouraged to think about and debate quite profound issues and challenge opinions. As the Declaration of Human Rights is a complex charter, teacher and child can learn together.

The use of these excellent resources in Stranmillis Primary School has enabled teachers to address the sensitive issues surrounding human rights education. They have also encouraged creative and innovation approaches to teaching and high levels of pupil participation in the learning process. The pupils have also enjoyed the learning experiences involved and it has opened up for them rich insights into fundamental aspects of human rights.



Citizenship Education in Oakgrove Integrated College

In the article that follows John Harkin from Oakgrove Integrated College identifies a range of opportunities which can stimulate an active approach to class and whole-school citizenship activities.

In Oakgrove, citizenship is something active because it should empower young people to make a difference in the lives of others. This is most effectively done through action projects where students research issues of concern, plan and act to make a difference, and then evaluate.

Numerous stimuli exist to enable participation and work equally well as class or extra-curricular activities. The BBC's *Question Time Challenge* asks students to put together a TV panel programme and the resources available help staff organise young people to run the event. Our winning entry in the inaugural year of the 'Challenge' involved a team of twenty-five. Preparation refines students' talking and listening skills, teaches how to make a balanced and representative panel and leads to finding out from others what concerns them.

The Citizenship Foundation's *Youth Parliament and Mock Trial* competitions provide incentives. Nothing teaches children better the workings of Parliament than filming a parliamentary debate on an issue of their choice. Potentially dull workings of the legal processes are fun when learned as part of a competition entry. It's easy for teachers when excellent materials are provided free of charge!

Formally run elections to a Whole-School Council enable students to learn about PR and why it is a fairer way to vote. The student voice is heard, and successful candidates know they must work hard if they are to be re-elected! Student led assemblies and year group collaboration is also a feature of a good 'citizenship ethos' in the school.

Other teaching scenarios include 'each one teach one' games, where students teach each other articles from the UN Rights Conventions, help give ownership to rights. An Amnesty International group allows students as young as primary age to use letter-writing skills to literally save a life. A student-run FairTrade shop shows how the simplest of choices can make life better for others. Fundraising, using cooking skills to run bun sales and sponsored walks are just some of the ideas students will come up with when given information and the opportunity to work for change.

Good lessons give young people the desire to learn about something new, as well as the skills they need to make a difference. Citizenship education matters because young people will use the skills acquired to address injustices and problems which they encounter in the future.

Contacts:

Citizenship Foundation:

www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk

www.citizen.org.uk/education/question_time.html

www.amnesty.org.uk



'Being Sensitive'

Patricia McCann, the Local and Global Citizenship co-ordinator at St Mary's Girls High School in Lurgan suggests an approach to dealing with the sensitive issues which may arise in a citizenship lesson.

There are many challenges facing teachers of citizenship, however these challenges multiply when we are required to address sensitive or controversial issues. In this context it is essential that we employ the right amount of caution yet also ensure that we stimulate the minds of the pupils involved.

Sensitive issues cannot simply be dealt with within the first few weeks of a citizenship course; rather the children need to have built up a strong foundation in essential citizenship concepts before the class can embark on the more controversial issues. A sense of empathy needs to be firmly in place before we can ask our pupils to consider any complex or sensitive topics.

An excellent way of doing this is to embark on role play scenarios. These situations can help pupils understand how they would feel, or act, if placed in the position of an individual from another background with specific needs and problems.

In St Mary's we applied this approach to produce a short animated film entitled, 'The Others'. Twenty Year 9 pupils were involved in the project in which they created a film which followed an adventurous day in the life of an alien family. The family arrives from another planet and eventually ends up in Lurgan. In adopting the 'role of the other' the pupils were able to explore the sensitive issue of sectarianism. This enabled the pupils to develop empathy towards other people's situations and life circumstances. The role play enabled sensitive issues, such as sectarianism, to be explored in a non-threatening yet realistic way.



The Pramerica Spirit of Community Award

In keeping with the citizenship theme of this edition of *termtalk*, GTCNI is pleased to announce the Spirit of Community Award which seeks to reward the voluntary contributions that young people make to their local communities.

Recognising outstanding contributions from young volunteers in your school

Do you have students in your school who deserve to be recognised for their volunteer work? Then encourage them to apply for the Pramerica Spirit of Community Award! This new programme recognises post-primary/secondary-level students from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland for community service activities, and is co-sponsored by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) and the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI).

In September, all secondary-school Principals will receive applications to distribute to students who have engaged in volunteer work over the previous year. Students' applications must be completed by October 26th, then certified by a Principal and submitted for judging by November 10th. The top 20 finalists will be announced in February and then acknowledged at a gala dinner ceremony in March 2007. There, they will receive €500 cash prizes and beautifully engraved silver medallions. Also at the dinner, two of finalists will be named All-Ireland's Youth Volunteers



of the Year, winning an additional €500, gold medallions, €1,000 for the charities of their choice, and a trip to Washington, D.C., in May to attend the national recognition events of the American Spirit of Community Awards programme.

The Spirit of Community Awards programme was created by Prudential Financial Inc. in the U.S. in 1995, and has recognised more than 70,000 young volunteers over the past 11 years. The programme has elicited praise from educators, parents, elected officials and news media for communicating to young people the importance of volunteer service in their communities. Among the many prominent personalities who have participated in the programme are Jimmy Carter, Barbara Bush, Magic Johnson, John Glenn, Madeleine Albright, Rudy Giuliani, Whoopi Goldberg and Colin Powell. The programme has also been introduced in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

In addition to NAPD and GTCNI, the awards programme in Ireland is being sponsored by Pramerica Financial, a subsidiary of Prudential Financial. For more information, contact NAPD at www.napd.ie or GTCNI at www.gtcni.org.uk or visit www.pramerica.ie/spirit



Pramerica introduces An All-Ireland Programme, Pramerica Spirit of the Community to recognise young volunteers starting September 2006. L-R Michelle Morris, David McPherson NAPD, Derek West, NAPD, Henry McGarvey, Managing Director, Pramerica, Gerry Devlin, GTCNI, Caroline Breslin, Director of IT, Pramerica.

Citizenship and the 'Dissolving Boundaries' Programme

How do pupils in Northern Ireland use ICT to learn about difference and diversity while working online together to create something original and interesting?

Teachers and pupils in special, primary and post-primary schools do just that through the 'Dissolving Boundaries' programme, which helps them find a partner school across the border, then plan joint work, and use video-conferencing and text-based conferencing to learn together in their choice of curriculum area.

Pupils as young as 8 or 9 work together to create PowerPoint shows and their own websites. It's in creating these shared work spaces that they come to know each other, form friendships and negotiate how to present their joint investigations to a public arena. To date project areas such as child labour, community action, science, local history and geography, creative writing and citizenship have featured.

In many of the schools, it's the video-conference, with its immediacy and powerful visual appeal, that helps pupils work their way around different accents, different attitudes and different school routines. Teachers report that this has done wonders for communication skills and for pupil self-esteem. Some of the pupils smarten up when they're doing a 'live' link up to their partner school...they've even been known to wear aftershave!

Other schools have found text-based communication using NINE to be best, allowing teachers to integrate 'Dissolving Boundaries' into their teaching plans, pick up messages when it suits and give time for pupils to compose replies.

Roisin Daly from Dungannon Primary school in County Tyrone is linked to Scoil Mhuire Coolcotts, Co.Wexford, in a project called 'Face to face, learning together to become citizens of the future' based around literacy with pupils working in 'joint teams' of five, in each of the two schools. They sent profiles of themselves, exchanged views on Roald Dahl, designed and exchanged Christmas cards, talked about sport and will evaluate their experiences of working 'virtually'.

Here are Roisin's reflections...

"Where has this academic year gone? Time has passed so quickly but yet as I reflect on our work within Dissolving Boundaries I smile and feel proud of what has been achieved. Children from Primary 5 (Dungannon) and Fourth/Fifth Class (Coolcotts) have thoroughly enjoyed engaging and developing their own ICT skills and learning, enabling them to become independent learners. One of the most remarkable outcomes from this project was the opportunity which we had to explore cultural diversity. As teachers we had not considered this possibility until the pupil profiles which included photographs arrived in school. This opportunity was seized by both schools to promote cultural awareness and diversity"

Find out more on www.dissolvingboundaries.org or email Roger Austin, who is the co-director of the programme, at the University of Ulster at: rsp.austin@ulster.ac.uk

There is also a conference planned on the 'Role of ICT in Bridge-Building and Social Inclusion' from 10-13 September 2006; details at: http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/education/ict_conf/index.html
All teachers are most welcome.



GTCNI Survey of Teachers

The Council is, at present, undertaking a large scale survey of teachers in Northern Ireland. The aim of the survey is to elicit the views of the profession on a wide range of important areas which directly affect the working lives of teachers. At a time of unprecedented change, it is essential that the views of teachers are heard in the policy making arena. To this end, the survey will cover areas such as pupil behaviour, PRSD, continuing professional development (CPD) and the impact of ICT on classroom practice. Importantly, it will also explore areas such as the status of teaching and teachers' career aspirations. The survey will also seek to ascertain the extent of teachers' influence on school-based policy development and also policy development at a national level.

The implementation of the revised curriculum will also require that teachers have a range of curriculum planning skills. The survey will enable Council to find out what teachers feel about the implications of the revised curriculum for professional practice and the CPD that will, necessarily, have to accompany the new arrangements. The survey section on CPD not only asks teachers to evaluate previous experiences of provision but also seeks to discover

what the CPD priority areas are likely to be in the future.

If you are chosen as part of the 3000 representative sample we would really appreciate your response. This will be an important service to all colleagues in the wider profession. The Council will then use the evidence collected to inform its own internal policy development as well as using it to influence government policy in a way that ensures that the profession's views are taken seriously.



You may be selected to be part of the GTCNI survey. Use your views to help shape the future of your profession and you could win £500 to spend on resources for your school.

Those who have been selected to participate will receive the questionnaire by the 30th May 2006.

UPDATE...Substitute Teacher Register (NISTR)

The Department of Education has recently advised schools and employing authorities that, as from 1 September 2006, only teachers registered on the Northern Ireland Substitute Teacher Register (NISTR) should be employed to work in schools as substitute teachers.

The primary purpose of this is to offer protection to pupils, schools and employers by ensuring that all substitute teachers are properly checked as suitable to work with children and are fully qualified before being employed in schools.

All teachers on NISTR have an initial pre-employment criminal record check carried out and have vetting checks carried out every two years thereafter. The application process to join NISTR also includes a check that teachers are considered 'eligible to teach', satisfy relevant health requirements and are registered with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI).

It is important that teachers who intend seeking employment as substitute teachers in the future should register in good time so that all appropriate checks can be conducted well in advance of taking up any substitute cover assignment. At least 8 weeks should be allowed for this process to be completed.

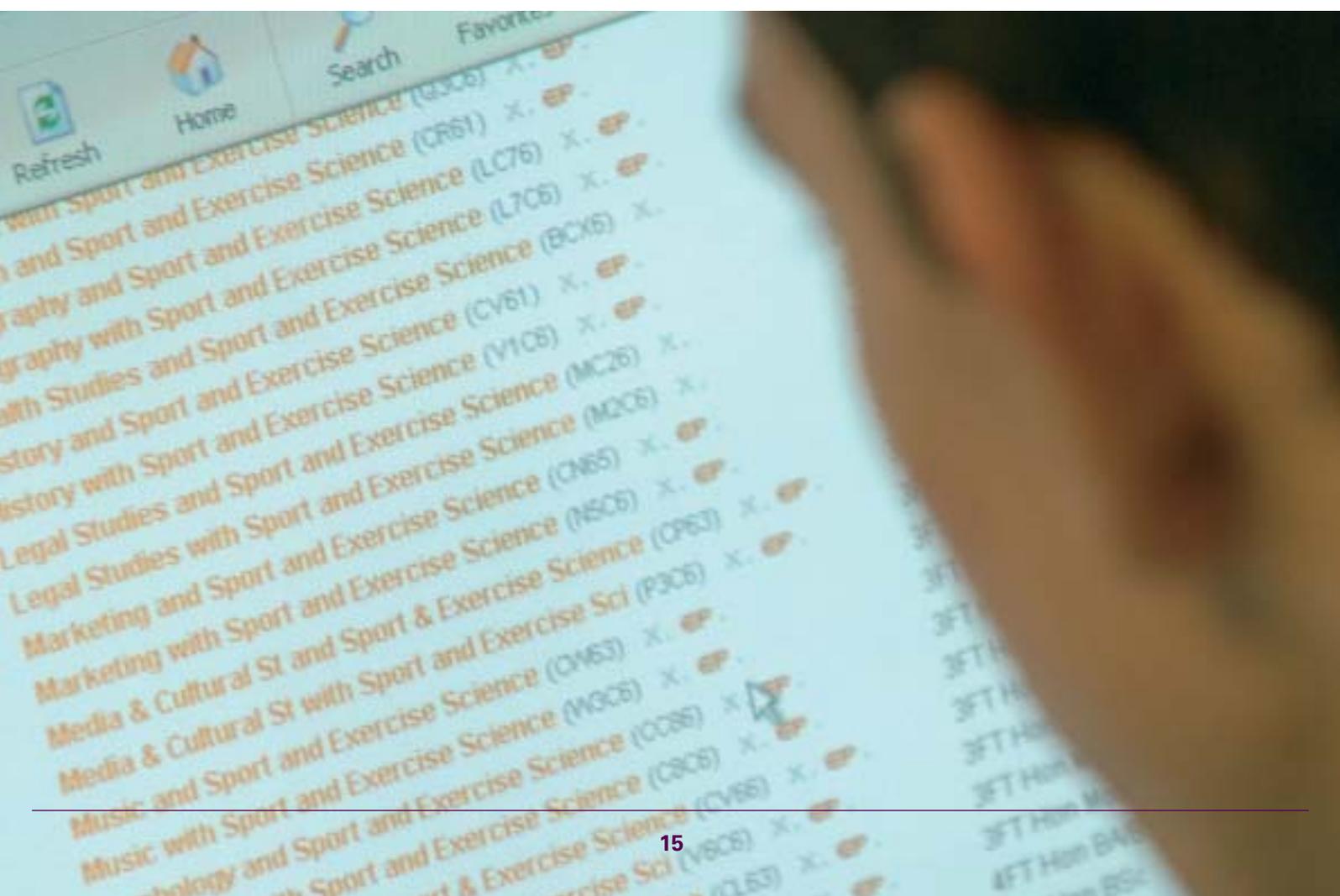
Schools have their own secure login and password to access the system and have round the clock online access and can search for teachers by:

- individual name;
- date, subject and key stage;
- list of those previously used by the school; and
- lists of teachers available on the day or the following working day.

The online register has an integrated online electronic booking system that allows schools to register their needs and match those against the available teachers who can register free of charge. The information held on teachers' availability is updated as soon as schools confirm and complete the bookings on the system.

Teachers due to qualify this summer have been advised of the new arrangements and of the requirement to register on NISTR well in advance of the start of the school year. Also, schools have been urged to advise substitute teachers that they must register if they wish to be employed in September.

Online application forms and registration details are available on the website www.nistr.org.uk or forms can be obtained from the Administration Unit at Belfast Education and Library Board for completion off-line. (Tel 028 9056 4000 Ext 4427)



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Want to find out more?

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