

ACCS Convention 2016

The beautiful surrounds of the Slieve Russell Hotel and Conference Centre provided the backdrop to the 34th Annual Convention of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools from 3rd - 5th March. Convention provides the opportunity not only to do the technical business of ACCS but also the opportunity to think outside the ordinary and reflect on key issues in education today. The theme of this year's Convention, 'A Pathway to a Changing Culture', could hardly have been more apt with the publication of CL 24/2016 on the implementation of Junior Cycle Reforms on the opening morning of Convention.

Thursday 3rd March



Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS, opens the 34th Annual Convention

In her opening remarks Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS, welcomed all delegates with a special welcome reserved for the principal, Mr Anton O'Mahony and representatives of our newest member, Skibbereen Community School. Special mention was also reserved for the late Sr Eileen Randles who passed away since our last Convention. Sr Eileen, a former Trustee of ACCS, was always a great support to ACCS who shared her extensive knowledge of the Irish education system with great generosity.

Following the normal preliminary

business of the Convention General Secretary, Ms Eileen Salmon, reported on the work of ACCS over the year. The ACCS Strategic Plan provided the framework for her report with the key areas addressed under the headings:

- The work of ACCS 2015/16
- The ACCS Strategic Plan
- Managing the Evolution of ACCS
- Promoting the Community and Comprehensive Sector
- Shaping the Future by Influencing and Managing Change
- The Junior Cycle Circular 24/2016

While acknowledging the financial difficulties of the last number of years particular attention was given to the inadequate support for management in schools which are close to breaking point. Ms Eileen Salmon, General Secretary, also highlighted these concerns in an article published in the Irish Independent on March 2nd which appears later in this Newsletter.

Dr Anne Looney was guest speaker on Thursday evening and a report on her excellent contribution is featured later in this Newsletter. She took us on a magical journey invoking the theme of change as the big story currently in Irish education and viewed our schooling system from an international perspective.

On the proposal of Fr John Hand and seconded by Mr Peter Keohane, Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt was elected unopposed to a second term as President of ACCS. Ms Nic Gearailt expressed her thanks at the great honour it was to again have the opportunity to represent ACCS at a national level.

Prior to concluding the official business of Thursday with Regional Meetings to elect Executive representatives for the 2016/17 year, the new ACCS logo was launched under the chairmanship of Mr Pat McKenna of the ACCS Identity Sub-committee.



At the launch of the ACCS Logo, Mr Pat McKenna, Chairperson ACCS Identity Sub-committee, Mr Diarmuid Guinan, Creative Designer Brosna Press, Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS, Mr Peter Keohane, Principal Donahies Community School

Friday 4th March

Friday of Convention was again a mix of the business of Convention and the opportunity to think outside the ordinary. Professor Aidan Mulkeen, NUI Maynooth, looked at the origins of our current education system in Ireland, the need for reform, current reforms being implemented in NUI Maynooth and the lesson to be learnt from this experience.

The centre piece of Friday was the Presidential Address followed by an address by Mr Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills, and an open forum with department personnel. A detailed report of these events appears later in this Newsletter.

On Friday afternoon two schools, St Attracta's Community School and Cashel Community School showcased successful projects in a session 'Promoting an Entrepreneurial Culture in our Schools'.

Mr Gary Ó Donnchadha, Assistant General Secretary DES, at a Forum on Entrepreneurship in Schools in September 2015 noted that there are many entrepreneurial initiatives undertaken in Irish schools.

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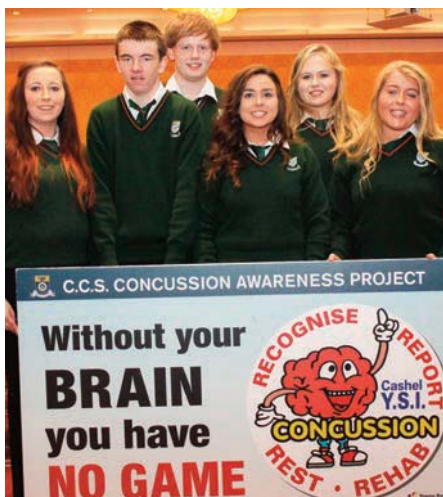
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Team Verus Racing, St Attracta's Community School, F1 in Schools National Champions and World F1 Championships award winners. Mr David McEvoy, Principal St Attracta's CS, Mr Enda Joyce, St Attracta's CS, Niall O'Donnell, VERUS Racing, Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS, Eoin Leonard, Verus Racing, Gerard Hunt, Verus Racing, John Irwin, Assistant General Secretary ACCS

He highlighted two particular initiatives, F1 in Schools and the Young Social Innovators. St Attracta's Community School Team Verus Racing described their project which won the National Finals of F1 in Schools and went on to become award winners at the World Finals in Singapore. The Cashel Community School team has developed the project 'Without Your Brain You Have No Game' and has won Silver and Bronze in the last two Young Social Innovators National Finals. The students left a lasting impression with all delegates present.



Cashel Community School's 'Without Your Brain You Have No Game' Team, Young Social Innovators Silver Award winners

At the Convention Banquet the delegates were joined by guests. Two of our guests who recently retired from their positions received presentations from Ms Eileen Salmon in recognition of their contribution to second level education in Ireland, Mr Ferdia Kelly, JMB and Mr Pat King, ASTI. She thanked both for their support and courtesy in all their work as colleagues in education. The Banquet concluded with an excellent presentation of story and song based on 1916 in this year of commemoration by the students of Moyne Community School.



Mr Ferdia Kelly, Retired General Secretary, JMB, Ms Eileen Salmon, General Secretary, ACCS, Mr Pat King, Retired General Secretary, ASTI, at the ACCS Convention Banquet Dinner

Saturday 5th March

Saturday morning opened with a focus on reports from the different Sub-committees of ACCS. The reports were followed by motions.

ACCS Convention 2016: Motions

1. That ACCS asks the Department of Education and Skills to consider the consequences of a two year postgraduate qualification programme that is now creating problems for schools and teacher supply.
St. Brendan's Community School, Birr CARRIED
2. That ACCS asks the Department of Education and Skills to take on board all the elements of the document 'A Proposal for Management Structures for Post-Primary Schools' as a matter of urgency. Our schools need a vibrant and effective middle management structure and are very concerned about the continuing adverse effects of the moratorium on posts of responsibility in our schools.

St. Brendan's Community School, Birr. CARRIED

3. That ACCS would ask the DES to introduce a common pay scale for all teachers in order to encourage quality graduates into the teaching profession.
St. Brendan's Community School, Birr. CARRIED

4. That ACCS would seek a review of the agreed school calendar with the DES and other management bodies with a view to secure further flexibilities which would be subject to local/regional agreement rather than an imposed national agreement.

St. Colmcille's Community School, Knocklyon. NOT CARRIED

Workshop on School Governance

The General Secretary, Ms Eileen Salmon and HR Manager Ms Anne Marie Dillon presented a workshop on School Governance. The agenda addressed:

- Best practice in conducting Board Of Management Meetings
- Board of Management input into recruiting Principal/Deputy Principal
- Role of Trustees in our schools
- Protected Disclosures

A busy and fruitful Convention 2016 closed with an Open Forum to address issues that arose over the course of the event.

Sincere thanks to ACCS Office Manager, Ms Susan Cunneiffe and her team of Ms Debbie Riordan, Ms Eileen Diver and Ms Sinead Van Kampen for all their work behind the scenes to ensure the Convention ran seamlessly.



Students from Moyne Community School who Entertained Delegates and Guests at the ACCS Convention Banquet Dinner

Schooling towards 2020: Perspective, position and power

Dr Anne Looney, Chief Executive, NCCA

Mr Ron Heifitz at Harvard talks about the need “for leaders to get off the dancefloor every so often and climb up to the balcony”. Such an opportunity was afforded to Dr Anne Looney, Chief Executive of NCCA, who for the past year was a research fellow of the Learning Science Institute of Australian Catholic University. In her presentation at the ACCS Convention 2016, Dr Looney took the delegates on a journey to look at the changes in schooling that are shaping school systems across the world and closer to home.

Change

Opening her address Dr Looney observed that when picking the theme for Convention, ‘A Pathway to a Changing Culture’, ACCS could not have imagined how appropriate a theme it would prove to be. She observed that one of the most important lessons to learn is that change happens and “we can only hope for a pathway through a changing culture”. Often it is suggested that schools are doing the same things they did in the 20th century but she contended this is simply not true, as the context for students in schools continually changes. As school leaders we want to stay ahead of change, prepare and be ready.



The Australian Perspective

Dr Looney continued that those who work in the arts, literature and film tell us the “big story” is back and it was fascinating to get to see the inside of another education system and view their big stories. It provided a different perspective and the opportunity to reflect on how Irish and un-Irish their system is. She told us the Australians value that their system has its roots in the Irish education system and you can see reminders of it everywhere in familiar names such as St Patrick’s, Catherine McAuley, Nano Nagle and Edmund Rice. She herself was based in the McAuley Campus in Brisbane. However, it was also very un-Irish and she outlined two incidents that drove this home to her.

The first of these was a review of the

curriculum at second level in Australia. What was unusual was that it was carried out by two individuals and she described this as being akin to the DES asking Kevin Myers and Ed Walsh to review the Irish curriculum. The report was less than favourable describing the curriculum as a ‘Kumbaya Curriculum’. The surprising aspect was that there was little or no reaction from educationalists in Australia.

The second event was a review of initial teacher education (ITE) in Australia. Here the findings pointed to low ATAR scores of applicants (equivalent to the CAO points in Ireland) and the introduction of a literacy and numeracy test for all graduating teachers. She recounted that the daily newspaper, The Australian, referred harshly to student teachers as ATAR bottom feeders and more surprisingly carried a cartoon using ‘the teacher as ape’ theme. Dr Looney described her great shock that again there was little or no reaction from educational professionals. When she enquired of teaching professionals in Australia as to why this was the case, they informed her that this was a standard representation of teachers in Australia.

Hong Kong

Dr Looney also had the opportunity to visit Hong Kong which prides itself with a school system it perceives as a hub of 21st century learning. She focused on the multi-million dollar industry of private tutors where image is everything and the motto of one of the most successful is “no knowledge, just results”. These experiences provoked thoughts of home and “our ongoing concerns about the over emphasis on results at the expense of learning” and “our efforts to listen to the voice of students”.

Andy Hargreaves Teaching and the Knowledge Society

Dr Looney’s thoughts also turned to the work of Andy Hargreaves in his book *Teaching and the Knowledge Society*. In that analysis he looked at schooling across the globe and suggested that work of teachers in schools would be seen as one of the following:

1. **Catalysts** for the knowledge society as agents of social and cultural development and the knowledge professionals who supported the development of 21st century skills of learning.
2. **Counterpoints** to the knowledge society, supporting wellbeing of young people



Dr Anne Looney, Chief Executive, NCCA addresses delegates at the ACCS Convention 2016

and encouraging them to ask the hard questions, challenge and critique.

3. **Casualties** of the knowledge society reduced to school bound technicians delivering pre-packaged courses and valued and measured by results of the tests.

She concluded that in essence what has happened in most schooling systems is a combination of all three leading to different outcomes. In England they cannot recruit or retain teachers while in Australia teaching remains an undervalued profession. She noted that in both systems the results of standardised tests are used to rank and rate schools in the interest of transparency and accountability.

Dr Looney described how international audiences had difficulty grasping how Ireland has banned such ranking tables, preferring instead the model of self-evaluation. She described a presentation given by Dr Eithne Kennedy of DCU at an international conference on literacy in Brisbane, where she was the only contributor to emphasise the key role of the teacher, not the phonics programmes and tests, in inspiring young readers.

Professor Pasi Sahlberg and the Global Education Reform Movement

Professor Pasi Sahlberg describes the set of common policy features of modern school systems across the world as the ‘Global Education Reform Movement’ (GERM) of which Dr Looney concluded he is not a fan because they promote:

- Competition
- Standardisation of teaching and learning
- Collection and publication of standardised test data
- Devaluing teacher professionalism
- Privatising public schools

She posed the question “have we beaten the GERM”? She encouraged delegates to consider these issues carefully over the course of our conference.

Professor Sahlberg identified three countries in Europe where GERM has not taken root, Scotland, Finland and Ireland. In all three countries there is considerable public interest in and debate about schooling and little difficulty attracting high quality candidates into teaching. She concluded all three have a tradition of the hero village teacher and they retain the ideal of the teacher as imaginative adventurer.

Returning to Ireland

Returning her attention to Ireland Dr Looney pondered on how can we tackle the GERM? She concluded the following will protect us from the worst excesses of GERM:

- Students - capture the student voice and student wellbeing as central to our purpose
- Teachers - value their contribution and encourage co-operative learning and sharing their judgement of student work
- Evidence - promote evidence based policy and practice and continue to

promote innovation

- Values - resist seeing students as ‘clients’ or schools as ‘services’ but align ourselves strongly as human communities

Dr Looney reported she is very encouraged by new conversations between teachers about classroom practice that she has witnessed since her return to Ireland. These conversations are beginning to include students and she stated “the allocation of time for this engagement in Junior Cycle as a recognised part of teachers work has been a long time coming, but has arrived”. She noted that, “one of the key aspirations of Junior Cycle is that teachers and students, will look at and analyse evidence of their own learning and not bypass it en-route to the mark”.

She observed that “Australia’s system may be stronger on GERM features but it is also stronger on support for school leaders, and on middle management”. She made particular reference to meeting an instructional leadership team at a large second level high school where seven teachers in this team had half class contact time, the rest available to lead, manage and evaluate innovations in pedagogy and assessment.

Dr Looney concluded, referencing Mr

Gert Biesta who proposes the idea of educational wisdom.

Wise educational judgement is never a repetition of what was in the past, but is always a creative process that is open towards the future for the very reason that..each moment in the practice of education in which judgement is called for, is in some respect radically new and radically unique.

The full text of Dr Looney’s presentation is available on the ACCS website www.accs.ie, click on the CPD Programme tab → ACCS Convention 2016 presentations.



Dr Anne Looney receives a presentation from Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS

What medieval monks and the Springfield rifle can teach us about educational reform

Professor Aidan Mulkeen, Vice-President Academic, Registrar and Deputy President, NUI Maynooth

Professor Aidan Mulkeen in his presentation stated that “Our education system has an underlying architecture that comes from industrial revolution thinking and changes in society suggest this is not an appropriate place to start in designing an education system”. He outlined the thinking behind the development of this industrial revolution era education system and the need for reform to meet the needs of today’s society. He outlined the experience in Maynooth University and measures they have taken to meet the needs of 21st century students.

Standardisation

The story of the Springfield rifle is one of standardisation. In the Springfield Armoury they were able to develop precision manufacturing to a level where they could mass produce standard component parts that could then be assembled by relatively unskilled workers at a much reduced cost. It also meant that if something went wrong a relatively unskilled person could simply replace any

faulty component. In Springfield they claim this process assisted the northern side in winning the American Civil War, leading to the abolition of slavery and the birth of the US which became a world superpower! While Professor Mulkeen believed their claims may be exaggerated, standardisation did become one of three key themes of the industrial revolution, which were:

1. Standardisation - everything to the same specification
2. Standard pace - all moving at the same speed
3. Quality control - removing the substandard

Industrial Revolution Era Mass Education

These themes are reflected in industrial revolution era mass education systems that developed with an emphasis on:

- Learning a standard set of things
- Moving at the same pace
- Testing and excluding those who did not meet the standard



Professor Aidan Mulkeen fielding questions at the ACCS Convention 2016

Industrial society required a very large number of factory workers needing minimal education to carry out routine manual jobs, a large number of clerical workers requiring good writing and arithmetic skills and a smaller number of developers and inventors to develop ideas

and new technologies. Therefore it was seen as OK to:

1. Exclude the weak
2. Focus on conformity
3. Provide the opportunity to very few to progress to creative thinking

This contrasted sharply with the individualised nature of education delivered by medieval monks prior to the industrial revolution. However, this mass-education system met the needs of the industrial revolution era. There was a need for large portions of the population on completion of formal education to enter routine manual and cognitive jobs.

Changing Societal and Labour Market Demands

Labour market demands and the needs of society have changed. Professor Mulkeen highlighted that research indicates the most significant decrease is in routine clerical type skills since the advent of the computer. There has also been a decrease in demand for routine manual skills.

The greatest increase in skill demand is in non-routine interactive and non-routine analytic areas. These areas include white collar workers in the likes of Google, bloggers, web-designers, media analysts etc. These jobs require non-routine skills, an ability to think creatively, think outside the box, come-up with something new. To engage in these tasks there is no manual developed that you can simply follow.

The other skill employers seek is the ability to communicate, be articulate, be comfortable making presentations and writing documents that are not simply formulaic but have new things to say.

The Maynooth Experience

Professor Mulkeen outlined work that NUI Maynooth engaged in to identify 'what education does society want?' The findings are summarised in the following table:

What education does society want?

What do young employers want?

Specific skills
Flexibility, adaptability
Communication
Interpersonal skills
Self-management, ability to get things done
Creativity, something different
Value initiative over compliance

What do young people want?

Develop skills and abilities
Feel they are growing and developing
Follow their interests
Be employable afterwards

He continued by summarising the current position in Irish Higher Education as:

- achieving very high participation levels based on very low budgets
- producing graduates with technical knowledge.

However, he identified the risk of limited opportunities to develop communication skills, to challenge graduates to develop critical skills and explore ideas of other disciplines. Much of this is because of large lecture sizes and lack of tutorial time due to under investment in third level education. There are also very limited second chances if students make the wrong initial choice of course.

Professor Mulkeen outlined how NUI Maynooth is addressing these risks and meeting identified needs through the following reforms in their Arts programmes:

- Broad entry routes
- A flexible degree programme
- Developing critical skills
- Opportunities to explore ideas from other disciplines

The response to date has seen an increase of 15% in CAO first preferences for courses in NUI Maynooth and a strong interest in critical skills and electives from new entrants.

General Lessons

Professor Mulkeen identified the following general lessons:

EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES

- High standards are not the same as standardisation
- Learners like the choice
 - Self-determination increases motivation
 - They generally make sensible choices

MAKING CHANGES IN EDUCATION

- The 'insiders' find the change hard to envisage
- Students prove more capable than expected
- Students are more self-aware than expected.

Professor Mulkeen concluded by asking the challenging question, could any of this apply in second level?

Professor Mulkeen's presentation can be accessed through the ACCS website, www.accs.ie, click on the CPD Programme tab → ACCS Convention 2016 Presentations.

He contends that if you were now designing an educational system to meet these needs you would not start from the



Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS makes a presentation to Professor Aidan Mulkeen, NUI Maynooth

post-industrial era system we have inherited.

ACCS 2016/17 Executive Members elected at the Convention

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Comprehensives:

Mr Derek Lowry
An t-Úas Máirtín Ó Conghaile

Connacht:

Mr Michael Brett
Mr Gay McManus

Dublin:

Mr Paul Crone
Mr Pat McKenna
Mr Frank Moran

Leinster:

Ms Geraldine Keena
Ms Áine O'Sullivan
Mr Paul Thornton

Munster:

Mr Dermot Healy
Mr Séamus Ó Ceallacháin
Ms Noralene Ní Urdail

Ulster:

Ms Maureen Curran
Mr John Gorman

Co-opted:

Mr Paul Fiorentini
Mr Pat O'Connor

OFFICERS FOR 2016-2017

President:

Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt

Vice President:

Mr Paul Fiorentini

Honorary Secretary:

Mr Pat McKenna

Honorary Treasurer:

Mr Séamus Ó Ceallacháin

ACCS Presidential Address by Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt

A Pathway to a Changing Culture

In her Presidential Address to Convention Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt addressed all the current salient points in Irish second level education. Adopting the theme for Convention, 'Pathway to a Changing Culture', Ms Nic Gearailt stressed that schools need to change as the needs of their students change. They cannot remain static if they are to provide a relevant education for the students they serve. There are challenges to be embraced to meet these changes and with the Department's circulation of their document on autonomy in schools there is an opportunity to reflect. "Consider what we value in Irish education and do not want to lose in the process of change". She stressed a key theme of equality, "equality of access for all students and to all courses is fundamental to ACCS", which formed a theme throughout her presentation.

Leadership and Management in Schools

To successfully navigate this pathway to change Ms Nic Gearailt urged the Department to engage with the management bodies in delivering on their detailed proposals for a new middle management structure. The last number of years have been difficult for schools given all the cutbacks. While acknowledging the volunteerism of teachers, which is a feature of schools that students greatly benefited from, she felt it was regrettable at this time that teachers unions block teachers from supporting the activities of school management. The introduction of supports for deputy principal posts, in the form of an additional allocation of hours, in schools with enrolments under 500 was a welcome initial step in re-introducing management supports. Ms Nic Gearailt stated that we now look forward to these supports being extended to larger schools in the next budget.

Schools have seen very significant reductions in secretarial, caretaking and cleaning supports. All are essential to the functioning of schools. Ms Nic Gearailt urged the Department to address these issues and also put in place a timeframe to re-instate the 11% cut from schools funding since 2011.

The New Junior Cycle

"ACCS believes that the new Junior Cycle has the potential to bring significant changes to the way students learn. More importantly we see a lack of engagement among students who have come to be more and more reliant on the work of their



Mr Paul Fiorentini, Vice President ACCS, Mr Kevin McCarthy, Assistant Secretary DES, Mr Martin Haney, Assistant Secretary DES, Mr Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General DES, Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS, Ms Eileen Salmon, General Secretary ACCS

teachers and an ability to memorise". Ms Nic Gearailt recounted that we all can identify students who have worked diligently in schools and their effort has not been reflected by the current limited assessment methods. She concluded that it is imperative that we find a way to make full implementation of the new Junior Cycle possible for all students.

Trusteeship

There is an urgent need to progress the review of the Deed of Trust of Community Schools so it reflects the reality of the changes that have occurred since it was first written. Ms Nic Gearailt stated "unfortunately, the DES interpretation of Deed of Trust as it relates to Religious Trusteeship, has created serious obstacles for this sector". She urged the Department to initiate real negotiations with all the relevant bodies as a matter of urgency to progress what is a crucial issue.

Inclusive Education

"The culture of Community and Comprehensive Schools is one of inclusion with the aim to provide equal opportunity to all". A recent ESRI report reflected this indicating that Community and Comprehensive schools catered for a larger proportion of students with special education needs than any other sector at second level. With regard to the new allocation model to schools of additional resources to meet the needs of students with special education needs to be introduced in September 2017 she identified two imperatives:

1. Standardised test results be maintained, as originally proposed, as a robust basis to distinguish between schools.
2. An agreed mechanism to determine social context of the school must also be put in place before commencement.

She believed that the use of Junior Cycle results as an indicator could

penalise schools for achievement. As co-ordination would also be essential, a proposal has been submitted to the Department outlining a rationale and role for a dedicated SENCO position in every school. It is proposed that the time allocated to this position would be determined by the level of allocation in the area of special needs.

Ms Nic Gearailt stressed the importance of the School Completion Programme and the DEIS scheme. She stated, "these programmes play a crucial role by allowing schools put in place a range of supports to overcome some of the educational obstacles faced by the most disadvantaged students".

Scoileanna Gaeltachta

Chuir ACCS fáilte roimh cáipéis na Roinne maidir le 'Moltaí Polasaí don Soláthar Oideachais I Limistéir Ghealtachta. Baineann na ceisteanna luaite anseo go díreach lenár scoileanna bunaithe i gceantair Gaeltachta. Athnaíonn an cáipéis na castachtaí a bhaineann le múineadh trí mheán na Gaeilge agus na nithe a chaithfidh aghaidh a thabhairt orthu. Ina measc Soláthar múinteoirí atá inniúil go leor sa Ghaeilge, tionchar an aistriú teanga ó Ghaeilge go Béarla sa phobal, Caighdeán teanga i measc daltaí Gaeltachta féin; Curuclam Gaeilge a oireann do dhaltai Gaeltachta agus daltaí nach iad araon.

Fáiltimid roimh an deis bheith páirteach sa chomhairliúcháin seo agus táimid ag súil le dul i ngleic le na moltaí mar a théann said ar aghaidh.

Teacher Supply/Digital Strategy/Further Education

In her address the President also reflected on the difficulty of teacher supply which is the feature of an article elsewhere in this Newsletter. She welcome the scope of the Digital Strategy for Schools but stressed it must be a funded strategy. With regard to Further Education she noted the

collaborative work with schools in the secondary voluntary sector and the formation of the Joint Further Education Representative Group (JFERG). JFERG is the representative body for providers in both sectors and has engaged positively

with SOLAS, QQI and ETBI.

In Conclusion

In her concluding remarks she thanked the members of the ACCS Executive and Sub-committees for their valuable

contribution. She particularly wished to thank Ms Eileen Salmon, General Secretary ACCS, and the team she leads in head office for all their work.

Address by Mr Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills

Mr Seán Ó Foghlú delivered a presentation on behalf of the Minister for Education and Skills who was unable to attend Convention. His presentation entitled 'An Agenda for Improving Education in Ireland' focused on a range of initiatives delivering extensive change being implemented at all levels within the Irish education system. He outlined the four themes of reform as follows:

1. **Learning for Life.** Under this theme he made particular reference to the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, Junior Cycle Reform, Transitions Reform between second and third levels, the Skills Strategy and the Digital Strategy for Schools.
2. **Improving Quality and Accountability.** Particular reference was made to the establishment of the Centre for School Leadership and their role in supporting present and future school leaders. Mr Ó Foghlú also referenced the consultation process commenced on School Autonomy and Accountability. The DES research paper summarized a detailed review of the research on school autonomy and examined the feasibility of a range of possible options for advancing school autonomy in Ireland. He welcomed the submissions received to date, including that from the ACCS and looked forward to an ongoing debate on this in the near future.
3. **Supporting Inclusion and Diversity.** The New Allocation Model for SEN currently being piloted in twenty post primary schools was referenced as an essential development to ensure the equitable allocation of resources to meet the needs of students with special educational needs. A review of the DEIS Programme is also underway.
4. **Building the Right System and Infrastructure.** Mr Ó Foghlú reported on the patronage model introduced in 2011 where parents can express their preference for the particular style of school they want for their area. He reported two new Community schools have been established, Ballymakenny College and Celbridge Community



Mr Martin Hanevy, Assistant Secretary DES, Mr Kevin McCarthy, Assistant Secretary DES, Mr Paul Fiorentini, Vice President ACCS, Ms Eileen Salmon, General Secretary ACCS, Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS, Mr Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General DES

School. He stated that there is a need to progress the issue of establishing a single Catholic patronage body for Community Schools.

Resourcing

Mr Ó Foghlú accepted that as well as the change agenda "there is also a need to consider the priorities for investment in the future". He stated that following a number of difficult years there was a welcome increase in the last Budget that has allowed the provision of:

- 550 additional teachers at second level to allow support for the position of deputy principal in schools under 500 and an allocation of time for guidance in schools.
- The announcement of 128 major projects at second level, including 12 Community Schools, to cope with the projected demographic increases.

He accepted that the moratorium on posts of responsibility and supporting clerical officer and caretaking posts has caused difficulties particularly in larger schools but cautioned that future investment needed to be prioritized. He stated that, *"It is my hope that funding, while limited in nature, will continue to be made available over the next few years to invest in our schools. The critical challenge for us all will be to ensure that whatever additional resources are made available, that they are utilised in such a way as to maximise teaching and learning outcomes"*.

Open Forum

Mr Ó Foghlú was joined by his colleagues Mr Kevin McCarthy and Mr Martin Hanevy for an open forum with delegates. While acknowledging the financial restraints delegates from the floor stressed the need for additional funding in education to address:

- A new middle management structure for schools
- Investment in ICT infrastructure to meet the needs of a modern education system
- Necessary secretarial and facility management supports to allow principals and school leaders focus on their central role as leaders of learning and teaching
- The need to make teaching an attractive and rewarding profession going forward. Teacher supply is becoming a real concern for schools

The General Secretary, Ms Eileen Salmon thanked the DES personnel for attending Convention and engaging in an open and frank debate about school needs and priorities. She acknowledged that the DES is actively engaged with ACCS and the other management bodies in achieving the best outcome for schools given the limited resources at their disposal. She also acknowledged that this interaction led directly to the alleviation at deputy principal level for second level schools of less than 500 students in Budget 2016.

'Overloaded second-level school principals need support teams', by Ms Eileen Salmon, ACCS General Secretary

Irish Independent on Wednesday 2nd March 2016

Recent research has revealed some very disturbing concerns regarding the position of Principals and Deputy Principals¹. It was revealed that principals experience nearly twice the level of threats of actual physical violence than other population groups. In addition they experience more than three times the frequency of bullying at work than the general population. Their average working week is approximately 50 hours and the majority of principals work up to 30 hours a week during school holidays. The sheer quantity of work coupled with the lack of time to concentrate on teaching and learning are further stressors. It is not surprising therefore that in the areas of general well-being and quality of life principals are not doing as well as the rest of the population. Interestingly, these findings are not new. The 2009 School Leadership Matters, Final Report found that over 60% of principals in the South of Ireland describe their work-life balance as either poor or very poor. Matters have not improved since 2009 – a period which coincides with severe cutbacks in schools. Since then, many of the supports available to principals through the Post of Responsibility structure of Assistant Principals and Special Duties Teachers have been decimated.

It is generally agreed that few jobs have as diverse an array of responsibilities as that of the modern principal. Previous research has already identified that the workload of the principal is a cause for concern in that the demands of the job far exceed the capacity of most people. (JMB 2005, Martin 2006)². The embargo on recruitment and promotion which was introduced in 2009 has reduced the number of assistant principals and stopped the appointment of special duties teachers and has greatly added to the principals' workload. While there has been some alleviation to the embargo the majority of schools still have only a fraction of the number of Assistant Principals and other post holders which they previously held. As a result, long term educational planning takes a back seat to the 'urgent' demands of the moment so that principals are distracted from their core function of leading quality

instruction, teaching and learning.

There are those that would argue that the present Post of Responsibility structure of Assistant Principals and Special Duties teachers which was introduced in 1998 had established a middle management system in schools. The rationale behind their introduction was excellent. This agreement aimed to provide teachers with opportunities to take up leadership roles in instructional leadership, curriculum development and the management of staff and their development. Unfortunately, the implementation of the agreement never lived up to its promise and the systemic review promised as part of the new agreement has never taken place with the result that it is no longer fit for purpose.

There are solutions. The Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS), the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) and the Education and Training Board of Ireland (ETBI) are convinced that now is the time to redesign and implement a new leadership team system for second level schools. They have jointly proposed to the Department of Education and Skills the establishment of a flexible leadership team structure based on individual school needs. The very detailed proposal aims to provide a model framework for the management of schools and will provide opportunities for post holders to assume responsibility and accountability for significant leadership and management functions in the school. Through delegated roles it will provide a variety of leadership and management experiences for teachers and will support a career path that accommodates their career development needs - from classroom teacher to deputy principal or principal. Key areas which are emphasised are change management, capacity building, professional discussion and the school as a learning organisation.

ACCS acknowledges the Department of Education and Skills understanding of the current difficulties facing management in schools. The Management Bodies have had very positive and constructive discussions around the joint proposals. In attempting to alleviate the urgent needs of senior management, the Minister for Education and Skills, with the support of



Ms Eileen Salmon, General Secretary ACCS

the DES, granted an enhancement at Deputy Principal level for second level schools of up to 500 students in Budget 2016. ACCS acknowledges this first step in alleviating the huge pressures on school management. We hope that this enhancement can be granted to larger schools in the next budget.

However, a key concern in the new proposal is the context in which a school operates. The management bodies argue that schools need flexibility and fluidity in deciding on a middle management structure. What is important is that the leadership team has the capacity to meet the needs of the school and improve student outcomes. This demands flexibility regarding the particular management and leadership structure to be adopted rather than a 'one size fits all' model.

The joint proposal recognises the significant influence that teacher leadership has on student achievement. Accordingly, it advocates that our schools become 'learning communities' where a model of shared leadership creates an environment where students and teachers can learn to their potential and where team structures and processes enact and enhance collaboration.

ACCS also believes that this proposal provides an opportunity for the teaching unions to become collaborators in the change process and urges them to get involved in the development of a fit-for-purpose leadership team structure for our second level schools.

¹ Reilly, P. (2015) Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey, Irish Principals and Deputy Principals Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, Australian Catholic University

² JMB Report (2005) The Workload of Principals in Voluntary Secondary Schools, Martin, M (2006) School Matters: The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in 2nd Level Schools

'Teacher Supply', an extract from the ACCS Presidential Address by Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt

Irish Independent on Friday 4th March 2016

The area of initial teacher training is currently undergoing significant change. We would all agree that the quality of education is intrinsically linked to the quality of teaching in the classroom. It is a fact that students taught by the most effective teachers make three times more progress in a year.

One of the most important issues for every school is to ensure an adequate supply of qualified teachers in all subject areas. Currently schools are experiencing very serious difficulties in recruiting teachers in certain subject areas – most notably Gaelige, Modern Languages and Home Economics. In some cases there are no applicants for advertised positions. Even schools offering full hours have failed to secure qualified teachers.

Obviously this year is especially difficult because of the two year PME. But this problem is not new. ACCS has warned of a shortage of teachers in certain subject areas for a number of years. But now it is at crisis point.

ACCS would raise a number of questions for consideration. Why are students intending to follow a career in teaching unwilling to engage with certain subjects beyond second level – subjects such as Gaelige and Modern Languages? Do colleges need to review the range of

subjects they offer undergraduates? A re-configuration of the subject combinations might serve to address the imbalance where you have over supply in some areas and shortages in others.

In addition qualified teachers, both those in employment and those seeking employment could be afforded opportunities to upskill and retrain in subject areas experiencing shortages. The success of the Maths upskilling programme offered in UL is a very successful example of such a programme.

One of the downsides of the longer initial teacher training period is that we may lose potential teachers. The costs associated with six years of study with precarious career prospects at the end may become an impediment to entry. ACCS suggests that it is worth considering an expansion of the routes into teaching. This may be possible by extending the concurrent teacher training structure. This model has produced teachers of the highest quality for many years in a range of subject areas. It accommodates those leaving school definite in their determination to follow a career in teaching. Were such a model extended to more degree programmes it may serve to allow students a more direct and focussed route into the profession.



Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS

Teaching in Ireland has been seen as a worthwhile, attractive and financially viable profession. Into the future we need to ensure that the profession continues to attract high quality graduates.

To this end ACCS believes that the current two-tier pay structure must be abolished. We urge the Department to equalise teacher pay scales to ensure that those new to the profession are not treated differently to their more senior peers.



Recruitment to Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills will be recruiting post-primary inspectors this summer. Competitions for the appointment of inspectors of:

- **Business**
- **French**
- **Geography**
- **Guidance**
- **Physical Education**

will be held by the Public Appointments Service prior to the summer vacation. If you are interested in these positions, log on to www.publicjobs.ie and register your interest so that you will receive notifications when applications open.

ACCS Convention Banquet, Friday 4th March, 2016



Ms. Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS makes a presentation to teachers Ms Fionnuala Maxwell, Ms Aisling McCarthy, Ms Trish Murren & Mr. Des Cullen, Principal, Moyne Community School for co-ordinating the banquet entertainment at ACCS Convention 2016



Mr Fintan Kemple, Chairman, NACED and Mr Dave Fitzpatrick, President PACCS, enjoying the ACCS Convention Banquet 2016



Mr Paul Mooney, President NPCpp and Mr Ciarán Flynn, former General Secretary ACCS



The Men from Connacht - Mr. Billy Hannon, Dunmore Community School, Mr. Seán Duffy, Glenamaddy Community School, Mr James Duignan, ACCS Executive Member and Mr Michael Brett, ACCS Executive Member



Ms Geraldine Keena, ACCS Executive Member & Ms Anne Marie Dillon, Human Resource Manager ACCS



Students from Moyne Community School after a wonderful performance at the ACCS Convention banquet

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- The Irish Times, Dublin 2.
- The Super Generation, Dublin 11.
- The Teaching Council, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.
- Trinity College, Dublin 2.
- Wriggle, Dublin 12.



Main Convention sponsor VSware representative, Mr Phil Rodgers with ACCS President, Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt



Mr Dermot Healy receives the Bishop Hegarty Memorial Cup from Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt following his victory in the annual ACCS Golf Competition at the recent Convention. Thank you to PCI for their continued sponsorship of this event and sponsor of the Banquet Reception



Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS, Sr Declan Wixted John the Baptist CS and Mr Philip O'Callaghan Examcraft

Our new look...



The Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) are proud to reveal our fresh, new identity. It has been designed to reflect the ethos of the organisation and communicate in a clear, dynamic way to the schools and communities it represents, and the statutory and professional sectors it works with. The “trio” symbol represents community, collaboration and support. “Ní neart go cur le chéile”. There is no strength without unity. Working in partnership with school bodies is at the very heart of what we do. The colours are bright, fresh, and positive, they suggest a diversity of

backgrounds within an Irish tradition. The calm use of grey balances this vibrant palette. The monogram “ACCS”, all set in lowercase has been sympathetically designed to create a unique, linked typographic unit that uses symmetry and a nod to our monastic learning heritage in the uncial-like letterform “a”.

A free pull-up bannerstand for every school

To mark the launch of the new ACCS identity, we are offering to provide each of the Community and Comprehensive Schools a pull-up bannerstand, complete with school crest, motto, photographs and contact details, delivered to your school, free of charge.

To order your school's pull-up bannerstand please contact Brosna Press Creative Design and Print directly by email: info@brosnapress.ie providing the following:

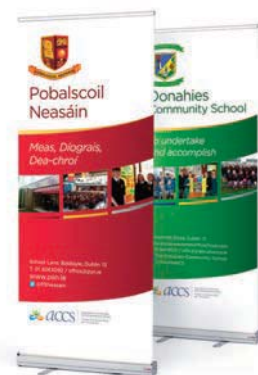
1. Full school name and motto.
2. Full address, contact number, email, website and social media details.
3. Three high resolution photographs (landscape format), supplied as jpeg files (minimum 1600 pixels wide).
4. School crest in one of the following

formats: EPS or PDF file or as a high resolution jpeg (minimum 1000 pixels wide).

5. Indication of selected background colour scheme.

6. Contact name, number and delivery address.

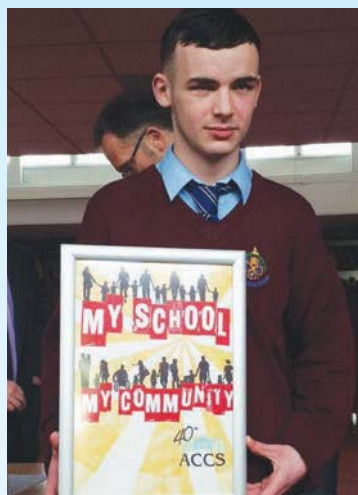
The pull-up bannerstand will follow the ACCS school bannerstand template design. Variable elements are: school crest and name, motto or other statement, photographs, contact details and the background colour scheme, which will go from a light to dark version of the chosen colour. The fixed elements are: all typefaces, sizes, positions and alignments, the curved background. All bannerstands will have **three photos** and the ACCS logo will appear as shown. One per school available until 30th September 2016.



Recent Relevant DES Circulars Since our Last Newsletter

CL 27/2016	Post 01 January 2011 and Post 01 February 2012 New Entrants to Teaching – Recognition of Previous Public Service in another EU Member State
CL 26/2016	Prescribed Material for the Junior Certificate Examination in 2018 and Leaving Certificate Examination in 2018
CL 25/2016	Promotion and Appeal Procedures for appointment to Assistant Principal, Special Duties Teacher and Programme Co-ordinator
CL 24/2016	Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to school years 2015/16 and 2016/2017
CL 23/2016	Student data required to be returned to the Department of Education and Skills by schools from 2016/17 onwards for the purposes of analysis and reporting in the areas of social inclusion and integration
CL 20/2016	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
CL 19/2016	Further Extension to the ‘Grace Period’ for Superannuation Benefits in respect of Special Needs Assistants
CL 18/2016	Further Extension to the ‘Grace Period’ for Superannuation Benefits in respect of Teachers
CL 17/2016	Indemnity Declaration Form
CL 14/2016	Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2018
CL 11/2016	Cost Limits for Post-primary School Buildings
CL 08/2016	Teacher Fee Refund Scheme 2015
CL 06/2016	Post-Graduate Certificate/Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers working with Students with Special Educational Needs (Autistic Spectrum Disorders)
CL 05/2016	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 – 2016/2017
CL 04/2016	Combined Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Involved in Learning Support and Special Education – 2016/2017
CL 01/2016	Community & Comprehensive Schools: Approved Allocation of Teaching Posts (2016/17 School Year)

News and Events in our Schools



Mayfield Community School had significant success in the recent ACCS poster Competition 'My School My Community' with Monika Stanczyk winner of the Overall Award and Kyle O'Donovan winning the senior section



Nicole Tighe, 1st Year student **Gallen Community School Ferbane**, pictured with her winning entry in the Doodle for Google National Awards Section 4 for 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year students



Carndonagh Community School, Senior Boys All-Ireland Soccer Champions, having defeated Presentation Bros. College Cork 2 goals to 1 in a thrilling match which went to extra time. Team is pictured with Mr. Paul Fiorentini, Principal, Mr. Martin Cavanagh, Senior Coach and Mr Liam Monagle, Junior Soccer Coach, outside the school's latest development - Ionad Folláine Paschal Uí Eacáin - a modern fitness suite named after former PE teacher and Head of Sport, Mr. Paschal Harkin who promoted all sports in Carndonagh Community School



Ms Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President of ACCS, presented by Ms Ryan, Deputy Principal, Heywood Community School with a ceramic of the school crest on the occasion of **Heywood Community School's 25th Anniversary**



Crescent College Comprehensive School has certainly been enjoying considerable sporting success recently. The Senior Girls Hockey Team retained their Munster Hockey Crown while the Senior Boys and Junior Boys Cup Teams have both reached the Munster Schools Rugby finals. The Seniors were narrowly defeated 9-8 by CBC Cork in the final while the Juniors won their final 17-7 in a replay against the same opposition



News and Events in our Schools



UNIQUE DOUBLE ALL IRELAND success for **Gallen Community School, Ferbane**. The Senior Boys Football Team won the All Ireland Post Primary Schools Paddy Drummond Cup Final in Croke Park following on the success of the Senior Ladies Football Team who won their All Ireland C title in a magnificent contest against Scoil Phobail Sliabh Luachra



The Chief Executive of Concern Worldwide, Mr Dominic MacSorley, visited **Tarbert Comprehensive School** to thank staff and students for their ongoing support. The school received the 'Best School in Ireland' award in the Concern Volunteer Awards in Dublin, following a 30-year association with the charity. In that time, staff, students and parents have raised almost €200,000 (€199,310) and visited Concern's development works in Tanzania. In the photo receiving the award is Ms Brid Carroll, school charities coordinator and Mr MacSorley



Antoine Ó Coileáin, Príomhfheidhmeannach Gael Linn, Máirín Ní Dhomhnaill (Múinteoir), **Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin, An Cheathrú Rua**



SCC le Seán Ó Ceallaigh, Bainisteoir Scéimeanna Náisiúnta Gael Linn, Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh, Máirín Ní Dhomhnaill (Múinteoir) agus Seán Mac Donncha, Príomhoide **Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin, An Cheathrú Rua**



Foireann SCC le Antoine Ó Coileáin, Príomhfheidhmeannach Gael Linn, Máirín Ní Dhomhnaill (Múinteoir) agus Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh

Proclamation Day 2016

Remember, Reflect, Re-imagine



Coláiste Chiaráin, Leixlip parade and flag raising ceremony



Staff and students of **Tarbert Comprehensive School** celebrate Proclamation Day



Reading the Proclamation in **Mountrath Community School**



Millstreet Community School presentation of Sean O'Casey's Plough and the Stars

Proclamation Day 2016

Remember, Reflect, Re-imagine



Gallen Community School student's proclamation



Old Bawn Community School students celebrate Proclamation Day



Proclamation Day in Carndonagh Community School



Ms Mary MacBride, grandniece of Major John MacBride second in command in Jacob's Factory during the Easter Rising, receives a bouquet of flowers having raised the Flag outside **St Louis Community School, Kiltimagh**

Proclamation Day 2016

Remember, Reflect, Re-imagine



Transition Year students of **Mayfield Community School** with their portraits of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation as part of the Proclamation Day celebrations



Celebrating Proclamation Day at **Pobalscoil Inbhear Scéine**



Students from **Ashbourne Community School** following receipt of their school's flag in Croke Park



Trinity Comprehensive School is transformed into Dublin 1916

