



**PRINCIPALS AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION**  
**CUMANN PRÍOMHOIDÍ AGUS PRÍOMHOIDÍ TÁNAISTEACHA**



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*Adrian Power PDA President*

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*Dear Colleague,*

Welcome to our 2020 newsletter. Since March 12, your role as a school leader has changed dramatically. While you worked to capacity and beyond before COVID, you somehow managed to dig deeper into your reserves to pull your school communities through a nationwide lockdown. You led your staffs to adapt to new technologies, new teaching methodologies and new ways to meet, while never losing sight of the vulnerable students in our care or underestimating the strain that all of our students were under, in particular our Leaving Cert cohort. You worked tirelessly through the summer months to catch up on work neglected, to ready your schools for COVID opening, to re-timetable and to make sure that your entire school community was ready for the huge challenge ahead.

All of the hard work has paid off and you succeeded in being part of an operation that kept a million students in school through the second wave of the pandemic, helping our society to keep going in the most difficult of circumstances, and all the while never losing sight of the most important aspect of the job, the care of our students. For this you are to be commended. However, the tireless work does not stop there with every day posing new challenges to be overcome. This is the nature of the job, but I sincerely hope that you manage to take a well-earned break over the Christmas holiday period. Take the time to recharge the batteries.

It is at this time of the year that we would normally have our annual conference. We were very disappointed to have to cancel it but look forward to having an exciting and informative conference this time next year. We are also releasing this edition of our newsletter online instead of having our normal printed format. I hope that some of the information in it will be of use to you. Should you have any concerns or queries that you would like raised, please contact your area representative or one of the officers by email. Our role is to liaise with the TUI and bring your concerns as Principals and Deputy Principals to their attention and to make sure that we do not get left out of any discussions. I will continue to look for your views, concerns and advice throughout the remainder of this school year and beyond.

Mise le meas,

***Adrian Power***  
*President, PDA.*

## **Colaiste na Riochta-Our Experience of remote Teaching & Learning**

### **The Continuity of Teaching & Learning**

I think I can quite honestly say that Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> of March was the strangest day I have experienced in my teaching career and one I will never forget. I began the day by addressing our Leaving Certificate students at their morning assembly on our contingency plan around the possibility of a school closure and at 3pm I spoke to them again only this time it was a reality and those that did not have their own laptops were told to collect a school laptop from the Deputy Principal before they left. Following the announcement by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, that schools were to close, the atmosphere around the classrooms and corridors was varied with giddiness and excitement from 1st Year students to distress and apprehensiveness amongst our 6th Year class and although this announcement did not come as a huge surprise I think the overall feeling amongst the teachers was one of utter disbelief.



Thankfully, as a school we had been planning our contingency arrangements for a number of weeks prior to closure and both staff and students were primed as well as we possibly could be for this remote learning situation that we now find ourselves in.

Kerry ETB launched their Digital Strategy for Schools back in 2015 and out of this we developed our own schools Digital Learning Plan. Our school has been using Microsoft Office 365 for the last four years. All our students receive Digital Literacy classes as part of our Junior Cycle programme and all our teachers have had extensive CPD on the use of this package. In fact, we are the only school in Kerry to offer Computer Science as a Leaving Certificate subject, our students were due to sit this exam in May, but it has now been deferred to later in the summer. So, from the guise of ICT preparation we were in a very good place to be able to manage online learning for our students. Our current First Year's for example, all have their own device, which they received from the school last September on a rent-to-buy scheme.

Our teachers have created Microsoft Office Class notebooks for all their classes, this app allows teachers to add and edit material related to their subject for the students to access. Students cannot edit this material; however, they can access the collaboration space to communicate with each other and their teacher and they also have a private folder to submit their work to the teacher for feedback. Student engagement with this has been excellent and I believe that in time the skills that they are currently developing will stand to them, skills such as independence, communication, research skills and ICT skills as well as time management.

At this point I would like to acknowledge the excellent work of our teachers, who have literally overnight changed the way they teach. The teamwork displayed by subject departments adjusting their plans and their mode of delivery in such a short timeframe demonstrates not only the collegiality amongst the staff but also the staunch support that the teachers give to their students daily.

### **The Continuity of Student Support**

The wellbeing of our students remains a priority and we are fully aware that this worldwide Covid-19 crisis is causing huge stress and anxiety for our students and their families. We have continued to hold our Weekly Student Support Team (SST) meetings via Office Teams, during these meetings concerns can be highlighted and actions decided upon.

We have also been in regular contact with both parents and students from all year groups. Our Home-School Liaison officer has been linking in with many families via telephone since the school closure and has highlighted any issues raised to her with our SST. As a DEIS school we also have the assistance of the School Completion Programme who again have been in touch with several families to offer support. Once per month the school has been delivering packages to each household within our student cohort, this was funded by the School Meals programme and I would like to thank the School Food Company for putting the packages together and An Post for delivering them.

We issued a survey to our students, inquiring about levels of anxiety and whether there was anything else we could do as a school to help them. We received a 50% response rate to the survey with most of the students stating that they are coping well with working from home and that they were happy with the support from the school. Our Guidance counsellor is also still available to students for appointments and has been in contact with many students via telephone and Office Teams. She is also hosting a weekly Mindfulness lesson via Office Teams with a small group of students who suffer from anxiety.

We have an ASD class in the school and are very aware that for many people with ASD this disruption to their daily routine can be very distressing. Our ASD co-ordinator has been in touch with the parents of our students on a weekly basis to check in on how they are getting on and to offer advice if required. For our students with additional educational needs our teachers are continuing to differentiate the work that they distribute online to the best of their ability. The Office 365 Class Notebook has an Immersive Reader function on it which is very useful for students with literacy difficulties. The Immersive Reader will read the text for the student, and they can also use it to highlight grammar options like all the verbs in a sentence or nouns for example. Maths is a subject that many students fear when it comes to the Junior and Leaving certificate examinations so to help alleviate some of the stress for our students we purchased vouchers for them to access an online maths support system entitled 'The Maths Tutor' where they can view video lessons and interactive exercises and advice on exam techniques.

### **The main challenges and Concerns**

The main challenge for us is not being able to physically see our students, to check for understanding in the middle of a lesson or simply just to check in with them and make sure that they are okay. Trying to motivate and encourage them from a distance is a huge challenge but one that we will endeavour to undertake and overcome with time hopefully, as both students and teachers adjust to this new way of teaching & learning.

A small number of our students did not have their own computers/laptops at home, to assist with this we have loaned them a school laptop, prioritising Junior and Leaving certificate students. We are fully aware however, that even in households where there is a computer or laptop it may have to be shared not only between siblings but possibly even with parents working from home and so this can have an effect on the level of engagement with our students. There are some who engage every day for several hours and others who may only check in once or twice per week which is understandable in the circumstances, though I do worry about the lack of parity here for all our students and indeed for all students across the country. Will we ever be able to make up for those who are being disadvantaged by this situation?

I can't emphasise enough at this time the importance of maintaining a routine at home for the students. Routine creates a structure in our lives, a sense of predictability but more importantly a sense of security and I worry that our students are missing this which will only lead to further anxiety in an already stressful situation. When the students and teachers left here on the 12th of March my advice to them was to try and follow the timetable of the school day so that they would have some sort of routine and also to ensure that they would work on all their subjects and not just the ones they like. Having reviewed the feedback on this with our Student Support Team who have been speaking to parents and students over the last few weeks this is an unrealistic expectation. Therefore, we will be issuing students with new timetables after the Easter holidays to assist them with their studies at home for however much longer this closure continues.

### **In Summary**

Firstly, I would like to say that I am very pleased that Colaiste na Riochta is under the patronage of Kerry ETB, as I mentioned above it was through their guidance from the Digital Strategy for Schools that we developed an excellent ICT infrastructure within Colaiste na Riochta enabling us to respond to this unprecedented situation fairly seamlessly. Throughout the last five years we have instilled in both our teachers and students a level of ICT skills that is more than competent to allow teaching and learning to continue remotely. I am proud of our school community at how we have handled this crisis, the quick responses and infinite support from our teachers, the compliance and participation of our students and of course the support from our parents, who themselves have had to respond quickly to a new home-schooling situation. It is far from an ideal situation and I do worry about our students, particularly our Leaving Certificate class of 2020 who sadly may never get their graduation day and now have to study all summer long for their Leaving Certificate which has been postponed. I am aggrieved for our teachers too who are continuing to work very hard and yet will not get a summer holiday this year and so will enter a new year completely exhausted. Nevertheless, I can confidently say that the students of Colaiste na Riochta will continue to receive an education, though be it through a virtual medium. It is Flawless? No, it's not, we can't wait for our students to walk through the gates of the school again but until then we will do our very best to adapt to remote teaching and learning. In the words of an American author;

"The oak is the strongest tree in the forest, but the willow bends and adapts. When the fires and storms hit, it is the willow that survives."

— *Kara Barbieri*  
*Iseult Glynn*  
*Acting Principal*

### **School Closure from the perspective of a 6th Year Student**

Since the school closure I am finding learning from home difficult as I miss the routine of the school day, I find that I am getting up and starting the day later which results in a harder day because I am not inclined to take breaks when studying. There are also lots of distractions when studying at home, not just for me but for others too. There are siblings to be looked after in some families and some family members are working on the frontline which means the teenagers of the house must cook the dinners and keep up with the housework while having to fit in study and a little exercise too if we can. It is a small bit stressful trying to study by myself and trying to balance each subject with adequate time.

I am in contact with the teachers throughout the week via email. The teachers have been great and are willing to help even when I email them with questions outside of the normal school hours. Our teachers continued to send work, and feedback on my work, during the Easter holidays which I appreciated.

I have mixed feelings to the announcement by the Minister for Education last Friday that the Leaving Certificate is postponed until the end of July. While I can appreciate that he is trying to give us all a fair crack at the whip, I think it is an unfair approach on the class of 2020 and it's the start of an unequal Leaving Certificate. I was certainly very anxious when I found out the news, it just added to the stress we have already been experiencing. We are missing out on all this class time which cannot be made up. Postponing the Leaving Certificate was harsh as student's mental health is already strained and the motivation to work on until July/August is going to be a struggle. We are in middle of a global pandemic where many students have relatives who are vulnerable, being realistic some are going to lose family members and these people are basically being told to forget about it and study for the exams, this is not allowing a grieving process which is going to be very hard on students and their families.



## **ISSUES ADDRESSED BY THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT OF P.D.A. Mr. Stephen Goulding at ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019**

At the outset I want to take this opportunity to remember Gerry Connolly , Principal of Oaklands Community College ,Edenderry, Co. Offaly who sadly passed away after a brief illness in September. Gerry held every position on the PDA National Executive including the role of President with distinction. Gerry was a progressive school leader whose advice and expertise was invaluable to us all. Our thoughts are with his wife Caroline and family and the entire school Community at Oaklands Community College at this difficult time.

I quote the General Secretary John McGabhann in his speech at the TUI Conference in April “ this is not merely the gathering of an interest group, of a stakeholder caucus. This is a gathering of experts, of professionals whose daily commitment is to the betterment of society, to the achievement of social justice and cohesion. The delegates at this conference are imbued with a rooted sense of optimism, a belief that the transformative power of education can be harnessed to forge a better future for all “. To me this aptly represents what we are about as committed professionals.

Principals , Deputy Principals & Teaching staff are overloaded. We are told we are valuable contributors to society and economic growth yet our newest members to the profession are treated as second class. This must stop and the TUI needs to fulfill its mandate here up to and including strike action. This two tier pay structure affects both retention & recruitment of staff. Budget 2019 again was a missed opportunity.

The PDA have highlighted the issue of teacher recruitment throughout the past year. Teachers are leaving the profession due to the availability in the main of precarious part time employment which does not give our colleagues the opportunity to aspire to a career and a future commensurate with their qualifications.

The issue of Teacher Supply is nationwide, not specific to urban or rural areas.

The Government’s action plan to tackle teacher supply is not going far enough to address acute classroom shortages. Far more ambition and urgency is required.

### **New Junior Cycle**

While the PDA endorse the value of reform and change, we want the department & the NCCA to pay more attention to the effects of implementation on the ground. The last phase of Junior Cycle reform began in September when the phase five subjects began. Those subjects are the Technology suite, Religious education, Jewish Studies and Classical Studies. I want to acknowledge the work of the TUI on the Junior Cycle implementation committee as a forum where feedback from the PDA has frequently sought and brought to these discussions. However, implementation issues still remain that threaten both the success and value in the new programme. For Principals & Deputies the issue of the JCPA has not been adequately resolved especially the input of other areas of Learning. The inadequate admin grant no longer exists. This is a time-consuming task which is additional work that falls on senior leadership. Principals & Deputies have to decide what the school wants to recognise and then find the information from each student, type it up and then enter into the JCPA. This is clearly additional work. The gathering and inputting of data for the completion of Other Areas of Learning in the new JCPA demands considerable time and effort and this has caused additional stress for school leaders. Furthermore, there has been continuous lack of clarity when the JCPA award is to issue which has the potential to devalue the new process for both parents and Students.

### **Senior Cycle**

The PDA welcomes the Consultation process on Senior Cycle review, but we must be cautious on the challenges around the pace of change. However, given experience, PDA cautions against the risk of marginalising the voice of the profession. Consultation must be meaningful, and we look forward to fully engaging with the advisory report.

Reform of Senior Cycle must be designed to be truly inclusive of all students and abilities. At present, the range of levels across all Senior Cycle programmes caters for a wide breadth of academic ability. Future reform must not marginalise or exclude any cohort of learners; it must be inclusive in nature.

The PDA working with the TUI will seek to ensure the voice of Principals and Deputy Principals are heard in this process.

### **Circulars**

Delegates it is increasingly happening that circulars with resource implications are being issued without consultation or linked resources. The PDA are requesting the TUI to address this. The Irish exemption circular will lead to an associated additional workload with this and the appeals process. There are also resourcing implications for school leadership that have not been acknowledged. Also the circular has led to expectations by parents that school leaders will grant exemptions irrespective of the criteria.



## **Pay**

We are tired of speaking of our workload with no additional remuneration. There is also a two tier pay structure among Principals – some colleagues still receive and rightly so allowances for the BOM & Adult Education. The PDA is calling for an immediate return of these payments. Take for example the huge additional responsibilities undertaken by Principals & Deputy Principals through Child Protection, Various Circulars such as Irish exemptions, Allocation of SEN resources, SNA/PA management, GDPR in our schools & FE centres. I am asking as President of this Association that the TUI join with us as a matter of immediate priority in working out a road map for restoration and equity for Principals & Deputy Principals. Delegates we deserve no less.

## **School leadership**

The PDA acknowledges the very positive role and impact the Centre for School Leadership is having on transforming school leadership. In 2019 96 Post Primary Principals were appointed. The coaching service to Principals and team coaching for the leadership team in schools is vital. This is long overdue. PDA would recommend enhanced financial supports for teachers participating in such important post graduate studies. Perhaps ETBs could take a lead here in this regard. I also feel the Leadership needs of Further Education Principals & Deputy Principals need to be acknowledged and supported under the CSL model. Delegates we are at risk without proper and sustained training irrespective of how long we are in our positions.

## **Student & Parents Charter**

This new procedure once enacted would require schools to have a charter for interacting with parents and children. The Department views this as "an important step towards improving the experience of students and parents in how they engage with schools". One of the key areas covered by the bill is the need for schools to reduce costs for parents. Schools will also be required to consult with parents and students and invite them to offer feedback on issues like costs.

Our objective is to ensure every school should receive the funding necessary to realise its educational goals and not depend on parent contributions.

## **FINANCE & Buildings**

School budgets remain at a grossly inadequate level since the recession. The capitation grant despite a 2.5% increase from September 2020 does not meet the needs of our schools. This works out at roughly an extra €7.40 per student at second level.

Currently school budgets are not keeping pace with rising costs of core services despite the government procurement system in sourcing savings, but this does not cover all services needed by schools. While long term planning under project Ireland is welcome, investment is essential now after a decade of cuts that simply have not been reversed.

## **Further Education (FE)**

Further Education has undergone significant reform since the first FET strategy in 2014. The CSO findings on further education demonstrate that 62% of PLC graduates were in employment and 30% were in Higher Education. Retention rates are higher at HE from Plc students. FE colleges can be proud of their role in participating in the economic recovery of the state. This is an argument both SOLAS & the DES have acknowledged. PLC is an essential route for many students. I am calling for parity of funding for PLC along with Apprenticeships & Traineeships. Over 27000 students take the PLC route every year. Our FE colleges are now providing greater opportunities for our students with both PLC courses, Apprenticeships & Traineeships on offer. The new FET strategy must embrace the changing needs of our FE colleges. The new FET strategy must secure the place of PLC provision acknowledging its place and strength within FET but must align more closely with Higher education.

## **School Attendance**

The PDA welcome highlighting the issue of school attendance as a national campaign. The 'Every School Day Counts' campaign will run annually during the month of November and the PDA hope that the impact of this will permeate throughout the academic year and parent attitudes towards attendance. This is hugely beneficial for all schools but DEIS in particular.

## **Generation Apprenticeship**

I would like to welcome the TUI initiative called generation apprenticeship that has been launched by TUI president Seamus Lahart. Realising the poor take-up in Apprenticeship and the relentless push toward Third level by the CAO points race, Seamus started a discussion group in TUI which at various points included the HEA, Solas, the ESB, Teagasc, The Army training facility and CIF. This working group examined avenues to promote skills, training and apprenticeship.

## **Conclusion**

In summation we have outlined deteriorating conditions for Principals, Deputy Principals & teachers which include unequal pay structures, casualization/non-permanent contracts, limited restoration of promotional opportunities, the teacher supply problem, the inadequate capacity and resource levels in schools and, more generally, the underfunding of education at all levels. I ask the TUI to redouble its efforts to ensure an education system that works for all that has inclusion and equity at its core.

I would like to say that it has been an honour and a privilege for me to serve as President to this association over the past three years. I have been well supported by a very hard-working National Executive and I would like to thank them for the very dedicated way they have represented your concerns at national level.

# Conference Speakers for PDA Conference 2019

## *“Leadership for Creativity and Inclusion”*

### John Doran

John is a teacher, guidance counsellor and author of the programme Ways to Well Being. He is an accomplished speaker and his brief was to get our 2019 Conference off to lively and light hearted note late on Wednesday evening 13th November. John regaled his audience with a fast moving presentation, supported by a selection of video clips that delivered a fun filled message which was loaded with meaning. He acknowledged the challenges of leadership and offered sound messages of advice around resilience and hope. John’s indepth and earthy understanding of the issues faced by teachers and leaders in schools on a daily basis, allowed him to forge a powerful connection with delegates. His connection with his audience was brought to a new level when he convinced Mattie Kilroy to thrill the attendance to a rendition of the Bog Down in the Valley. John left us with a note of sound advice; stop going to bed both tired and wired and reminded us that the more we give to others, the more we need to give to ourselves.



### Ben Murray

Ben Murray is the post Primary Director with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment with responsibility for curriculum and assessment design at Junior and Senior cycle levels. Ben was one of 3 contributors to the Thursday morning panel and he shared some current thinking and brought Conference up to date on developments relating to the ongoing review of Senior Cycle. Commenting on progress to date he alerted delegates to the extensive review of International Research across nine jurisdictions that had been carried out and the consultative processes engaged in to date by the NCCA. As of November 2019 information from public consultations was being processed with a view to reporting to the Council before the end of the year. An advisory report to Council was expected for Spring of 2020.



### Joe O’Connell

Dr Joe O’Connell inspired delegates through an exploration of the leadership challenges in managing change. At the outset Joe made the point that change is personal and alluded to the fallacy that a one size fits all approach is possible- a clear message for leaders. Moving on to explore resistance to change he identified multiple motivating factors. Leaders he suggested should give consideration to what he called the “resistor’s driving forces”. Important for the leader to recognise that well motivated professionals may resist for reasons linked to a sense of competence in dealing with the familiar and the fear of the unknown. Joe stressed the importance of keeping people involved from the early stages, clearly informed of the reasons for change and invited to participate in working out how the transition to new practices will be implemented. He pointed to the importance of what he called a transition initiative, engaging highly involved team members who having the pride of ownership, will not only put forth their own best effort despite the hassles of change, they will positively influence those around them. Finally Joe challenged delegates to explore models for collaborative action and presented a framework to analyse what was currently working well, what is not yet working well, what was open to change and what might not be open to change. (and why)



### Anne Looney

Anne Looney was making a return visit to Conference after a previous presentation in Sligo in 2012. Creativity was the focus of her presentation which commenced by looking at the history of the concept of creativity. She charted a journey travelling from the view of creativity in ancient Greece up to the catalyst provided for the first wave of creativity research, inspired by the 1950 address to the American Psychological Association by JP Guildord. She introduced delegates to 3 phases of that research starting with Personality Aspects, moving on to the Cognitive Aspects and ultimately the development of programmes through the work of Vernon in 1989. Delegates were introduced to the work of Kevin Gormley(2019) focussing on a growing interest in creativity with societal well being seen as one of a number of driving forces. Current perspectives she said saw a link between creativity and criticality with obvious links to skills developments in our students.



## Joan Russell

The Thursday morning panel presentations followed by discussion and questions has become a particular highlight of Conference over the past three years. We were pleased to have ETBI Director of Schools Support Services Joan Russell as panel facilitator. Joan brought a wealth of experience to the task, with her in-depth and critical understanding of key issues around leadership, curriculum innovation, creativity and pedagogical practices. Her skills were in evidence throughout the morning, as she drew together the key themes emerging from the presentations by Ben Murray, Anne Looney and Joe O'Connell. What followed was an engaging and insightful, facilitated panel discussion exploring and analysing the challenges posed in the presentations. Delegates were invited to ask questions, make contributions and engage in discussion with the panel. Such was the level of interest that the session was extended by 15 minutes beyond the scheduled time. A winning format.



## Fiona O'Brien

Fiona is the Team Leader for School Leadership at the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) and has been seconded since 2016 from her post as Principal at Killarney Community College. In addressing the leadership and management of assessment changes at Junior Cycle, Fiona drew the attention of delegates to the work of Professor Claire Wyatt-Smith (holds advisory role with NCCA) whose research focuses on professional judgement, standards and moderation and teachers' assessment identities. Noting that the landscape of assessment has changed Fiona alluded to the dual approach provided for in the Framework for Junior Cycle requiring a combination of classroom based assessment and a final externally-assessed state certified examination. Drawing on Circular 0055/2019 she went on to emphasise the need for schools to review their own assessment policies and plan for the replacement of in-house examinations with Classroom-Based Assessments for students where relevant. LAOS 2016 makes specific reference to this process in Statements of Highly Effective Practice. Fiona concluded by noting the challenges for those in school leadership roles would be to support teachers to collaboratively plan and to reconfigure the schools assessment and reporting procedures and calendar.



## Johanna Fitzgerald

Johanna joined us for Conference 2019 having relatively recently been appointed Head of the Department of Educational Psychology, Inclusive and Special Education at Mary Immaculate College Limerick. Dr Fitzgerald addressed the critical role of leadership in building schoolwide capacity to respond to the diverse needs of learners. In setting the context she pointed to the particular challenges posed to inclusive education by the growth of performativity agendas and the league tables showing the "best schools in Ireland". Delegates were challenged to explore the concepts of equality and equity and what they might look like in the context of inclusivity.

In suggesting a way forward Dr Fitzgerald pointed to the potential of a more developed role of Special Education Needs Co-ordinator in schools. Drawing on her own research and that of others (Fitzgerald & Radford 2019 under review) she pointed to the need for a more formal recognition of the SENCO role. She went on to state that this might usefully be preceded by further research in the Irish context to explore the role considering recent policy changes. In conclusion delegates were reminded that inclusive and special education are problematic for schools (wicked problems) and as such require a truly whole school response.



## Brian Mac Giolla Phadraig and Ger Power

The final day of Conference 2019 commenced with a presentation on Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections by Brian Mac Giolla Phadraig and Ger Power from the DES Inspectorate. In introducing the presentation the Inspectors pointed to the centrality of the child and the child's safety and welfare when it comes to child protection and safeguarding inspections. They were keen to emphasise the respectful engagement nature of the process noting that their Code of Practice underpins their inspections as they support the implementation of the 2017 procedures. They stressed that Inspection is a formative process that is done in a way that is fair to schools. In the course of the presentation it was made clear that one of the aims of these inspections is to promote best practice in school leadership as it relates to child protection. The inspectors went on to outline the inspection framework as it derives from the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017. The 10 point checklist ranges from the communication aspect through to quality of planning for and implementation of SPHE and RSE curriculum in the case of post-primary schools. In concluding the presentation the Inspectors spoke of the supports available to schools through a suite of mandatory and optional templates which are available on the Department website.

## Dr. Jennifer McMahon

Dr Jennifer McMahon delivered the concluding presentation to Conference 2019 on the afternoon of Friday November 15. Jennifer is a Psychologist and Educator based at the University of Limerick where she lectures in Psychology and Inclusion in the School of Education. Jennifer came with a wealth of experience in addressing the topic of youth mental health having conducted a large scale needs and resource analysis across Limerick. In exploring the theme Jennifer addressed four key aspects. What is youth mental health?, Prevalence of youth mental health issues, Stress and mental health and Positive psychology for good mental health. Jennifer introduced the WHO (2005) definition of youth mental health "the capacity to achieve and maintain optimal psychological functioning and well-being. It is directly related to the level reached and competence achieved in psychological and social functioning."

She went on to introduce some stark findings from the My World Survey (National Study of Youth Mental Health): 1 in 3 young people experience mild to severe depression, 1 in 3 mild to severe anxiety and 1 in 4 mild to severe stress.

In concluding Jennifer outlined the key role of positive psychology and drew particular attention to the concept of Flow by Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993). Schools are requested to encourage young people to engage in extra curricular activities that encourage a sense of flow and are crucial for development. In the time since Conference 2019 the My World Survey 2 findings have become available and can be accessed at: <http://www.myworldsurvey.ie/full-report>.



# TUI PDA TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION SURVEY

## 'Four in five schools have had no application for an advertised post' - Survey findings confirm worsening teacher supply crisis

The latest survey findings of recruitment and retention difficulties in Irish schools show worsening difficulties across the country, with four in five schools having had no application for an advertised post in the previous six months.

The poll was carried out in December 2019

and January 2020 by the Principals' and Deputy Principals' Association of the TUI.

The survey findings were released a week before the Union's national strike on pay discrimination, publicly highlighting the severe damage that the two-tier pay system is inflicting on the profession and the service to students.

**Q** Has your school experienced teacher recruitment difficulties over the last six months?



**Q** Has your school experienced teacher retention difficulties over the last six months?



**Q** In the past six months, has there been a situation where no teacher applied for an advertised teaching post in your school?



Situation has worsened since the question was last asked in April 2019, when 68% answered 'Yes'

**Q** Does your school currently have unfilled vacancies due to recruitment and retention difficulties?



Situation has worsened since the question was last asked in April 2019, when 67% answered 'Yes'



Survey of 131 second level schools carried out in December 2019 and January 2020



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**Subject areas in which the most severe teacher recruitment/retention difficulties were experienced – ranked 1 to 10**

**1 Irish**

**2 Home Economics**

**3 French**

**4 Mathematics**

**5 Spanish**

**6 Biology**

**7 Physics**

**8 Chemistry**

**9 German**

**10 PE**

**What do you think is the primary cause of teacher recruitment and retention difficulties? (Respondents were asked to rank from the four choices)**

**1**



More attractive options for new graduates in other employments

**2**



Discriminatory pay rates affecting new and recent entrants to teaching

**3**



The unavailability of contracts of full hours upon appointment

**4**



Accommodation costs in the vicinity of the school



As a TUI Executive member, I was nominated three years ago (2017) to be the liaison officer from TUI to the PDA. My role was to keep the Officers of the PDA briefed on what was happening with the TUI, or so I thought! All the PDA Executive meetings take place on a Saturday and at every meeting my eyes were opened to the plethora of issues our principals and deputy principals dealt with on a daily basis. While we as teachers may feel under pressure with the various education innovations and initiatives it became clear to me that principals and deputies, who have to drive these initiatives, are equally pressurised.

The PDA affords a voice to principals and deputy principals across the country; it gives them access to the TUI Executive and direct engagement with the Department of Education. The ethos of the organisation is to be “the voice of your concerns, anxieties and realisations”. The PDA has dealt with many anxieties and concerns since I began working with them eg. SSE, JCPA, OALs, SLARs, GDPR, the list of acronyms goes on and on. I have always brought the reality of the practitioner, the teacher to the PDA Executive meetings while the PDA has of course shared its concerns from a management perspective. There may be debates and disputed points of view but the reality is that we acknowledge that both the TUI and the PDA complement each other.

As an NCCA Council member I was directly involved in the Senior Cycle Review and I was fortunate to have the support and wisdom of the PDA, which combined with my own teacher perspective, helped me greatly and afforded me a unique perspective into the process. In September of last year, the NCCA had received a meagre 24 email submissions on the review. I worked with the TUI and PDA network to increase this figure. Within two months, the NCCA had received almost 1,200 submissions of similar in tenor and tone and were created by experienced, realistic and pragmatic educationalists. Working together, we are indeed a stronger force.

As an executive sub-committee of the TUI, the PDA has helped us to highlight the staff recruitment and retention problems we face in our schools and centres on a daily basis and have assisted and supported us in our strike action for equal pay. As Principal and Deputy Principal TUI members, I would recommend that you support the PDA as they organise a stimulating and innovative National Conference in Tullow, Co. Carlow in Nov. 2021. I look forward to seeing you there.

*Liz Farrell (TUI Vice-President)*



# Year Planner 2021

	January	February	March	April	May	
Wednesday						
Thursday				1		
Friday	1			2		
Saturday	2			3	1	
Sunday	3			4	2	
Monday	4	1	1	5	3	
Tuesday		2	2	6	4	1
Wednesday	6	3	3	7	5	2
Thursday	7	4	4	8	6	3
Friday	8	5	5	9	7	4
Saturday	9	6	6	10	8	5
Sunday	10	7	7	11	9	6
Monday	11	8	8	12	10	7
Tuesday	12	9	9	13	11	8
Wednesday	13	10	10	14	12	9
Thursday	14	11	11	15	13	10
Friday	15	12	12	16	14	11
Saturday	16	13	13	17	15	12
Sunday	17	14	14	18	16	13
Monday	18	15	15	19	17	14
Tuesday	19	16	16	20	18	15
Wednesday	20	17	17	21	19	16
Thursday	21	18	18	22	20	17
Friday	22	19	19	23	21	18
Saturday	23	20	20	24	22	19
Sunday	24	21	21	25	23	20
Monday	25	22	22	26	24	21
Tuesday	26	23	23	27	25	22
Wednesday	27	24	24	28	26	23
Thursday	28	25	25	29	27	24
Friday	29	26	26	30	28	25
Saturday	30	27	27		29	26
Sunday	31	28	28		30	27
Monday			29		31	28
Tuesday			30			29
Wednesday			31			30
Thursday						

Useful Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

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June	July	August	September	October	November	December
	1					
	2			1		
	3			2		
	4	1		3		
	5	2		4	1	
	6	3		5	2	
	7	4	1	6	3	1
	8	5	2	7	4	2
	9	6	3	8	5	3
	10	7	4	9	6	4
	11	8	5	10	7	5
	12	9	6	11	8	6
	13	10	7	12	9	7
	14	11	8	13	10	8
	15	12	9	14	11 Conference	9
	16	13	10	15	12 Conference	10
	17	14	11	16	13 Conference	11
	18	15	12	17	14	12
	19	16	13	18	15	13
	20	17	14	19	16	14
	21	18	15	20	17	15
	22	19	16	21	18	16
	23	20	17	22	19	17
	24	21	18	23	20	18
	25	22	19	24	21	19
	26	23	20	25	22	20
	27	24	21	26	23	21
	28	25	22	27	24	22
	29	26	23	28	25	23
	30	27	24	29	26	24
	31	28	25	30	27	25
		29	26	31	28	26
		30	27		29	27
		31	28		30	28
			29			29
			30			30

31

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**Mount Wolsley Hotel**  
**Tullow Co. Carlow**  
 PDA CONFERENCE 2021 November  
 10th, 11th & 12th





# Wisdom Is All Around Us

By Eithne Hunt



*Dr. Eithne Hunt, Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, University College Cork*

*Eithne is a State registered occupational therapist with 22 years of experience working directly with young people in health and education. In her work she draws on her previous clinical work with children, adolescents and young adults in in-patient and community mental health services; her extensive academic experience teaching young people about daily activities and wellbeing; her doctoral research on adolescent time use and wellbeing; her training in mindfulness with children and adolescents and mindfulness based stress reduction for teens (MBSR-T); and her outreach work designing and delivering 'Everyday Matters' and 'Older & Wiser' training to young people, parents, teachers and health professionals.*

This summer, I attended a conference presentation on applying Fink's taxonomy of significant learning to higher education settings. This presentation has stayed with me for two reasons. Firstly, I loved learning about Fink's taxonomy. It goes beyond the cognitive processes of the more well-known Bloom's taxonomy, emphasising the affective dimension of learning, including connecting ideas and information, learning about oneself and others, being excited and caring about knowledge and becoming self-regulated learners. The presenter invited us to reflect on and share something significant we had learned, from any source (e.g., book, film, podcast, journal article, lecture...), something that had really stayed with us. Almost without having to think at all, key take home messages from some recently accessed blogs, podcasts, papers and talks came to my mind. This is the second reason why the presentation stands out in my memory. It reinforced to me that wisdom is all around us, and within us. Giving ourselves time to be open to learning from the rich array of resources available to us, and connecting ideas and information from what we see, hear or read to expand our perspective on the world and ourselves, this is something that is available to each one of us. I try to pass on this message to the Occupational Therapy students I teach and the young people, parents and educators I meet in my outreach work.

Here are some significant learnings that have really resonated with me in recent months. Through sharing these ideas with the young people and communities with whom we work and embedding the values in our educational contexts we have a wonderful opportunity to nurture and celebrate a culture of inclusion and belonging.

In the superb and always thought-provoking On Being podcast, Stanford medical professor Abraham Verghese and co-founder of the US based non-profit Challenge Success Denise Pope discussed how children and young people are so often asked 'what do you want to be when you grow up?'. They urged parents and educators to instead pose the question 'who and how do you want to be when you grow up? This feels like an urgent question for us to consider collectively, not least because it's now well recognised that many of the jobs of the future are as yet unknown and, as Pope noted, 'the idea of a straight and narrow path is really outdated'. To my mind even more important though is the idea that, as Pope articulated, education should support 'the creation of full, well-rounded humans'.

Similarly, Carol Dweck, a Stanford psychology professor and creator of the theory of fixed and growth mindset, tells her freshman college students that maybe their job before arriving at the Ivy League university was to get As, their job now is to 'become the person you want to be, the person who will make your contribution to society'. What an empowering message to give to young people, affirming their potential to influence their becoming and also drawing attention to the need to think beyond what we as individuals need and want to achieve, instead thinking of the part we each play in creating the society we wish to live in.

Sharing insights gleaned from 78,000 consultations with college students during her 17 year tenure as University of Bristol GP, Dr. Dominique Thompson in her TED talk spoke about the need to be open about failure and failing, as this is part of life for all of us. She also reflected on the prevailing culture of competition in our society. From Great British Bake Off to Love Island, each facet of human existence has seemingly become something to win at, to be the best at. Thompson encouraged the more inclusive message of "do YOUR best" rather than "be THE best". I wholeheartedly agree with her observation but would extend it even further, noting that we also need to reinforce that at times being "good enough" is okay too.

In her blog We Need to Talk about Children's Mental Health Welsh clinical psychologist Elizabeth Gregory (Twitter @dizzydoodler) shares her thoughts about the way Child and Adolescent Mental Health services should be developed and delivered. What has stayed in my mind from her writing is the idea of 'thinking big but starting



small', emphasising whole school approaches and 'the first five minutes of the day' when teachers can connect to each student and welcome them to class. While more challenging to do so beyond primary school given the number of classes and teachers, it is a reminder nonetheless of how we communicate to young people that we are glad they are here and that their presence is noticed and valued. Gregory has also written about the need for schools to be resourced and supported to 'hold on instead of refer on', meaning that schools would be equipped to provide supports to young people when and where needed. I also like to think of this 'holding on' as the practice of allowing feelings to be expressed, with adults helping young people to hold their emotions, co-regulating with them until they can do so on their own. A recent paper produced by staff affiliated with the Center for the Developing Adolescent in the US described this 'scaffolding' by parents and caregivers as critical to healthy development for young people.

US social worker, New York Times best seller and TED 'sensation' Brené Brown speaks and writes passionately and powerfully about our innate human desire to belong. She asked some young people to identify differences between 'fitting in' and 'belonging'. Amongst their definitions were 'I get to be me if I belong. I have to be like you to fit in'. Included in Brown's recently launched Daring Classrooms programme are posters that say 'Be Here. Be You. Belong. This classroom belongs to all of us.' I absolutely love this and used this poster as the focal point for my orientation session with incoming first year Occupational Therapy students this year.

Finally, the beautiful book (and now film) Wonder by RJ Palacio gave rise to the hashtag #choosekind and the chance to become a "Certified Kind Classroom", at least in the US. She wrote a book for younger readers entitled We Are All Wonders which celebrates difference and treating every person with kindness. If I were a school leader, above and before all else, I would make kindness (to self and others) an explicit value and practice that is named and celebrated within the ethos and daily life of the school. The scientific literature and research evidence on such kindness or self-compassion makes compelling reading.

Perhaps something you have read here has resonated with you and will stay in your mind as a significant learning, amongst the wisdom all around you. I wish you well for your conference and for the important work you do in creating school communities that honour inclusion for all.

**Eithne Hunt, PhD, MSc., PgDipStats, BSc.OT, MAOTI / e.hunt@ucc.ie / @MindMeMindYouIE (Twitter)**

## **Conference 2019 Exhibitors & Supporters**

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**CORK ETB**

**KERRY ETB**

**TEACHERS UNION OF IRELAND**

# Westport College of Further Education goes the Distance with its FET Agriculture Course

In 2015, Westport College of Further Education recognised that there was great demand across Ireland to complete a suite of Agriculture courses colloquially known as the Green Cert, to be delivered on a part time basis. The Green Cert, an Agricultural course which is comprised of a Level 5 QQI Certificate in Agriculture and a Level 6 Special Purpose Award in Farming. This allows recipients to gain a range of grant aid and taxation benefits. This part time course was an extension of the successful full-time curriculum in the college. The college was receiving a lot of queries for a part time course due to many farmers having fulltime off farm employment. This would preclude them from completing a fulltime course or some of the other part time options on offer in Ireland.

After one year of delivering the part time course to 30 students in Mayo, which due to its geographic area, is sparsely populated, Westport College of Further Education quickly realised that students were having difficulty in travelling twice a week to Westport to especially in the Winter months. One area of Mayo that had difficulty with this in particular was Clare Island, an island 35 minutes from the coast. Island families depend mainly on farming for their livelihood and needed to complete the Green Cert but could not afford the time to attend a full-time course in the College. This led Westport College to addressing this demand. It was from this, that our blended learning program was born.

A pilot project for 8 students on Clare Island was planned for Autumn 2016 in response to demand from the farming community on Clare Island. In conjunction with Cliara Development Company, Clare Island and South West Mayo Development Company Westport College put in place the delivery of the Green Cert by interactive learning on Clare Island. The pilot project at the time availed of e-learning and live classroom streaming which allowed the farmers living on Clare Island to access live class delivery in the evening and complete the Green Cert remotely. The facility overcame obstacles such as the simple practicalities of travelling to and from the mainland to attend class. Due to an article in a local paper there was great interest in this pilot learning initiative. The college signed up 12 more students from around Ireland as part of this pilot. The method of delivery proved to be beneficial to the Islanders as it created a positive learning environment which was more accessible and inclusive. To overcome the practical assessment requirements and exam integrity issues students travelled from Clare Island and other locations to Westport on Saturdays to complete these assessments.

The success of this mode of delivery proved a much-needed breakthrough in course delivery for the farming community and the farmers around Ireland were quick to embrace this new mode of delivery. The blended learning method of teaching enabled Westport College of Further Education to now offer this course to a wider community.

Since the introduction of the blended version of the course in 2016, Westport College has seen the provision of this go from strength to strength. Each year sees a surge in the number of applications and with the advancement in technology it is now possible for Westport College of Further Education to deliver the course to a much larger number of participants. In 2016, 20 students were part of the initial pilot course, in 2017 this increased to 107 and has increased to 170 in 2019.

The academic year of 2018- 2019 was a milestone year for Westport College of Further Education. The college was the first FET provider in the country to be validated under the new QQI Validation guidelines to deliver a blended learning course by QQI at Level 5 Agriculture and Level 6 Special Purpose Award in Farming.

The course is still delivered to via video conferencing but has gone through several iterations with the advancement in technology. Students from all over Ireland can partake in the course. The provision of the course using our current delivery platform allows teachers the facility to upload material prior to class commencement, interactive and electronic submission of work, all of which provides the students with a unique opportunity to successfully complete their Green Certificate in Agriculture and become a qualified farmer. However, there is still a need to travel to Westport on designated days to complete exams.

A recent addition, is an extension of the colleges successful Erasmus+ programme to provide part time students of Agriculture the opportunity to travel on partially funded trips to European agricultural shows in Paris and Rome. It allows the students unique opportunities to visit our European partners and see firsthand how farming is done abroad and implement these ideas on their home farms in Ireland.

## Why Join PDA

School leadership is frequently challenging and demanding and PDA at regional and national level is there to offer you advice and support if required. We encourage you to attend regional meetings and annual National Conference. In doing so you will build valuable contacts right across the ETB sector and discover that there are common problems and issues. The opportunity to build networks and discuss and share ideas will greatly support your work in school leadership.

The National Executive is composed of representatives from all ETBs and issues of concern are considered at each Executive meeting. The national officers of PDA hold regular meetings with TUI and with other relevant bodies from time to time. This access allows PDA to bring our policies and concerns to a national stage. Not all issues are easily resolved but we have a track record over time of making considerable progress on matters that impact in a major way on Principals and Deputies throughout our sector.

Our Annual Conference held in mid November each year is the policy making forum and members have the opportunity to contribute to debates on matters of concern submitted as resolutions from each region. The

### PDA Conference 2021

10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>  
November 2021  
hosted by  
PDA Areas  
Carlow/Kilkenny  
and Waterford/  
Wexford  
Conference 2020  
Cancelled



Conference has a very strong educational and professional development focus with workshops and presentations from speakers with expertise in key areas directly related to teaching, learning and educational leadership.

Exhibitors at the conference include suppliers and agencies ranging from the education support services to providers of initial teacher education. The schedule also includes a social dimension with extensive opportunities for networking.

Attendance at all the professional development sessions at Conference

and the Conference banquet is open to Principals/ Deputy Principals who are not members of PDA.

Some short business sessions are exclusive to PDA members. Further information on attendance at Conference is available from any of the contact numbers in this newsletter.

PDA offers formal and informal support to members and towards this end names and contact details of support officers are included on page 20 of this newsletter. Where necessary a support officer will travel to your region to meet with you to discuss an issue of concern and provide advice and support.

## PDA Support Personnel

Three former Principals who have each served as President of PDA have been selected by the Executive to provide advice and support to members on issues arising from their role as school leaders. They may be contacted directly for advice if required. In addition they attend meetings of the Executive in an advisory role and provide support at local and national level on matters such as the organisation of Annual Conference.

### Tom Hughes - Cork

M: 087 2203556

E: thughes313@gmail.com



### Michael Daly - Carlow

M: 086-4075203

E: mickdaly200@gmail.com




### Mattie Kilroy - Galway

M: 087 6335479

E: mattie.kilroy@gmail.com



# PDA National Executive 2020

<b>Dublin &amp; Dun Laoghaire ETB</b>	Austin Fennessy Riversdale Community College, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. M: 087 234 4890 austinfennessy@ddletb.ie		<b>Galway &amp; Roscommon ETB</b>	Frank Colohan Abbey Community College Boyle Co. Roscommon Frank.colohan@gretb.ie T: 071 966 4646	
<b>Kildare &amp; Wicklow ETB</b>	Mary Cullen Confey College, Leixlip, Co. Kildare T: (01) 624 5322 mcullen@confeycollege.org		<b>Co-opted</b>	Noel Kelly Griffeen Community College, Lucan, Co. Dublin T: 01 6212392 noelkelly@griffeenccl.ie	
<b>PDA Executive Educate Together</b>	Pádraig Conaty's Harold's Cross Educate Together Secondary School 151/153 Harold's Cross Road Dublin 6W principal@hctetss.ie		<b>Mayo, Sligo &amp; Leitrim ETB</b>	Sean Wynne Drumshanbo Vocational School, Drumshanbo, Co Leitrim, Ireland T: 00353(0)71 9641085 seanwynne@msletb.ie	
<b>Clare &amp; Limerick ETB</b>	Michael Behan Coláiste na Trocaire Rathkeale, Co. Limerick T: 069 64094 michael.behan@lcteb.ie		<b>Waterford &amp; Wexford ETB</b>	Sandra O'Toole, Bunclody Vocational College Irish Street, Bunclody, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. M: 087 204 9392 sandraotoole@wwetb.ie	
<b>Cork ETB</b>	Jim O'Sullivan Principal Nagle Community College. Mahon, Cork T: (021) 435 8633		<b>Tipperary ETB</b>	Ruaidhri Devitt St Ailbe's School Rosanna Road Tipperary Town ruaidhri@aibes.com	
<b>Kilkenny &amp; Carlow ETB</b>	Gerry McGill, Principal Tyndall College, Mortarstown, Kilkenny Road, Carlow, T: +353 (0)59 9182250		<b>Laoise, Offally Longford &amp; West Meath ETB</b>	Rosemary Johnston Ballymahon Vocational School Ballymahon, Co. Longford T: 090 6432211 RJohnston.BVS@lwetb.ie	
<b>Co-Opted Member</b>	Brian Ó Maoilchiaráin Principal Coláiste an Eachréidh Baile Átha an Rí Co. na Gaillimhe 091-874590		<b>City of Dublin ETB</b>	Sinead Dunne Margaret Aylward Community College, Thatch Road Whitehall, Dublin 9 T: 01 8375712 sinead.dunne@cdc.cdteb.ie	
<b>www.PDA.ie</b>			<b>Liz Farrell TUI Liaison</b>	Liz Farrell Colaiste Eoin, Hacketstown, Co. Carlow T: (059) 647 1198 Tuiarea1@tuimail.ie	

## PDA Officers 2020



**Adrian Power**  
PDA President  
Principal  
Bridgetown College  
Bridgetown  
Co. Wexford  
053-35257



**Stephen Goulding**  
PDA Past President  
T: 068-21023  
principal@kerrycollege.ie  
Kerry College, Tralee,  
Co. Kerry



**Roger Geagan,**  
PDA Treasure,  
T:057-9331231  
principalascn@gmail.com  
Ard Scoil Chiarain Naofa  
Clara, Co. Offaly.



**Iseult Glynn**  
PDA Secretary  
T: (098) 25241  
principal@colaistenariochta.ie  
Colaiste na Ríochta,  
Listowel, Co. Kerry.



**Michael Murphy**  
PDA Vice President  
T: 087 287 3131  
michaelmurphy@westportcf.ie  
Westport College of Further  
Education, Westport, Co. Mayo.