

Farewell to General Secretary, Ms. Eileen Salmon



Ms. Eileen Salmon and Mr. Ciarán Flynn, former General Secretary ACCS



Mr. Malachy Molloy, past President of ACCS, with members of the ACCS Executive, Mr. Pat McKenna and Mr. Paul Crone



The ACCS Executive Committee 2017

At the end of August, Ms. Eileen Salmon retired from her position as General Secretary of ACCS, a position she had held for three years. She had been Assistant General Secretary for the previous three years, working with Mr. Ciaran Flynn as General Secretary and Mr. Malachy Molloy as President. When Eileen took over as the first lady to lead ACCS, Mr. John Irwin was appointed Assistant General Secretary and so began the new team.

Eileen can be very proud of her tenure in ACCS. Among her many achievements was the development and implementation of the first Strategic Plan and making strategic planning central to the work of ACCS. Her work in supporting schools was characterised by a forensic knowledge of education and unending attention to detail that gained her the trust and

confidence of all. Her wise advice, especially in times of difficulty, will be remembered by many schools.

In the wider education field Eileen constantly worked to secure enhanced Senior and Middle management structures to support the work of school Principals and Boards. She had an unfailing commitment to Junior Cycle reform. All who worked with her on these and many other issues appreciated her honest, forthright and common-sense approach.

The ACCS team will miss Eileen and we wish her health and happiness in the future.

Eileen a chara, go n-eirí go geal leat agus go raibh míle maith agat.

Ms. Antoinette Nic Gearailt
Úachtarán ACCS



ACCS President, Ms. Antoinette Nic Gearailt marks the retirement of Ms. Eileen Salmon

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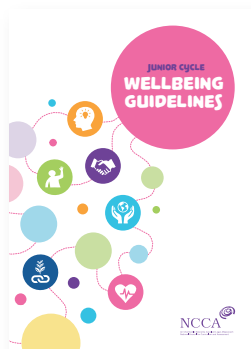
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Junior Cycle in Our Schools

Junior Cycle change is coursing through our schools as first year students are introduced to new subject specifications in English, Business, Science, Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) and Art while in second year and third year, students will experience Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) in the relevant subjects also during this year. Students may also experience short courses in addition to subject specifications which may be school developed or developed by the NCCA.

The *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines* have been introduced to the schools and these will assist the implementation and embedding of the wellbeing programme in the school curriculum over



the next three years. This is a new area of learning which builds on the excellent work that has taken place in post primary schools to date to support students' wellbeing. The area will incorporate learning traditionally included in PE, SPHE and CSPE as well as other areas such as Guidance.

The changes which are taking place currently on a phased basis at Junior Cycle reflect a changed context and time. The syllabi written for the Junior Certificate exam in 1989 focus on content and knowledge which are expressed in aims and objectives in the classroom. In 1989 this exam served a very different purpose for many students as it marked an end to their formal education and therefore deserved the "high stakes" status. This is no longer the case in 2017 as over 90% of students now move onto Leaving Certificate.

The changes are most evident in the subject specifications which replace the syllabi of old. These are written in learning outcomes which show what a student will know, understand, value and be able to demonstrate at the end of the three years. When teachers and students are engaging with the learning outcomes they are reassured that they are addressing the key skills, the statements of learning and the principles underpinning Junior Cycle.

In this new system while we are placing a definite emphasis on the development of skills, knowledge remains absolutely valued. In the words of Dr. Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector, DES,

"I welcome the retention of subject disciplines in the junior cycle framework. What I would like to see, however, is that the teaching of these subjects and the short courses that schools will be able to design, will bring students far beyond the acquisition and repetition of banks of knowledge. Students will require a good knowledge of a range of subjects, but they should also have opportunities to delve deeply into that knowledge, to learn to question and evaluate it, to be able to re-assemble different pieces of knowledge in new contexts and to use their knowledge and skills with others to approach new situations with open, creative solutions. Far from a dumbing-down of the curriculum, a changed Junior Cycle should be much more challenging. So, I think it will be essential for teachers and school leaders not to regard the development of skills or competences as an end in themselves, but to design a balanced programme of learning activities in which students' knowledge can grow, while at the same time deliberate and planned attention is paid to the development of students' abilities to understand, question, think, appreciate, analyse, express oneself, care for oneself, critique and acquire values, cooperate and create."

Dr. Harold Hislop (2014)

As we all grapple with the impact of the new Junior Cycle in our schools it is also important to remember that this represents one of the biggest changes that the education system has seen in the past fifty

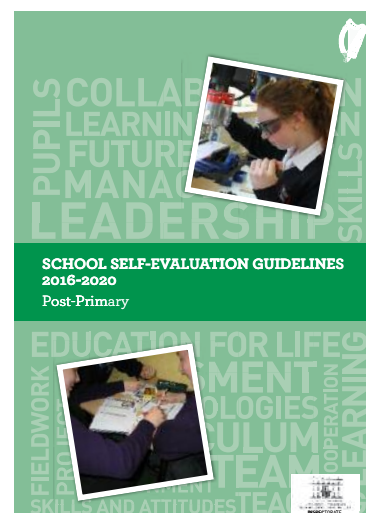
years and that it may take a very long time to embed the changes fully. Boards of Management and school leaders, from classroom teachers to school principals can be confident that they will be supported in their roles as agents of change in the process. There is no doubt that while *"Junior cycle education places students at the centre of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives"* (DES Framework for Junior Cycle, 2015) the key to the change will in fact be the classroom teacher and how they view the learning and the

programme which they facilitate.

One of the most exciting aspects of the introduction of Junior Cycle lies in the concept of professional time for teachers. This affords an opportunity for colleagues to work collaboratively in a mutually respectful space and one where the potential for authentic professional development is immense. The JCT programme of in-service which supports schools in their endeavours is a rich one with an extensive programme of subject specific CPD in addition to school closure days which are available for whole school CPD and Cluster day CPD. Leadership CPD is being facilitated for in-school management teams in the knowledge that the school leader is crucial to the success of the implementation of real change at school level.

Looking at Our Schools 2016 is the quality framework which provides standards that can help us assess how good our practices are and which point the way towards improvement when this is

needed. This framework underpins the six stage self-evaluation process and both initiatives can now be used to identify and acknowledge the many strengths evident in our schools, many of which already support the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle. These will also offer schools an opportunity to explore ways of building on the positive classroom practices found in our schools so that the necessary changes can be embedded effectively.



Classroom Based Assessment

Context is everything

As exciting and innovative as the new Junior Cycle is, for many of us the vision is clouded by confusion and misunderstanding. Our context is complex. Many teachers are teaching a new subject specification without the benefit of professional development. This leaves us all in an awkward position; in the absence of clarity, distrust and fear build up. It is not an ideal start for what I believe is one of the most exciting educational reforms in my lifetime but it is what it is. Probably the most contested area is assessment and that will be the theme of this series of articles. Over the next few issues, I hope to provide some clarity to abate the confusion and clear up some of the misunderstanding that has crept into the Junior Cycle story. This month I have chosen to discuss Classroom-Based Assessments as they are a reality for many of us teaching English, Science and Business Studies.

Classroom-Based Assessments

One of the major changes to our assessment procedures is the introduction of Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs). It is often said, 'what's measured, is treasured' and that may be true for how we assessed in the old Junior Certificate. The Junior Certificate exam measured the skills, knowledge and understanding that could be tested in a pen and paper examination. As a result of this, many of the skills that could not be captured in this way, were not prioritised or developed fully with students. The CBAs address this by providing us with a mechanism to capture, measure and hopefully treasure, student achievement in these particular areas.

For example, in English the first CBA is an Oral Communication Task which encourages students to develop their

ability to communicate and research effectively. They are assessed on their fluency and control of the materials used, their clarity of expression and their ability to engage the audience or listener. As a result, I am now explicitly teaching research skills and effective communication on an ongoing basis in my English classroom. This is different. It means that students who are skilled verbal communicators can now be recognised for their achievement in this area.

There are 2 CBAs, one near the end of 2nd year and another around December of 3rd year. The results of the CBAs will be reported on in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement. We will use the following descriptors to assess the student work:

- Exceptional
- Above expectations
- In line with expectations
- Yet to meet expectations

These are called the 'Features of Quality' and under each heading there is a further elaboration to help teachers to establish the student's level of achievement.

The most frequent question I am asked is, 'whose expectations are we talking about? Is it the teachers or where does the standard come from?' The answer is that there is a group of people convened by the NCCA several times a year to execute a 'Quality Assurance' meeting. The group that meets consists of representatives from SEC, NCCA, JCT, the Inspectorate and the largest representation from subject teachers. They assess a variety of student work, reach a shared understanding of the standard and then post the examples with explanations as to why they are at that standard on curriculumonline.ie. It is essential for teachers embarking on CBAs to engage with these samples to align our judgement with that of that the national standard. Over

time, this will get easier as we will become more familiar with the Features of Quality and the national standards.

To conclude, I have spoken to numerous teachers throughout the country who have already experienced CBAs. Many spoke about how unsettling it was (as it was so new) and how this led them to inflate their importance for the students. The students picked up on this anxiety and fed off it and the CBAs in some schools took on a life of their own. In my own school, the teachers of English reflected on last year's CBA and gave some advice to our Business Studies and Science teachers. It was along the lines of the following...Don't panic, don't make it into a big deal, do engage with the annotated examples of student work on curriculumonline.ie, do plan it in advance and do enjoy it. They all agreed that it altered how they approached teaching in a positive way and agreed that it helped the development of students' key skills.

CBAs provide students, parents and teachers with a snapshot of student achievement at different stages of their learning journey. They allow us to capture student achievement in the Key Skills and the skills of our subjects. They provide multiple opportunities for students to shine and they allow for all learners to achieve under the guidance and advice of their teachers. My biggest fear for CBAs is that they turn into 'stressful' events in students' lives. If this does happen we will have missed an opportunity to recalibrate and modernise our unbalanced assessment system.

Over the next few editions we will focus on Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings, the changes to the State Certified Examination and the Assessment Task.

*By Ms. Karol Sadleir,
Deputy Principal, Pobalscoil Neasáin*

Recent Relevant DES Circular Letters

CL 64/2017	Prescribed material for Junior Cycle English for students commencing Junior Cycle in September 2017
CL 62/2017	Scheme for leave of absence following assault for special needs assistants in recognised primary and post-primary schools
CL 61/2017	Scheme for leave of absence following assault for registered teachers in recognised primary and post-primary schools
CL 57/2017	HSE Post-Primary School Vaccination Programme 2017/2018
CL 54/2017	Revision of Teacher Salaries with effect from 1 September 2017
CL 52/2017	Home Tuition Grant Scheme 2017/2018 – Maternity Related Absences Component

ACCS welcomes our newly appointed Principals and Deputy Principals



ACCS hosted a two-day Induction Programme for all newly appointed Principals and Deputy Principals in the Mullingar Park Hotel on the 21st and 22nd of August 2017. A total of fifty-six participants representing forty-three schools attended the seminar which focused on such topics as School

Governance, Data Protection, Care and Management of Students, Workplace Relations and new Developments in Education.

Participants enjoyed the supportive and relaxed nature of the seminar and found the content of the presentations extremely useful, relevant and highly stimulating.

This is an unprecedented number of appointments in one year and represents the increase in allocation of additional posts at Deputy Principal level where schools with 700+ students were granted a second Deputy Principal while schools with 900+ students were granted a third Deputy Principal in the 2017 Budget.



ACCS In-School Management Conference 2017

The ACCS In-School Management Conference will take place on the 30th November and 1st December 2017 in Farnham Estate Spa & Golf Resort, Farnham Estate, Cavan.

The theme for this year's conference is "Changing Dynamics" and we are delighted to welcome Ireland Rugby Head Coach, Mr. Joe Schmidt to the conference.

The conference opens with a session focussed on "Promoting Professional Collaboration" which will be delivered by Ms. Phil Fox, Head of Initial Teacher Education and Induction with the Teaching Council. Workshops during the seminar will develop the theme of sharing professional practice in our schools and will explore how the dynamics in our classrooms and schools are changing.

News and Events in our Schools

The Certified Irish Angus Beef Schools' Competition at The National Ploughing Championships

Two of our schools saw an interesting increase in their enrolment figures this academic year when students returned from the Ploughing Championships with five Angus calves. The calves were presented to the schools when they became finalists in the *Certified Irish Angus Beef Schools' Competition* which is run by The Irish Angus Producer Group along with its processor partners, ABP Ireland and Kepak.

Five school teams from around Ireland were presented with their prizes at the National Ploughing Championships by RTE broadcaster, Ms. Miriam O'Callaghan. This competition is a unique one which aims to encourage second level students to gain an understanding about the care that is required to produce and market the highest quality beef for consumers.

Each of the finalists will receive the financial benefit involved in the selling of the animals to the processors on completion of the project. The winning students also receive an additional grant of €2,000 for their further education.



John Duignan & Cathal Moran with the calves. Glenamaddy Community School, Co. Galway

The theme of the Glenamaddy C.S. project is
"Mental Health & Wellbeing Among Farmers"

Reasons for entering:

"We entered the competition based on our own passion for agriculture as we are both from farming backgrounds. The thought of winning five Irish Angus calves tempted us very much as we could base our Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science around the rearing of the calves. Being able to see into the world of beef production also appealed to us. We hope it will give us a head start in our future farming careers."



Hannah Keogh, Ella Smyth, Kellie Ward & David Corry, Ashbourne Community School, Co. Meath

The theme of the Ashbourne C.S. project is
"Viability of Dairy Cross Irish Angus Beef Production"

Reasons for entering:

"This was a new and very different project. It sounded practical and the work could be completed outside school hours. We found the concept interesting and challenging and realised that it would give us the opportunity to develop many skills including research, communication, presentation and teamwork skills. It would also promote the subject of Agricultural Science within the school and give us an insight into the subject at Leaving Certificate. Finally, as a community school, we always work very closely with local businesses and this project would offer us the possibility of strengthening those links."

Double Take! Cashel Community School's 'Magnificent Seven'

On Tuesday 29th August 2017 Cashel Community School welcomed the 2017/18 First Year Group and amongst the freshmen were seven sets of twins, five of whom are identical. This is most definitely a first for the school. In their midst are four pairs of girls and one of boys. The fourteen students represent 9.8% of the first-year group.

Starting secondary school is a major transition in a young person's life and we are delighted that in addition to the support structures in the school these students will share the experience with each other. We look forward to seeing all the first years thrive as they grow towards adulthood.

In the meantime, the next six years will no doubt produce many unique photo opportunities.



Back Row (left to right): Darragh & Ciara Spillane, Mr. John Gallagher (Principal CCS), Anna & Lillie Fahie.

Middle (left to right): Ciara & Aoife Fleming, Abbie & Kate Bennett.

Front Row (Left to Right): Benjamin & Emilie Borowski, Caoilinn & Aoibheann Casey, Ross & Robbie D'Arcy.

News and Events in our Schools

Kilrush Community School celebrates 25 Years

On the 29th of September last, Kilrush Community School marked the 25th anniversary of their amalgamation and birth as a Community School.

The school celebrated with an inter-faith ceremony held in the school gym hall. Guests on the day included the original Board of Management members, the current Board of Management, many religious figures from the community, representatives from ACCS and many former students and retired staff members.

The ceremony itself saw the use of lots of symbols representative of all the three strands of the school itself; the Convent of Mercy, The Christian Brothers and the VEC. This sense of community pride and inclusion was also evident in the inclusion of parents, staff and students throughout the ceremony.

In 25 years the school has gone from strength to strength on the basis that people were willing to embrace change. It is a testament to the entire school community that the ethos of the school has stood that test of time, it is the one constant throughout all the educational and social reform the school has witnessed. It takes character and resilience to hold the spirit of a school and keep it to the forefront of all daily interactions. It is a remarkable achievement for the school to be able to say that the graduates from 25 years ago have the same ethos in common with the graduates of this coming school year.

The day was a day for all involved in Kilrush Community School to show their pride and to share some very fond memories with friends, past pupils and colleagues over the past 25 years, it was a day for the community to remember where they came from, acknowledge where they are, and look to where they are going.

By Ms. Karol Torpey, School Chaplain



School Principal, Mr. Rock Kirwin, with Sr. Kathleen Conway, Chairperson of the Board of Management welcoming Sr. Margaret Corkery, Trustee of Kilrush Community School.



The Sacred Space created by the school community for the 25th Anniversary Celebration

News and Events in our Schools

The 40th Clifden Arts Festival Welcomes Literary Heavyweights to Explore a New Chapter of Education, Entertainment and Enchantment



President Michael D. Higgins chats with Dr. Brendan Flynn and Mr. Joe Boske at the opening of the Clifden Arts Festival



Fidget Feet Wired & Free, Clifden Arts Festival

Photo by P Howard

The longest running community arts festival in Ireland, Clifden Community Arts Week, now in its 40th year, took place in mid-September with its usual very high quality artistic programme and superb literary, musical and visual art content. A festival of national and international importance, Clifden Arts Festival has sparked creativity, shared its reputation for diversity and quality with visitors and locals and explored the possibilities of nurturing the arts amongst young people from its very origins to present day.

From its humble beginnings the ethos and guiding principles of the Clifden Arts Festival have remained the same. In 1977, Creative Director Dr. Brendan Flynn proposed the idea of encouraging the

arts in the newly opened Clifden Community School. His passion for incorporating the arts into the school curriculum meant that this school based festival grew into the adjoining town and surrounding hinterlands to become a community orientated event.

Currently, 14 schools from the area take part in various aspects of the event, including hosting poets, musicians and theatre troupes. From the very beginning the festival has attracted acclaimed artists such as Seamus Heaney, Christy Moore, not to mention President Michael D. Higgins who officially launched the Arts Festival this year.



A warm welcome to the Clifden Arts Festival 2017

News and Events in our Schools

Tremendous success for Coláiste Cholmcille, Ballyshannon

Congratulations to Mona Mc Sharry, Fifth Year in Coláiste Cholmcille, Ballyshannon, on her amazing achievements at the World Junior Swimming Championships in Indianapolis last month.

Mona, from Grange, Co. Sligo, is now the World Champion in 100m breaststroke! Following her win in that competition, she was placed fourth in the 200m a couple of days later. These are both truly fantastic achievements for Mona, a member of the Ballyshannon Marlins' swimming club, and we couldn't be prouder of her here at Coláiste Cholmcille.

Mona beat the Irish record for the 100m breaststroke and knocked three tenths of a second off her own personal best from the Irish Open earlier this summer. This latest win continues a

highly successful summer for Mona, having won the World and European 100m Breaststroke Gold, World Bronze and European Gold in the 50m Breaststroke and European 200m Breaststroke Silver.

Mona's hometown of Grange turned out in force for her homecoming on Sunday night, and a few days later the student body at Coláiste Cholmcille filled the Assembly Area to welcome Mona back to school.



World Champion Mona Mc Sharry with Coach Ms. Grace Meade being interviewed by Mr. Sylvester Maguire at the school celebration last week



Deputy Principal Ms. Cora Fagan and Principal Mr. Jimmy Keogh with World Champion swimmer Mona Mc Sharry

Gorey Community School celebrates 50 years of Free Second level Education

On Thursday 7th September 2017 a commemorative stamp was issued by An Post to mark the 50th anniversary of free second level education in Ireland. The stamp, designed by leading designer, Mr. Ger Garland with photography by Mr. Alan Betson, features Lauren Dench and Michael Duke, two students from Gorey Community School, the largest second level school in the country.

The announcement by the Minister for Education, Mr. Donagh O' Malley in 1967 that education to Intermediate Certificate would be free was a significant milestone in Irish life. It is widely accepted that this changed the face of modern Ireland fundamentally. Reports of the time indicate that about a third of all children finished primary school were dropping out of education altogether. At fifteen years of age fewer than 50% were still in full time education. By age sixteen, only 36% were still at school.

Among the other reforms initiated by Minister O' Malley were the extension of the school transport scheme the building of new non-denominational comprehensive and community schools in areas where they were needed and the Regional Technical College system. Unfortunately, the Minister did not live to see his reforms introduced.

The commemorative stamp and First Day Cover (FDC) are available from main post offices, from stamp counters at Dublin's GPO or online at irishstamps.ie.



School Principal, Mr. Michael Finn with students, Lauren Dench and Michael Duke