

Educate Together

Education & Support



news

For Educate Together teachers
and boards of management
SUMMER 2015



WELCOME TO EDUCATE TOGETHER'S EDUCATION AND SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

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Boards of Management

Focus on:

Fionnuala Ward
Primary Education Officer

Main areas of responsibility:

- Courses in Colleges of Education
- Postgraduate Certificate in Ethical and Multi-Denominational Education, St Patrick's College of Education
- Summer Courses
- Ethical Education Conference
- Resource Development - currently lessons on Humanism

The colleges are publicly-funded but, for the most part, religiously run. Graduates are well-equipped to teach the religious programmes taught in denominational schools but have generally had very limited exposure to Educate Together and the Learn Together curriculum. We're trying to put that straight!

CPD in Ethical Education is also a huge part of the Primary Officer's role, be that courses or conferences. CPD keeps a school up to date with resources, debates and developments within the sector and the more CPD we can provide, the more varied forms of CPD we can provide and the higher quality of CPD we can provide, the better!



We Need Your Help!

We're in the process of gathering examples of Ethical Education lessons. Would you like to contribute? Could we video you and your class? The lesson doesn't have to be perfect! It doesn't have to include dancing bears, or students performing pyrotechnics or an in depth analysis of world events. Honestly! We're looking for solid, substantial, ordinary, down-to-earth lessons.

Please contact Ann or Fionnuala above.

Philosophy in the Classroom

Dermot Stanley, Canal Way ETNS

10yrs old, slap bang in the middle of an Irish lesson and I could wait no longer. Up went my hand – “Teacher, teacher, if I poured a spoonful of water into the sea, would the water level rise?”

My teacher chose to answer me after lunch, when he returned armed with a mug of water and a tea-spoon. He took a spoon of water from the mug, tossed it onto the floor, and sneered “Now Stanley, what do you think?” The biting tone and the guffaw from the class, made sure I didn’t ask my follower-upper question - “What about 2 spoons teacher, or 3 spoons, or 4, or what about 5 billion trillion spoons teacher?”

Children ask philosophical questions all the time. Dilemmas, puzzles and philosophical scenarios befuddle children without aid or prompt. They come flying at teachers and we can catch them and enjoy discussion around them. We don’t need highbrow qualifications to facilitate philosophical discussions in our classrooms. We don’t need the answers either.

A good jumping off point is through children’s literature. Story is a wonderful overture that makes any field of philosophy accessible to younger classes. Children’s books raise deeply philosophical issues that children love to discuss. Philosophical questions based on a story are very different from comprehension questions and should generally be broad, and are rarely based on the character or the setting for example, *Dr Seuss*, ‘*The Lorax*’ – Is it possible to be greedy without being harmful? (Philosophy of Ethics) and *Leo Lionni*, ‘*Little Blue and Little Yellow*’ – Do things remain the same once they change? Is this also the case for people? (Philosophy of Personal Identity)



I was inspired to use children’s literature as an approach to philosophy, after reading Prof Tom Wartenberg’s ‘Big Ideas for Little Children’. In this book, he reviews 5 children’s books and gives guidelines to facilitate philosophical discussion around each one. He also has a website www.teachingchildrenphilosophy.org which reviews 144 books,

Here in Canal Way Educate Together (formerly Portobello ETNS), we are into our second year of philosophy. We use children’s literature to introduce ideas around the different fields of philosophy. The children love sitting in their thinking circle, passing around the talking stick and listening to one-another’s ideas, safe in the knowledge that the teacher is as bewildered as them, and there isn’t a mug or spoon in sight

Write an Article for Our Newsletter

We want to hear from you!

If something has worked for you in the teaching of Ethical Education; if you’d like to promote a methodology; if an assembly went really well; if you’re particularly passionate about a cause, please let us know!

Likewise if there are any aspects of life as a Board of Management member you’d like to outline, or policies you’re keen on exploring or experiences you feel you should share, please get in touch!

Just send a brief outline of your proposed article to resources@educatetogether.ie and we’ll get back to you asap.

Summer Courses

Educate Together has been running EPV day accredited summer courses for 5 years now, with great success.

This year the following online courses will be available:

- **Ethical Education in Educate Together Schools**
 There is some overlap in content between the above and an earlier course entitled 'An Introduction to Educate Together and the Learn Together Curriculum'.
- **Teaching Ethics and Social Justice - Equality and Justice; Ethics and the Environment**
- **Teaching Morality in a Culturally Diverse Ireland – Moral and Spiritual Development; Belief Systems**



To date, almost 1,000 teachers have completed at least one of these courses:

The course provided me with a clear and focused outline of each of the strands of the curriculum while also offering a platform on which to discuss, reflect and debate some of the complex issues addressed throughout. I feel the course helped to equip me with a grounding in the Learn Together programme that proved invaluable during my first year teaching in an Educate Together school!

Shane, Course Participant

It was a very helpful and informative course which gave an insight into the different world religions along with guidance on teaching morality. The links to the resources were useful and practical for everyday teaching.

Dawn, Course Participant

For further information please see the Educate Together website or contact us here in the National Office.

Teacher Calendar 2014 / 2015 Correction

In an OOPS moment, we recently spotted that the description of the Summer Solstice for June 21 is incorrect. It applies to either the Spring or Autumn equinox instead. Sorry about that! As you no doubt know, it's the day in the year with most daylight, commonly known as the 'longest' day of the year (in the northern hemisphere, that is).

Poetry Ireland

This year a group of First Year students at Hansfield ETSS participated in a project organized by Poetry Ireland, in partnership with Worldwise Global Schools. The students worked with children's author Debbie Thomas in a series of development education-themed creative writing workshops. Email moira.cardiff@poetryireland.ie if your school is interested in taking part in 2015/16.

www.poetryireland.ie



Above: Hansfield students Caila and Ismail during the Poetry Ireland Creative Writing Project



WorldWise Global Schools Project 2014/15

Educate Together received funding from WorldWise Global Schools in 2014 to support teachers in our three new second-level schools to develop development education-themed projects across the curriculum.

We have been really impressed with the schools' responses to this challenge. Teams of teachers in each school worked creatively and tirelessly to devise active and engaging projects that address local and global issues.

Hansfield ETSS students participated in a project that focused on the issue of Homelessness locally and in developing countries, and discussed the impact of natural disasters like cyclones and earthquakes on people in countries such as Vanuatu and Nepal. Students also organised a bake sale to raise funds for Focus Ireland, a charity that helps homeless people in Ireland.

At Ballymakenny College, students explored the themes of food and health, and researched different countries around the globe. They discussed how the world's food is distributed unequally. They also participated in cooking (and eating!) foods from countries in South America and Africa (see photo) and took part in sports workshops, including one facilitated by SARI (Sport Against Racism in Ireland).

Kishoge Community College explored food sustainability and ethical food production in their project. Facilitators from Bridge21 also

Ethical Education Framework

Following our Ethical Education Development Group's recommendations, our initial ethical education curriculum framework for second-level schools is undergoing some changes. A decision has been made to retain what is unique to the framework and remove those strands in which content is duplicated elsewhere at junior cycle (such as in CSPE and SPHE).

Three reconfigured strands are now included in the revised framework.

Working titles for these are:

- [My Ethical World/Ethics and Me](#)
- [Beliefs and WorldViews](#)
- [Diversity and Intercultural Learning](#)

It is being planned as a three year, 100 hour course at junior cycle. Teachers have already participated in a productive meeting to plan themes and topics in 2nd and 3rd Year. Schools will be able to make their own decisions on how best to timetable ethical education in their junior cycle programmes. The final Development Group meeting has been rescheduled to September (date to be confirmed). More updates - and comprehensive details of the revised framework - will be available in our next newsletter!

UNDERSTANDING ETHICAL EDUCATION
IN A MODERN IRISH REPUBLIC

Cherishing all the children of the nation equally?

OBLACHT NA H EIREANN. Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberties and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to ensure the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

 Educate Together
Ethical Education Conference

20-21 November 2015
Alexander Hotel, Dublin

01 429 2800
info@educatetogether.ie
www.educatetogether.ie

Ethical Education Conference

Registration is now open for Educate Together's inaugural Ethical Education Conference on Nov 20th / 21st. This conference is aimed specifically at teachers and principals, both primary and second-level, and is shaping up to be a lively affair packed full of opportunities to discuss, debate, listen, learn and socialise.

A limited number of places at a reduced registration fee are available. If you're thinking of attending, **save €25 by confirming now!**

Hotel rooms at reduced rates have also been block booked. Please contact us and we can pass on the relevant links.

Conference Prices

Educate Together Teachers: €125

Reduced Registration Fee (limited availability): €100

Non-Educate Together Teachers: €150

Primary Online Database (POD)

The DES have issued a revised circular in relation to the POD, Circular 25/2015. The circular covers:

1. Processing of Data and Data Protection
2. Sharing of data with other bodies
3. Access to POD within schools
4. Requirements for schools to ensure all pupils are counted on POD for grant payment and teacher allocation purposes
5. Quality of data
6. Irish language version of POD
7. Repeating a year
8. Notes area in POD

In addition to the circular, the DES have published a “Fair Processing Notice”. This explains how the personal data of pupils will be recorded, processed and shared. It also gives clear explanations of why different items of data are being collected, the legal basis for the collection by the DES, and the legal basis for collection by schools. We feel that this will be very useful for schools in answering the questions that are being asked by parents.

While the initial roll-out of the POD involves considerable work inputting data, and there has been a degree of unease from some parents and schools, it will, in the long run, make life easier for principals, particularly in the area of annual school returns.

If a school finds that parents are asking questions that it can't answer (or there are questions the school needs to have answered), the POD helpline is still active. It's available from 8:30am to 5pm, Mondays to Fridays: 01 889231

There are also [videos and training manuals](#) to help guide schools on inputting the relevant data.

[Circular 25/2015](#)

Garda Vetting

While the timeframe for the commencement of the Garda Vetting Act has not yet been announced, the DES has issued a circular [\(26/2015\)](#) in advance of the Act coming into law. The circular won't win the award for the snappiest title ever! Its title is: Advance preparations for the commencement of statutory requirements for Garda vetting under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 (the Vetting Act).

It outlines the steps that need to be taken by teachers, and boards of management before the Act comes into place. There are [five key points](#) for Boards of Management, including a requirement that the school should have a copy of the Teaching Council vetting letter for all teachers on its substitution list, **before the 31st July 2015.**

Until the Vetting Act is commenced (i.e., becomes law), the existing arrangements under [Circular 63/2010](#) still apply.

Additional information is available on the Department's [website](#).



Burglaries!

We've been reminded by the DES that schools are vulnerable to being burgled, particularly over the summer months, and in September. The National Crime Prevention Unit offers

advice to school Principals and Boards of Management on crime prevention measures, and secure cash handling. We know that schools have a concern about the safety of staff in handling cash (for instance, lodging the proceeds of a big fundraising event).

Getting advice from the Garda Divisional Crime Prevention Officers seems like a good idea. You can get contact details for your local area under the 'Crime Prevention' tab at www.garda.ie

Training

We are currently putting together dates for training for Boards of Management in the next school year (2015/2016). The Department have commissioned a new training module on the Anti-bullying Procedures, which will be available for delivery in the coming school year. We are also looking at the possibility of holding a webinar, as we understand it's not always easy for Board members to attend training.

In preparation for the new Boards of Management taking up their roles in December 2015, the DES is also looking at preparing a video that would be shown at the beginning of the first meeting of the new Boards

Ethical Education Conference

Educate Together is asking all Boards of Management, primary and second-level, to consider subsidising at least two teachers to attend the Ethical Education Conference in November. This conference aims to ensure our teachers are confident in their ability to teach Ethical Education and we would like to see an excellent turn out for this inaugural event for our network. Schools outside of Dublin can benefit from a limited number of reduced price tickets which we have made available on a first come, first served basis.

The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network

The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network recently launched resources for teachers on dealing with a bereaved child. These resources are both sensitive and practical and it's wonderful to see content like this being made available to Irish schools. Available at www.childhoodbereavement.ie

Review of Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure

You're all familiar with the Constitution of Boards book, which is the basis of all Boards of Management of Primary schools. As the current Boards' term of office comes to an end (30th November 2015), the partners in education come together to finalise amendments to the current Rules, which came out in 2011. The new Rules will be ready for the new Boards, and I'm sure it'll be as familiar to them, in time, as it is to current Board members!

Principals' Conference 2015

This took place in the Maldrone Hotel in Portlaoise on Thursday 23rd and Friday 24th April. 51 principals attended, from all around the country, primary and second-level. The Conference covered Managing Workload, School Procurement, Nurturing good staff relations, and effective inclusion of EAL parents. Principals spoke about initiatives in their own schools: Connecting schools with Skype, Philosophy using Children's Literature (see Dermot Stanley's articles elsewhere in this newsletter), and Clustering Schools. The Keynote address was given by Daire Keogh, President of St. Patrick's College, on the subject of Leadership in Challenging Times.