

ACCS

Newsletter Nuachtiris

Cumann na Scoileanna Pobail is Cuimsitheacha Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools

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Please circulate to Board Members.



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Junior Cycle Reform

Following a briefing in the Department of Education and Skills on Monday, 02 March 2015, ACCS and the two other Management Bodies (JMB and ETBI) together with NAPD issued a press release in support of the Junior Cycle Reform 'A Way Forward' proposals issued by Dr Pauric Travers. Dr Travers had provided clarifications on his proposals to both the Minister for Education and Skills and the ASTI and TUI on 23 February 2015.

Press Release

"We regret that the clarifications provided by Dr Pauric Travers were not accepted by the Unions as a way forward. The reforms envisaged in the Travers Document provide an approach to curriculum and assessment that will improve the learning experiences of students.

Any such improvement in the learning experience requires the wholehearted engagement of teachers and Travers' proposals provides such an opportunity.

Teachers are being asked to report to parents on the progress of their children. This is the core element of the proposal. This can happen through the school-based assessment element of the Junior Cycle Framework.

We have confidence in the professionalism of our teachers, guided by the Junior Cycle for Teachers Support Service and the Independent Assessment Support Service. Teachers as professionals can assess objectively and effectively the work of their students and report student progress to parents.

We recognise that parallel to the school-based assessment a programme of objective state certification will continue through the State Examinations Commission.

We are clear in our minds about the resources needed for the successful implementation of the revised Junior Cycle Framework. We look forward, as a matter of urgency, to engaging with the Department Officials and the other Education Partners, including the Unions, to secure those resources".

ACCS has been supportive of Junior Cycle reform since the first Junior Cycle Framework Document was published in 2011. The article below, published in the Irish Independent in February 2015 outlines our views.

Unless the examination changes, nothing else will

Junior Cert Reform is both necessary and overdue. Curriculum reform will only succeed if it is accompanied by simultaneous assessment reform – otherwise teaching and learning will revert to an exam-driven model.

This was the experience of the late 1980s when the old Inter Cert became the new Junior Cert. What changed as a result? Not a lot apart from the name. The 95 member schools of the Association

of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) support the proposed changes to the Junior Cycle curriculum set out by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in 2011.

Community and Comprehensive Schools support the approach to assessment proposed by the NCCA that includes an in-school component which will focus on the development of skills, on the learning process rather than the end product. Unfortunately it is not possible for external assessment alone to pick up on this learning process. In fact, the classroom teacher is the person best placed to see and assess this learning as it happens in the classroom on a daily basis. External moderation will ensure both the reliability and objectivity of such classroom-based assessment – while relying on and trusting teacher professionalism. The process of assessment by teachers will provide additional benefits including valuable professional development for teachers. This in turn will build capacity in schools.

How is this reformed model of Junior Cycle curriculum, with accompanying new modes of assessment, better than what went before?

There are plenty of examples in the Community and Comprehensive sector. Schools which have been exploring skills at junior cycle tell of new kinds of learning conversations, with parents also involved in evaluating their child's contribution in their own learning experience. In these real cases teachers find that they are affirming success, and not correcting the same errors each week. Students recognise their own learning, and mistakes or errors, but they also understand clearly their responsibility in the learning process and in improving learning. This kind of dialogue allows the focus of assessment to be moved away from what the student has done in the past and places it firmly on how greater success can be achieved in the future. In these situations we see students using detailed feedback to set goals and targets in their own learning.

We know that there is trust in teachers and in their work in schools. In a recent report the Chief Inspector, Dr. Harold Hislop, presents a national compilation of survey results conducted with parents and guardians. In this survey, 91% of parents report that their child feels safe and well looked after in school. 92% of parents say school reports give a good picture of how their child is doing. Parents trust schools more than most institutions in the State – because they trust most teachers and school leaders. Parents have no doubt,



Ms. Eileen Salmon,
General Secretary.

and show overwhelming trust in school reports. These reports are based on school-based assessment. One hundred percent school-based assessment.

Furthermore the ACCS firmly believes that the skills that are at the core of the Junior Cycle reform – which are not valued in the current system but are vital to the development of the well-rounded young person – will once again be lost if the system continues to prioritise examination preparation.

We have clear evidence – from the ESRI and others – of poor engagement by young people with a system which is outdated and has little meaning for them. This disengagement has real and costly consequences far beyond school – consequences for further learning, for democratic citizenship, for society and for the economy.

So how do we overcome this disengagement and replace it with the types of learning that engage young people and that provide the skills necessary for further learning and for the future? Feedback from initial introduction of the new junior cycle suggests that there is immediate benefit for student engagement, for deeper learning and also for teacher professional freedom, growth and renewal. The combination of a reformed curriculum (with less content overload, based on key-skills) and modes of assessment that are more continuous and closer to the learning have led to immediate positive impact on engagement.

These moves in the direction of reform are only initial – and attempts to assess their effectiveness have been delayed

by the Unions' directive to teachers not to engage with Junior Cycle reform. Nevertheless, conclusions can be drawn from the initial assessment of the various ways in which the reform has already been trialled.

A small number of schools have introduced the new junior cycle already in a limited number of subjects. One Principal, for example, who organised an independent, externally facilitated appraisal of this approach, reports that teachers involved are identifying numerous benefits. These include: greater engagement by all students, including those previously disengaged, greater inclusion of children with learning challenges, greater equity, deeper learning and teacher invigoration.

The ACCS recognises that reform requires time, support, training and resources. We reiterate our challenge to Minister O'Sullivan to ensure that all schools are resourced adequately in terms of planning time, renewed middle management structures, enhanced ICT capacity and professional development provision. We also challenge the teacher Unions to review their position on Junior Cert reform – they need to think again about their position on teacher assessment.

While Junior Cert reform is fundamentally about curriculum rather than assessment, the reality is that clinging on to current forms of assessment will lead to no curricular change. Can we really afford to let this opportunity pass and deny another generation of young people the necessary skills to take their place as 21st Century citizens?

DES Circulars Published since our last Newsletter

0001/2015	Combined Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers involved in Learning Support and Special Education – 2015/2016
0002/2015	Graduate Certificate in the Education of Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) for teachers working with Students with ASDs in Special Schools, Special Classes or as Resource Teachers in mainstream Primary and Post-Primary Schools – 2015/2016
0003/2015	Post-Graduate Certificate/Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers working with Students with Special Educational Needs (Autistic Spectrum Disorders)
0004/2015	Work Stoppage by ASTI and TUI Members – 22 January 2015
0006/2015	Parental Leave Entitlements for Clerical Officers and Caretakers employed in National Schools under the 1978/79 Scheme and Clerical Officers employed in Post Primary Schools under the 1978 Scheme
0007/2015	Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2017
0008/2015	Teacher Fee Refund Scheme 2014
0012/2015	Further Extension to the 'Grace Period' for Superannuation Benefits in respect of Clerical Officers and Caretakers employed in National Schools under the 1978/79 Scheme and Clerical Officers employed in Post Primary Schools under the 1978 Scheme
0013/2015	Further Extension to the 'Grace Period' for Superannuation Benefits in respect of Special Needs Assistants
0014/2015	Further Extension to the 'Grace Period' for Superannuation Benefits in respect of Teachers
0015/2015	Revised Payment Mechanism for Casual and Non-Casual Teachers with effect from the Commencement of the 2015/16 School Year - Cessation of "Rolled-up Holiday Pay"

Introducing the Schools Procurement Unit (SPU)

Meet the Team



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The Schools Procurement Unit (SPU) is the central support resource for providing guidance to all primary and post-primary schools (excluding ETB schools) on any procurement related issue.

It provides practical advice and help to schools on how to improve their procurement processes and practices on an ongoing basis.

The SPU will also produce practical guides on procurement best practice to enable schools to meet their obligations under public procurement law, within a complex and changing public procurement environment.

Meet the Buyers in the Schools Sector - The Office of Government Procurement (OGP)

About the OGP

The OGP is responsible for sourcing all goods and services on behalf of the public service. In addition, the OGP will also take responsibility for the area of procurement policy and procedures.

Through the OGP, the Irish public service (including the school sector) will speak with 'one voice' to the market for each category of expenditure, eliminating duplication and taking advantage of the scale of public procurement to best effect.

Who will buy what?

The goods and services currently bought by the public service can be grouped into 16 categories.

As explained in the table below, eight of these categories cover goods and services that are common across the public service (such as utilities, facilities

management, ICT, print and stationery). Instead of schools and public bodies each tendering separately for these common goods and services, the OGP will put in place contracts for them from which all public bodies will buy.

Major capital programmes such as school building programmes are outside the scope of the OGP operational activities at this time.

Benefits of New Approach

Centralising procurement means that individual schools will no longer need to tender separately for goods and services which are common across the School Sector. This approach will help to partially relieve some of the administrative burden and reduce risk currently being experienced within schools.

More Information

For more information about the OGP, please visit the OGP's website www.procurement.ie.

If you have any procurement queries, please contact the OGP's Customer Service Team at support@ogp.gov.ie or the SPU at procurementssupport@jmb.ie

Individual Schools

A considerable amount of purchasing activity takes place at local school level. With the advent of the OGP, the need for each individual school to continue to buy (on their own behalf) goods and services - the big ticket items which are common right across the school sector - will become redundant. Schools will have access to an ever increasing amount of legally compliant contracts which

OGP Led Categories	Sector Led Categories
Professional Services	Laboratory, Diagnostics and Equipment (Education Sector Led)
Facilities Management and Maintenance	Veterinary and Agriculture (Education Sector Led)
Utilities (e.g. Gas, Electricity, Fuels)	Minor Building Works and Civil Engineering Works (Local Government Sector Led)
ICT and Office Equipment	Plant Hire (Local Government Sector Led)
Marketing, Print and Stationery	Medical Professional Services (Health Sector Led)
Travel and HR Services	Medical and Diagnostic Equipment and Supplies (Health Sector Led)
Fleet and Plant	Medical, Surgical and Pharmaceutical Supplies (Health Sector Led)
Managed Services	Defence and Security (Defence Sector Led)

can best exploit economy of scale advantages. However, low-value ad hoc purchases are still likely to be a feature of school activity into the foreseeable future.

While it is not strictly mandatory for schools to use the OGP contracts, it is nevertheless important for schools to be aware of their obligations under public procurement rules. The situation as currently pertains can be summarised thus - the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform issued Circular 16/13 -

<http://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/per/2013/16.pdf> - which sets out the position with regard to the use of central frameworks and contracts by public bodies. All bodies, including schools, who receive more than 50% of their income from public funding, come under the remit of this circular. It is Government policy that public bodies, where possible, should make use of all central frameworks by the public bodies under their remit. The benefits arising from these frameworks include: cash savings; administrative savings from reduced duplication of

tendering; greater purchasing expertise; improved consistency; enhanced service levels and legal certainty.

Schools may still purchase from suppliers outside the frameworks if it can be shown:

- that the product can be sourced more cheaply elsewhere or
- that an existing contract is in place.

In Conclusion

The environmental framework in which public procurement takes place in Ireland is changing fundamentally. A school needs to be aware of what the implications of these changes are for them, and be cognisant of, and understand fully its responsibilities within this new paradigm. The SPU is available as a school's first point of reference with regard to any procurement related issue it encounters. The SPU will provide advice and guidance to help ensure schools are fully compliant in meeting their obligations.

Energy Monitoring and Reporting

Did you know that all Public Bodies, including schools, have a statutory obligation to monitor and report energy use?

The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan to 2020 has set the Public Sector a target to improve energy efficiency by 33% and to lead by example. Public sector bodies are required to report annually on their energy usage and actions taken to reduce consumption in accordance with Statutory Instrument 426 of 2014. These regulations transpose the Energy Efficiency Directive (Directive 2012/27/EU) into Irish law.

How will schools monitor and report?

SEAI and the Department of Communications Energy & Natural Resources have developed an **on-line energy Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) system** to help public sector organisations, including schools, track their progress towards the 2020 energy efficiency target. The target for improved energy efficiency for the schools sector in aggregate is 33%. Each school is expected to contribute towards this. The M&R system tracks each school's contribution, by expressing its performance with respect to a 33% improvement by 2020.

Benefits of reporting

As well as enabling you to report and track your school's energy data annually, the online system provides you with:

- Online access to your annual electricity and natural gas consumption data.
- Optionally, allows you to share relevant data with the Office of Government Procurement's energy procurement framework.
- A scorecard that presents a powerful snapshot of the school's progress to date.

When will this happen?

- Each school has received notification and details of how to log in to the system during December 2014 and can begin to report from this point.
- The deadline for submitting certain aspects of your

data is the **27th February, 2015**.

- The remainder of the report needs to be completed by **29th May, 2015**.

Supports available to schools

SEAI have developed a workbook, on-line videos and guidance to assist schools in reporting, which are available in the Schools section through the link: http://www.seai.ie/Your_Business/Public_Sector/Reporting/Help-Guidance-and-Support/

Register for a free training workshop

It is anticipated that most schools will be able to complete their report using the workbook, on-line videos and guidance available at www.seai.ie/PublicSectorReporting. There will also be free training workshops for schools on the reporting system in January 2015 which will be arranged by the CPSMA and will be **open to all schools primary and post-primary** (limited availability, preference will be given to larger schools or schools with more complex profiles such as multiple meters or shared premises). Visit www.cpsma.ie for details.

For more details on Monitoring and Reporting go to: www.seai.ie/PublicSectorReporting



News & Events from the Community & Comprehensive School Sector

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Community and Comprehensive Schools excel at the Young Scientist Exhibition



Community and Comprehensive Schools were well represented at the BT Young Scientist Exhibition with close on one hundred projects selected for exhibition from twenty four schools. Many received awards with the following receiving Special Awards.

Runner-up Group Prize and winner of the Irish Research Council Special Award: Patrick Sweeney, Chloe Daniels, Annette Moran, Birdsong and music: Connections between Irish and African music and development of a new music genre based on the Galapagos Island's birdsong. Carrick on Shannon Community School.

Environmental Protection Agency Award: Hugh Whelan, Ken McVitty, A study, using statistical methods of public attitudes and awareness of climate justice, Kinsale Community School.

Geological Survey of Ireland Award: James Barry, Luke Henderson, Tadhg McCarthy, Earthquakes in Ireland! What's shaking us, Kinsale Community School.

Teagasc Award: Shane Seery, Sean Pettit, Not mush-room for turf anymore, Moate Community School.

Road Safety Authority Award: Jessica Sheehan, Max Shanahan, A statistical study on the effect of change blindness and its impact on road safety, Kinsale Community School.

Father Tom Burke Memorial Bursary: Shiofra Ryan, An Tionshar (The impact hurling boot), St Brendan's Community School, Birr.

Science Foundation Award: Eve Casey, Cathy Hynes, Sugar on trial. A comparative study to access the relative sweetnesses of beet and cane sugar and the resultant potential for sugar reduction, Kinsale Community School.

BT Social and Behavioural Educator of Excellence: Shaun Holly, Kinsale Community School.



Lisa Daly with Paul McGinley Golfer and Colm O'Neill C.E.O. of BT Ireland.

Lisa Daly (Fifth Year Student from Heywood Community School) won first place in the **Senior Individual Social and Behavioural Sciences Category** with her project entitled "To P.E. or not to P.E.".



Shiofra Ryan, St. Brendan's Community School Birr.

Shiofra, winner of the **Fr. Tom Burke Memorial Bursary**, displays her project, An Tionshar (The impact hurling boot), at the Young Scientist Exhibition.



BT Social and Behavioural Educator of Excellence
Mr. Shaun Holly, Kinsale Community School.



Jemima Turner, Newpark Comprehensive School.

Jemima was placed **3rd** in the **Intermediate Chemical, Physical and Mathematical Sciences** with her project.



Gallen Community School Ferbane students Lucy Egan and Sophie Gilson definitely captured the imagination with their project on the effects of make-up on teenage girls appearing on TV3's Exposé and RTE's Tubridy show.

International Junior Science Olympiad Success



Maurice Moore, a student in Tarbert Comprehensive School, Co. Kerry was awarded a bronze medal at the Award Ceremony of the 11th International Junior Science Olympiad (IJSO) in Mendoza, Argentina. Maurice was selected to represent Ireland following his participation in the Irish Junior Science Olympiad.

Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC) Transition Year Schools Competition



St. Patrick's Comprehensive School, Shannon won the inaugural Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC) Transition Year Schools Competition.



Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship Competition

Clara Hewson, St. Clare's Comprehensive, winner of the national NFTE competition and she will travel to New York City to receive her award at the NFTE Global Showcase in Gotham Hall.

Ciara's project, Look 2 Cook, involved developing a cook book where the recipes are shown in pictures to assist people with reading difficulties.