


# info@ncca

supporting teaching and learning



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world **and much more...**

**NCCA** 

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta  
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

# welcome...

to the first issue of the new school year.

**You've seen it all before. And still it's something special. The new schoolbag. Crisp copybooks. Smiling faces... It's the beginning of a new school year.**

This new school year brings fresh hopes and expectations for our students. Hope is a word in short supply these days. It has been a rough year for us all and education has had its share of doom and gloom. But the hopes and expectations of children and young people are unwavering, and as teachers we have a great sense of the magnitude of our responsibility to students in our care. Perhaps now more than ever, we should take a moment to reflect on our work, and to share our achievements and successes in keeping this hope alive.

Ten years on from the launch of the revised curriculum in our primary schools, we've learned that our children like learning and are happy. In the primary curriculum review, teachers reported that children's enjoyment of learning was their greatest curriculum success. This is something of which we can and should be proud. So, for the tenth birthday of the curriculum this month, we've compiled

a celebratory photo album of snapshots of children's learning through primary school. You can get a sneak preview in this issue of *info@ncca*.

We also bring greater expectations for supporting teaching and learning to this new school year, from the growth of *Project Maths* now in its second year, to the launch of *Aistear*, the *Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.

In asking what we want for teachers and learners in the 21st century, we unpack the issue of curriculum overload and we share our plans for a consultation on the future of senior cycle education.

In this issue you'll also find stories that celebrate the work of teachers, because this issue is about you. It's about sharing the magic of what you do, everyday, to meet the hopeful, expectant faces of your students in September.

And let's face it, in the toughest of times, we **can** afford this celebration.





Sarah Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chief Executive  
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment



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## Supporting teaching and learning...

**info@ncca** is published three times over the school year, in September, January and April.

The January issue will be published in electronic format only. It will be available to download from [www.ncca.ie/news/newsletter](http://www.ncca.ie/news/newsletter).

To automatically receive a copy in your inbox, please email [newsletter@ncca.ie](mailto:newsletter@ncca.ie) placing 'Subscribe' in the subject field, or go to the website and click the '**Subscribe to Newsletter**' banner.

We welcome articles from teachers as well as comments and queries about content.

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## Information for parents

As you settle in to the new school year, you will be dealing with numerous queries from parents who are also settling in to a new school year. Your school may choose to hold group parent-teacher information meetings to address these queries. Or you may choose a more informal approach, dealing with each parent as their concerns arise.


Either way, the NCCA has resources designed to help both teachers and parents. In the  **Parents** section of our website, you will find a variety of explanatory materials for parents of both primary and post-primary pupils, including:

- *The What, Why and How of Children's Learning in primary school* (DVD)
- tip sheets on how to help children at home with reading, writing and maths
- information on standardised tests and school reports
- fact sheets on subjects available at junior cycle
- an overview of developments in senior cycle education.


Some of the resources at primary level are available in a range of languages. We've also included a copy of one of the 24 junior cycle fact sheets, Geography, in this edition of **info@ncca** to whet your appetite.

So, before you meet the parents, visit  [www.ncca.ie/parents](http://www.ncca.ie/parents) and you will be well prepared.

## Primary School Network

In the last edition of **info@ncca** we told you about how the NCCA set up the  **Primary School Network** to shape responses to findings from the Primary Curriculum Review. Read on to see what's been happening in the network in the areas of assessment and language.

### Assessment

We are currently working with 17 schools on the use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) in primary schools and also on teacher judgement of pupils' work. Over the next year, we hope to share some of the teachers work with you through the  **ACTION** website.


### Language

Eight schools will soon begin working with the NCCA in the area of language. The work will initially focus on Curaclam na Gaeilge. Teachers in the schools will be exploring strategies to support children's language development and progression in Gaeilge.

Materials developed through this work will be published on ACTION, including some podcasts and tip sheets about language teaching methodologies. The first of these resources will be available by December.


## Discussion paper on junior cycle curriculum framework for students with general learning disabilities

*'Overall, I think it's a wonderful document. The proposals are visionary and it's great to see that something is being done for students with learning disabilities.'* Principal

Many thanks to everyone for your comments on the discussion paper, which outlines the thinking on the best ways that curriculum and assessment can meet the needs of junior cycle students with general learning disabilities. For more information on our work in this area, have a look at the  **inclusion** section of the NCCA website. We would welcome your comments on these ideas; write to [newsletter@ncca.ie](mailto:newsletter@ncca.ie).

## info@ncca survey

Many thanks to those of you who responded to our survey in the last issue. We now know that many of you like to read **info@ncca** online and we are working on making it easier to do just that.

As subscribers, you have told us that you find **info@ncca** informative and useful. It would be great if you would spread the word to your colleagues by passing on this link,  [http://www.ncca.ie/en/Subscribe\\_to\\_the\\_Newsletter/](http://www.ncca.ie/en/Subscribe_to_the_Newsletter/), and encouraging them to subscribe.

## Doing junior cycle differently?

We would be really interested in talking to any teachers or schools who are approaching teaching and learning in junior cycle in a novel way—maybe you teach your subject a little differently and you think that others might find the approach useful. Or perhaps your school has an interesting approach to timetabling junior cycle classes? If you have an interesting tale to share with us, drop us a line at [newsletter@ncca.ie](mailto:newsletter@ncca.ie). We'd love to hear from you!

## Standardised testing at lower secondary

We've recently commissioned research into the international practice of standardised testing in lower secondary education (12-15 age group). This data will assist us in advising the Minister for Education and Science on the implications of the introduction of standardised testing at one further point in compulsory education (it's already happening twice during student's primary school years, in English and mathematics). We hope to have this data by the end of this year and will keep you posted on developments in this area in future editions of **info@ncca**.

If it's  
pink, it's a  
link 

# Towards learning

Let's hear your views on senior cycle

Developments at senior cycle have been frequently mentioned in earlier issues of *info@ncca*, and you're probably quite familiar with them. Now we would like to hear from you about how changes to curriculum and assessment can make a real difference for senior cycle students and their teachers.

The last time we consulted with you on senior cycle, we asked you about **what** needed to change; this time we want to know **how** to make that change happen. Over the coming months, we will be looking for your views online. We will also be meeting with subject associations, teacher unions, parent bodies, representatives of higher education and a selection of schools and student groups to discuss how to make real changes to senior cycle and support schools to engage with those changes. Check your staffroom notice board or follow the link for a copy of the information leaflet, *Towards Learning: Listening to Schools*, for an overview of what the consultation is all about.

The first phase of consultation will extend over about eighteen months during which time we will be seeking your views on:

- the new subject, politics and society,
- three revised science subjects: biology, chemistry and physics,
- physical education,
- short courses (90 hour courses),
- the overview of senior cycle, and
- some ideas on leading and supporting change in schools.

The consultations on all of these areas will be spread out over an extended period, to allow you the time and space to engage with as many areas as you wish. We will also include sample learning activities to illustrate how subjects and short courses might work in the classroom. Have a look at the *learning activities for politics and society* and let us know what you think!

Consultations on politics and society, and *Leading and Supporting Change in Schools* have already commenced and will conclude in November 2009.

So to get started, log on to [www.ncca.ie/seniorcycle](http://www.ncca.ie/seniorcycle), follow the link to the consultation and let us know what you think of the proposed changes.



# Aistear... a new journey



## The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

September is synonymous with thoughts of new beginnings. This is especially so in the case of thousands of junior infants who, full of excitement and adventure, set off on their journey through primary education. October this year represents another 'beginning' with the launch of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.

### What is Aistear?

*Aistear* is the new **early childhood curriculum framework** for children from birth to six years in Ireland. Because early childhood marks the beginning of children's lifelong learning journeys, this framework is called *Aistear*, the Irish word for journey.

It provides information to help practitioners, including infant teachers and Early Start teachers, to plan for and provide enjoyable and appropriately challenging learning experiences that will allow all children grow and develop as competent and confident learners. *Aistear* describes

the types of learning experiences that are important for children in early childhood, and offers lots of practical ideas and suggestions. Examples of how this learning might be nurtured are also given.

### Who is Aistear for?

*Aistear* is for all children from birth to six years. This means it can be used in a range of settings such as children's own homes, childminding settings, crèches, nurseries, playgroups, pre-schools, naíonraí, Early Start Units and in infant classes in primary schools.

### Taking a look inside ...

#### *Aistear* has two parts.

**Part 1** sets out **12 principles**. Many of these are similar to the principles in the *Primary School Curriculum* with some additions, for example a principle on learning through play and one on children as citizens. Part 1 also describes the **content of children's learning**. Unlike the *Primary School Curriculum*, *Aistear* does this using four themes rather than using subjects and curriculum areas. The themes are

- Well-being
- Identity and Belonging
- Communicating
- Exploring and Thinking.

Each theme connects with most, if not all, of the subjects in the *Primary School Curriculum*.

#### Well-being

This theme is about children being confident, happy and healthy.

#### Identity and Belonging

This theme is about children developing a positive sense of who they are, and feeling that they are valued and respected as part of a family and community.

#### Communicating

This theme is about children sharing their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with others with growing confidence and competence, in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes.

#### Exploring and Thinking

This theme is about children making sense of the things, places and people in their world. They do this by interacting with others, playing, investigating, questioning and forming, testing and refining ideas.



Through the themes, *Aistear* focuses on developing children's dispositions and skills, nurturing attitudes and values, and building knowledge and understanding of their world:

**dispositions** such as curiosity, independence, perseverance, and playfulness

- **skills** such as walking, climbing, cutting, and mark-making
- **attitudes and values** such as respect for others, care for the environment and positive attitudes to learning and to life
- **knowledge and understanding** such as developing a sense of colour, shape and number, learning how things work and that words have meaning.

**Part 2** of *Aistear* consists of **four sets of guidelines**. These focus on

- enriching learning through interactions
- learning through play
- using assessment to support learning
- working with parents.

A **User Guide** gives practical information on how you can use *Aistear* in your infant classroom or Early Start Unit.

## What's in *Aistear* for me?

Lots! Examples from practice are a defining feature of *Aistear's* guidelines. The examples are known as *learning experiences* and show how key messages in the guidelines might look in action in different settings including pre-schools and infant classrooms. The guidelines also give practical ideas and suggestions for using different types of play to extend children's learning, strategies to interact with children; methods to assess children's learning and plan for the next steps, and ways to involve parents in their children's learning. *Thinking about my practice* questions are included to help you reflect on what you do and say to support children's learning and development, and plan for how this can be improved.

And on the subject of using play to support children's learning and development, you might be interested in reading Fiona Giblin's story, also in this edition of **info@ncca**, about how she uses socio-dramatic play in her junior infant classroom.



**Absolutely loved the appendix of resources for play...Every infant teacher should have this list now!**

**Found the learning experiences very beneficial, realistic, helpful, relevant, interesting and practical.**

**Reflection boxes: Throughout both sets of guidelines beneficial, critical and grounding in that they take the theory and ensure some critical self-evaluation.**

Primary school teacher, Co. Galway



**Well done to all involved! Excellent self-reflection boxes, exemplars are perfect for highlighting the points being made.**

Primary school teacher, Co. Kerry



## Questions and connections

Alongside recent developments such as the free pre-school year for all children between 3 years, 3 months and 4 years, 6 months, the launch of *Aistear* marks an exciting time in early childhood education in Ireland. Equally, it raises questions.

### How does *Aistear* link with the

#### Primary School Curriculum or the Early Start Curricular Guidelines?

To help answer questions like this one the NCCA will work with practitioners, children and parents to gather examples of *Aistear* in action across a variety of settings. These examples might include short video clips, photographs, and samples of children's work and their conversations with adults and other children.

### How does *Aistear* link with *Siolta*, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (2006)?

This may be another question in your mind especially if you are using *Siolta* as a self-reflection tool to review and develop your early years practice. *Aistear* can help you work towards a number of the standards in *Siolta* such as curriculum, environments, identity and belonging, partnership with parents, interactions and play.

## When and where can I get a copy of *Aistear*?


*Aistear* will be published on the NCCA website at [www.ncca.ie/earlylearning](http://www.ncca.ie/earlylearning) and on CD-ROM in October 2009. Keep an eye on the website for details of how you can get your copy.

After publication, the NCCA will begin the work of gathering examples of *Aistear* in settings. If you would like to take part please email [newsletter@ncca.ie](mailto:newsletter@ncca.ie); we'd be delighted to hear from you.




# Project Maths

## Developments in junior and senior cycle mathematics

In the  **April 2008** edition of **info@ncca**, we wrote about the start of *Project Maths* and what it aimed to do for the teaching and learning of mathematics in post-primary schools. In this article, you can find out what's happening in the initial group of 24 schools and what the future has in store for your school in teaching mathematics.

### What aspects of the course are changing?

Last year, the schools in the initial group introduced Strand 1 (Statistics and Probability) and Strand 2 (Geometry and Trigonometry) into first year and fifth year simultaneously. In September 2009, the same 24 schools are introducing Strands 3 and 4, (Number and Algebra) and they will introduce Strand 5 (Functions) in September 2010. All other schools in the country, including yours, will introduce Strands 1 and 2 in September 2010. If you'd like to see a preview of draft strands 1 and 2, you can download them from  [www.ncca.ie/projectmaths](http://www.ncca.ie/projectmaths).

### So I don't have to do anything before 2010?

On the contrary, professional development begins this term for maths teachers in all other schools, a year in advance of the full roll out of *Project Maths*. Each teacher will have the opportunity to attend two workshops during the academic year. The workshops will focus on the newer approaches to teaching and learning in maths, particularly in Strands 1 and 2. As with the 24 schools, the emphasis is on what happens in the classroom, and the focus is on student learning. Teachers will also be given a selection of teaching and learning plans, examples of assessment materials, and information about other resources available to them. A *Project Maths* Regional Development Officer (RDO) will be in touch with your school about these workshops.

### Remind me again – what's different about this reform of mathematics?

In *Project Maths*, the teachers and students in the 24 schools are participating in the curriculum development process: they are trying out the new syllabus strands and giving feedback on 'learnability' and 'teachability'. The strands are being revised based on the feedback from the teachers and students. This approach is designed to close the gap between the curriculum-on-paper and the curriculum-in-classroom.

**'Project Maths is designed to provide a bridging framework from the revised primary curriculum into second-level and promote greater maths literacy across the school population. It is also designed to encourage greater take up at higher level and provide a solid foundation which prepares students for careers in science, technology, engineering, business or humanities options'**

Minister Batt O' Keeffe at the launch of *Project Maths* on 10 October 2008 in Scoil Mhuire, Kanturk, Co. Cork.



## How did the teachers in the initial schools get on?

The new approaches in *Project Maths* are proving popular with both students and teachers. The teachers in the 24 schools took a leap of faith when they began with the Strands 1 and 2 in September 2008. They had to deal with new content, as well as adopting new teaching and learning strategies in the classroom. Not surprisingly, resources in terms of time, IT provision, classroom materials and assessment items were high on the list of concerns for teachers. Teachers developed their own teaching and learning plans to ensure that their lessons were more active, and also worked with their colleagues to improve the teaching of maths in their schools. Despite some concerns, the teachers tackled the new strands with enthusiasm and gusto; they reported seeing the benefits in their students' work and are saying that their interest in the subject is being rekindled!

“

Because of the practical learning element of the subject ...maths [has] become a much more enjoyable, hands-on subject...In all my tens of years teaching, I have never seen such a change in children  
(Teacher)

”

“

The change in teaching methodology is bringing the class alive for the students.... It's more active as there's greater student participation. The students are actually saying its 'fun', so different to the way that they're used to  
(Teacher)

”

## How are the students doing?

The students are saying that they are more engaged with the subject and are enjoying maths—can this be true? The more active methodologies and the 'doing of maths' instead of 'learning of maths' has fired the enthusiasm of teachers and students alike.

“

We're using dice, coins and cards in our probability class...Two of us roll the dice 50 times each and record our findings. It's great to be working in teams in maths class.  
(Student)

”

Students are saying that they are more engaged with the subject and are enjoying maths.



## What about the examinations?

There will be a change in the examination papers to reflect the changed approaches to teaching and learning. The change will be gradual. For the 24 schools that began in September 2008, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) will conduct a trialling of **Leaving Certificate mathematics** examination paper 2 in October 2009. Following this, the SEC will issue a sample paper 2, which will be the basis for the revised examination paper 2 in June 2010. The new paper 2 will have an equal proportion of marks between the traditional style of questions (on knowledge of concepts) and those of a context and applications type.

Students who began first year in the 24 schools in September 2008 will see a changed **Junior Certificate mathematics** examination paper 2 in June 2011. The arrangements for the new paper 2 at Junior Certificate will be decided by the NCCA Junior Certificate mathematics course committee in the coming term, and is likely to follow a similar pattern.

## Where can I get further information?

Further information is available on the NCCA website, [www.ncca.ie/projectmaths](http://www.ncca.ie/projectmaths), as well as on the *Project Maths* website, [www.projectmaths.ie](http://www.projectmaths.ie). These sites include sample teaching and learning plans, classroom activities and worksheets, assessment items and booklets of exercises for students.

# Learning together

Celebrating 10 years of the *Primary School Curriculum*



**September 2009 marks the 10th anniversary of the launch of the *Primary School Curriculum*. It doesn't seem so long ago since the 23 curriculum documents arrived into every primary classroom in Ireland. In keeping with the tradition of marking an anniversary, this article invites us to reflect on the journey since the launch of the curriculum, consider and celebrate the present and deliberate the road before us.**

## **A time to reflect – A new curriculum?**

The *Primary School Curriculum* represented a major milestone in primary education in Ireland, reflecting the thinking and aspirations of a country on the threshold of a new millennium. The change represented by the curriculum was matched by its actual size and storing the box containing the 23 books proved a challenge in itself. Yes, signs of change were hard to ignore in the primary classroom but making the change a reality presented its own challenges. Perhaps for teachers there was some comfort in that it was a revised rather than completely new curriculum, rooted in the principles of *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1971). This may have made the 23 documents seem somewhat less daunting. While evolutionary rather than revolutionary in nature, the curriculum did extend the frontiers of primary education in Ireland, introducing three new subjects: SPHE, science, and drama. There were also extensive changes to the other eight subjects with detailed content objectives and skills and a wider range of methodologies. Words such as *strands*, *strand units*, *exemplars*, and *objectives* became part of the curriculum vocabulary.

Bringing the curriculum to life in schools and classrooms was a gradual process. While teachers reported ownership of the child-centred theories underpinning the *Primary School Curriculum*, they needed time and space to reflect

on the curriculum: *What does it mean to me and my class? How can I use it to improve my teaching and the children's learning?* The limited time between the national roll-out of professional development for each subject may not have helped this process.

The provision of an in-school planning day for curriculum 'review and consolidation' in 2004 was an acknowledgment of the magnitude of the task facing primary teachers in becoming more familiar with the *Primary School Curriculum*. These planning days were invaluable in helping teachers to embed the curriculum in their daily practice and provided an opportunity for teachers to come together for curriculum dialogue, discussion and decision making.

However, finding sufficient time to facilitate collaboration and planning is still a challenge for schools and teachers.

## A changing curriculum – need for review

At the launch of the *Primary School Curriculum*, the then Minister for Education and Science, Micheál Martin, noted that every curriculum needs to be continually monitored to ensure it remains effective. Gradual improvements are the basis for achieving core objectives, and curriculum review has played an important part in this process by identifying and responding to the challenges and changes since the journey began in 1999.

In the decade since then, Ireland has experienced significant cultural and societal changes. The number of children with special educational needs, and children whose first language is neither Irish nor English, attending primary schools has increased. Schools are currently contending with reduced budgets and resources now that we are in the midst of a severe national economic contraction. In the face of change, curriculum does not have the luxury of standing still if it is to meet the current and future needs of children and society. This is why the NCCA has completed two large-scale reviews of the curriculum in schools, looking at **English, Mathematics and Visual Arts** in 2005 and **Gaeilge, Science and SPHE** in 2008. The successes and challenges of the curriculum, as reported by teachers, principals, parents and children in these reviews, underpin the current work of the NCCA.

Examples of some of these challenges and the subsequent responses are outlined below.

- **Additional support material: Structure of the English Curriculum**

Teachers reported finding the four strands in the English curriculum difficult to use in planning. In response, the NCCA issued **Additional support material: Structure of the English Curriculum**. This provided an alternative format for the English curriculum.

- **A DVD for parents**

Parents asked for more information to help them support their child's learning and in response, the NCCA launched a DVD for parents, **The What, Why and How of children's learning in primary school**.

- **Guidelines on assessment**

Following requests from teachers for more advice and greater support in using different methods of assessment, **guidelines on assessment** were developed.

- **ACTION website**

Teachers also reported the need for greater exemplification of methods of teaching and learning. To meet this need, the **ACTION** website was designed to show what the curriculum looks like in different classroom contexts through sample activities generated with and for teachers.

## Current work

Building on this work, the NCCA has now set about responding to the findings from the most recent review. We are working directly with teachers and principals through a network of primary schools, to ensure that our work continues to reflect the reality of primary classrooms. This network provides an opportunity to explore with schools issues such as curriculum overload, making judgements about children's learning in assessment, and planning and progression in *Curaclam na Gaeilge*. **info@ncca** will keep you updated on the work of the network.





## Marking the anniversary: photos and stories

Celebrating any anniversary calls for photos and stories. The anniversary of the Primary School Curriculum is no different. Earlier this year schools were invited by the NCCA, with the support of the education centre network, to contribute captioned photographs and stories of the curriculum-in-action. Hundreds of photos spanning the six curricular areas were gathered from schools across the country. Some schools also shared stories, two of which are featured elsewhere in this issue, about their experiences teaching and learning in different aspects of the curriculum. The stories include themes such as numeracy, the Arts, curriculum leadership, play, ICT, assessment, curriculum overload and SPHE.

On 9 September, Batt O' Keeffe, the Minister for Education and Science marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Primary School Curriculum at an event titled, *Learning and growing together, 10 years of the Primary School Curriculum*. A CD featuring the curriculum-in-action photos and stories was distributed at the event. These photos and stories can be viewed at [www.ncca.ie/learningandgrowing](http://www.ncca.ie/learningandgrowing) and will be displayed by your local education centre.

No single photograph or story can truly capture the complexity of teaching and learning, or the tremendous work of teachers, principals, parents and children. However, the collection on the web site provides an insight into the daily practices and creativity that define the *Primary School Curriculum* in a cross section of real classrooms. Insights from the assembled photographs and stories contribute to the thinking on new solutions, and celebrate and affirm the work of teachers and children by sharing those 'blink and you'll miss it' learning moments. They also help to demystify the teaching and learning occurring in different classrooms.

We thank all the schools that participated, Mayo Education Centre for administering submission of the photos, and St. Louise de Marillac Junior and Senior Schools, Ballyfermot, Dublin for hosting the launch.

## Puzzling the future?

In recent years, other countries have reviewed their curricula in light of the demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century society, and have explored options such as the definition of core curriculum, competencies and skills. A curriculum must be agile in responding to changes in the wider cultural, social and economic society.

During the coming year, the NCCA plans to open up a discussion about the *Primary School Curriculum*. We hope to talk about the extent to which the curriculum remains relevant in an ever-changing world and what changes we may need to make as we think ahead to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These discussions, including voices from primary education and beyond, will help us in our work on curriculum overload which is already underway. We will let you know how you can contribute in future editions of **info@ncca**. You can read more in the article *Curriculum overload: responding to the challenge*, also in this edition.

The journey which began with the launch of the curriculum on 9 September 1999 has been momentous. Speaking then, Professor John Coolahan remarked, *if we bring it off, we will have achieved a great landmark*. The tenth anniversary gives us an opportunity to pause for thought; to reflect on the past, to celebrate and ponder the present, and to puzzle the future. Our curriculum journey of learning and growing together continues.

Thanks to Scoil Chaitriona Junior School, Galway, St. Joseph's Corville, Tipperary, Gorey Educate Together, Wexford, and St. Aidan's NS, Sligo for sharing their photographs with us.

# Futures thinking

Since September 2006, the NCCA has been working with a number of schools on Flexible Learning Profiles (FLPs) for senior cycle students. In this context, flexibility means offering students a voice and choice in their areas of study. The learning profile is made up of the areas of learning students would choose and how the student would be supported in this learning. So what is new about this approach you might ask? Well, these schools are looking at ways of offering their students wider choice. Some are looking into offering FETAC courses, alongside the more traditional Leaving Certificate, LCA and LCVP options. All of the schools are exploring more innovative ways of using ICT to support learning at senior cycle.

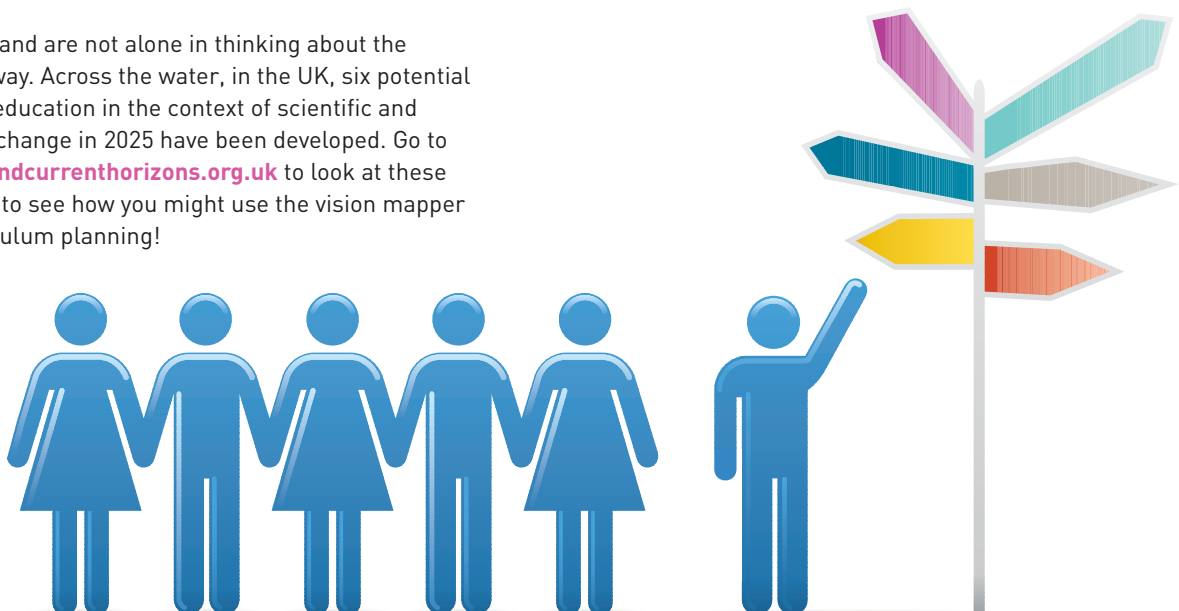
Key questions these schools grapple with in their thinking about the possible future Flexible Learning Profiles for their students include:

- could students build up learning profiles to showcase their learning path through senior cycle and provide evidence of their development of key skills?
- is there a way to bring the informal learning outside school closer to what is happening in school?
- how can the learning be made more relevant and meaningful for the students—is technology the answer?

Schools in Ireland are not alone in thinking about the future in this way. Across the water, in the UK, six potential scenarios for education in the context of scientific and technological change in 2025 have been developed. Go to [www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk](http://www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk) to look at these scenarios and to see how you might use the vision mapper for your curriculum planning!

Futures work is not about predictions; rather it is about offering multiple futures of what is possible, probable and preferable. It challenges us to think about what 'education' really means; is it something that gets people jobs, somewhere we look for solutions, somewhere things get changed or is it about encouraging individuals to be creative and flourish.

Futures work provides us all with lots to think about in education for years to come; flexibility in teaching and learning will certainly be one aspect of it.



# Stories from schools

In marking the 10th anniversary of the  *Primary School Curriculum*, the NCCA invited schools to share stories of how they brought the curriculum to life in innovative and creative ways, highlighting the successes and challenges encountered along the way. Here we bring you the stories from two schools, and you can access other stories contributed by schools on our  [website](#).

## Opening up: Learning through ICT

“

**Inver National School** is a small, rural four-teacher school in west Mayo, built in 1885. Being part of the initial disadvantaged schools scheme meant that our pupil/teacher ratio has always been favourable. While most classrooms have traditionally been multi-grade, there have been no more than 20 children in any classroom over the past ten years.

Like most other schools, we have received no funding for ICT since 2002, and then it was the sum of €700, which at that time bought half of a computer. We spend a lot of time patching old computers together and coaxing them back to life. We continue to do this because we believe, and have found it to be true, that using technology in our teaching and learning has enriched the education process and made it more meaningful and accessible for our children.


### A decade ago

About ten years ago, two interesting paths collided in our school - and in other schools in Ireland at around the same time. On the one hand, we had the intrigue and anticipation generated by the introduction of the *Primary School Curriculum* and, on the other, we had the excitement generated by IT2000, the national policy on ICT in education. Reflecting on it now, I don't think the two events were co-ordinated in any hugely cohesive manner, but I think the timing was serendipitous. The underpinning principles of the *Primary School Curriculum* and the possibilities surrounding the inclusion of technology in education seemed to be mutually supportive of one another. At the same time, they both seemed to be empowering for teachers, and

encouraged autonomy and creativity in classrooms. Together, they managed to instigate some of the most powerful changes primary education has seen for decades.

### Talking with other schools

One of the biggest changes that occurred in our school was the way we have opened up to doing various collaborative online projects and having creative educational conversations with other schools. One of my earliest adventures with technology in my classroom enabled my class of six and seven year olds to 'visit' a classroom in Australia on a nearly-daily basis via e-mail. Our children were fascinated by the differences in our seasons, by killer sharks and the joy of lemon trees. The children in Sydney learned a lot about our lambing season and our reluctance to swim in the sea in March. This collaboration took place via a trailing phone cable plugged into the phone socket in the principal's classroom where we dialled out for our internet connection... but we were among the lucky ones because our neighbouring schools had no telephone at all at that time!

This term, eleven years on, my class are doing a similar project with a school in New Zealand. Nowadays we  [blog](#) and exchange digital photographs, but the same principle exists; technology can help us to open up our classrooms and enables us to explore learning processes with other people and places outside of our school. No longer do we have to fly to New Zealand to visit our pen-pals. Now, we can virtually visit their school, respond to their blog, see the photographs, ask some questions and get the 'feel' of life in New Zealand in just one morning's work.

### Schools Integration Project (SIP)

As IT2000 became established, our school was included in a project being administered by the National Council for Technology in Education (NCTE) called the Schools

Integration Project (SIP) and we received ten desktop computers. For us, this was hugely enabling and we revelled in the joys of pushing the possibilities of teaching and learning with technology to the limit.

## Children learn in different ways

Suddenly, the boy who hated maths became our 'star' at doing mathematical drawings and programming using *Logo*. We used multimedia to record members of our local community for cross-curricular projects involving history, SPHE, English and geography. The children whose best hand-writing was difficult to decipher could now produce perfect print-offs. The children whose learning strengths were not of a linguistic or mathematical nature, found success in their ability to use multimedia to record their own voice-overs to explore and tell the story of their learning. They found freedom in the ease with which they could use visual images and video to enhance and share their learning. We could embrace the defining ideas of the curriculum, namely that different children learn in different ways, through the judicious use of technology in the everyday projects we undertook in our classroom. See [our website](#) for an example of a cross-curricular project on the topic of People in our Community.

## Our school website

Because we began to publish our work on our school web site, a whole new educationally creative conversation began for us. No longer did we solely seek guidance and expert ideas from outside our school; now others were turning to us to seek our advice and to use our ideas in their teaching and learning processes. Our own projects began to be used as examples of good practice by various educational bodies. One sixth class group even got an invitation to sing at a

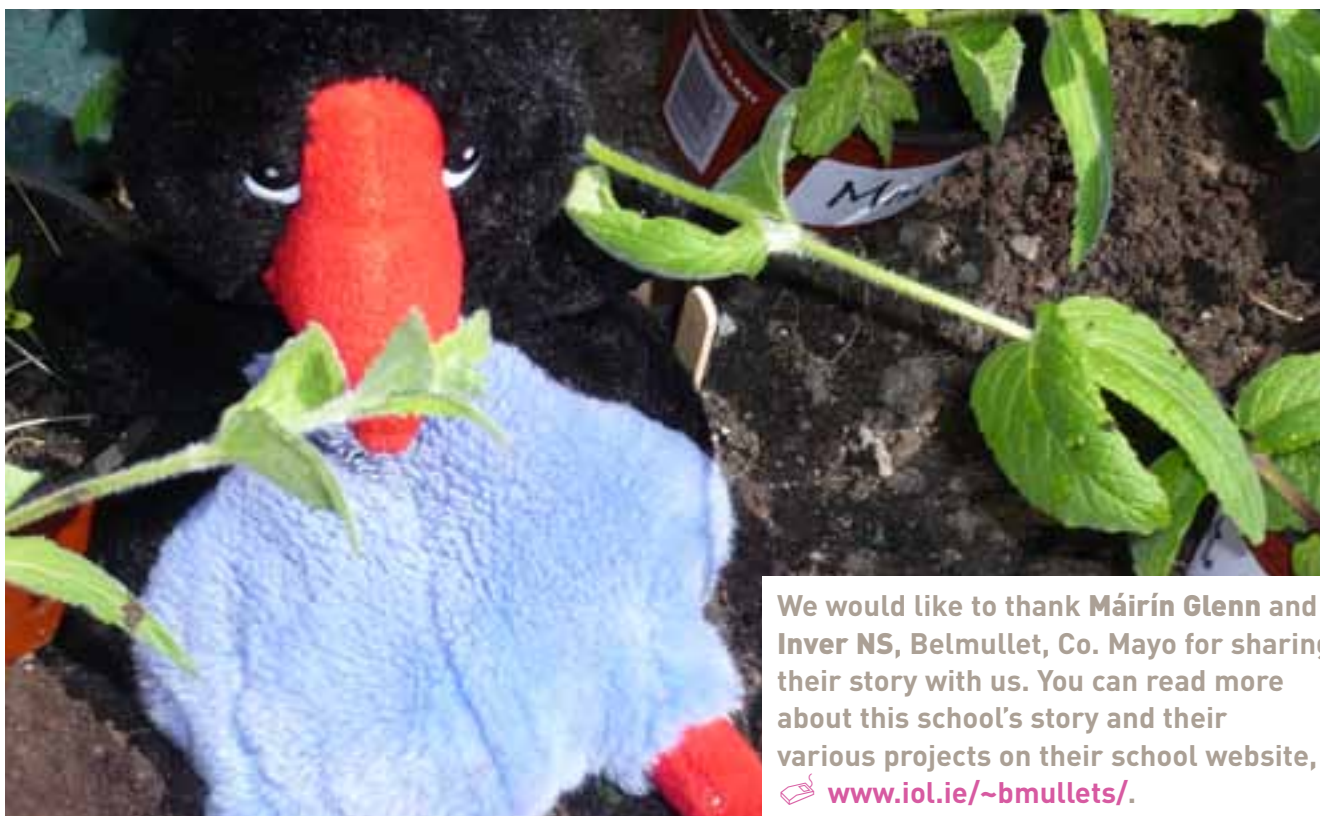
wedding when they performed ['Let it Be'](#)—albeit slightly out of tune—on our web site.

## Guide on the side

This 'opening up' was not just about exploring and sharing ideas with far-flung schools; it also began to happen in the learning process in the classroom. No longer was the teacher always the expert or the person with all the answers. One of the underpinning principles of the *Primary School Curriculum* is that children are active in their own learning. The move from teacher as 'sage on the stage' to 'guide on the side' is an important element of enabling children to be active learners. Much of our work in the use of technology in education is driven by these very same ideas. Very often, the teacher and the children learn alongside one another in a collaborative educational conversation. I am currently experimenting with *Scratch*, a programming language, and sometimes, the children from sixth class are racing ahead of me as we grapple with the various challenges posed. However, we teach and help one another and, hopefully, we will be able to publish some samples of our experiments soon.

## Focal scoir

The *Primary School Curriculum* celebrates human values in terms of the uniqueness of the child, as it is expressed in each child's personality, intelligence and potential for development. We have found that the use of technology as a tool in education can enhance this celebration. However, for this celebration to continue, it is crucial for the stakeholders in education to honour their commitment to teaching and learning. We really hope that funding for technology, that has been absent for seven years, will come to our school in west Mayo soon.



We would like to thank **Máirín Glenn and Inver NS, Belmullet, Co. Mayo** for sharing their story with us. You can read more about this school's story and their various projects on their school website, [www.iol.ie/~bmullets/](http://www.iol.ie/~bmullets/).

# Socio-dramatic play: an opportunity for learning



**This story explains my journey to incorporate socio-dramatic play into the Primary School Curriculum. I teach junior infants in an all girls' primary school, which has 405 pupils and 15 classroom teachers.**

## *Socio-dramatic play and the curriculum*

Imagine the conversation between the two girls in the photo.



*Pretend my baby is sick and you be the doctor and pretend I ring you. What's your phone number in the game?*

*Emmm... 299.*

*Ok. Hello Doctor, the baby is sick, come quick, she has a broken eye. Can you come over?.*

This scenario happened in my classroom. Can you see its possibilities for language development, maths, SPHE and drama in the Primary School Curriculum? Play is how young children learn and so is vital to implementing the curriculum they experience. Already you may be thinking about the challenges that might deter you from using play as a methodology. I know because I've been there.

## The challenges of incorporating play into the curriculum

During my early graduate training, I became very interested in socio-dramatic play in early childhood education. I was fascinated by the way young children moved between the real and the imaginary worlds, adopting various characters and creating stories. Observing young children playing,

made me realise that socio-dramatic play offered a valuable and enjoyable context for young children to develop early literacy skills. However, while on teaching practice as a student teacher, I became disheartened as the difficulties teachers contended with to implement a play curriculum in their infant classrooms were revealed - overcrowded classes, lack of space and priority of curriculum objectives.

When I accepted a position as a junior infant teacher I was determined to do it differently. I anticipated fully integrating play into the curriculum and looked forward to providing abundant socio-dramatic play opportunities for my pupils. However, I too was confronted with the dilemma of providing evidence of learning, progression and achievement in play. I also felt the constraints of curriculum priorities, large class sizes, and lack of resources, classroom space and adult support proved a challenge. Never one to give in to a challenge, I decided to undertake further studies to help me overcome some of the obstacles to using play in my classroom.

## Socio-dramatic play in my classroom

Presently, in my classroom, socio-dramatic play occurs daily

- during morning sessions of free play which last approximately 30-40 minutes
- integrated into lessons, for example role-play in SPHE, dramatisation of a scenario in English or re-enactment of a story in history.

I schedule sessions of free play into my weekly timetable for English, maths, SESE and SPHE by using a combination of the allocated time in the *Primary School Curriculum*. Children experience many aspects of these curriculum areas while they are playing. During free play, the children choose the theme, resources and location for their play. I prioritise their choice in play to motivate them and make learning enjoyable.

## The classroom environment

Along the back of my compact classroom, you will find the socio-dramatic play area. The play equipment is stored here but the children are free to move their play to other spaces in the classroom, moving tables and chairs if they wish. It is at this stage that you have to be able to let go of that image of your tidy organised classroom and let the children use the space creatively. Don't get too sentimental over your nature table display as often I have found it being shoved to one side and doubling up as a bank counter where the pine cones were being used to stamp the lodgement slips! Remember your classroom can always be restored to its former glory at tidy-up time.

## The play props

As I flick through those educational supplies catalogues, I wish I could have that high gloss play kitchen or those period costumes. Unfortunately, they are out of my league. From home, children bring in old toys, empty food containers, baby clothes for the dolls, and old clothes for dress-up. I source whatever I can myself such as magazines,





old handbags, and accessories. Before I throw anything in the recycle bin I ask myself, can we play with this?

These toys and props find new homes in plastic containers with an image that corresponds to their contents. They are used to play shop, house, bank, post-office, the doctor's surgery and the secretary's office. Lengths of cloth represent sea waves one day and saris the next. Our adjustable Styrofoam frame is often constructed into the children's dream home without the worries of their planning permission being refused! To avoid over familiarity with the play props, I vary them throughout the year and try to include resources that relate to a theme that is being explored in different curriculum areas. For example, when we're discussing holidays in SESE, travel brochures, empty sun lotion bottles, sunglasses, and a beach towel magically appear.

### My role in play

I listen, observe and intervene in the children's play so as to support and extend their learning. In other words to visualise playtime in my classroom, think of me placing an order at a Chinese take-away while I weave my way around a row of aeroplane seats, sidestep the doctor's surgery while leaping over Sleeping Beauty, all to the tune of a child pretending to be a dog barking! And while this image may seem daunting and tidy-up time may take a little longer, the rewards are immense.

### Learning through socio-dramatic play

My understanding of how socio-dramatic play contributes to children's learning and in particular to their literacy, has been strengthened through my classroom experiences. Through close observation and involvement in the children's play, I justify my use of play in my junior infant classroom.

The children

- develop key early literacy skills which will support them as they move on through the school.
- learn to work and play together, to improvise, negotiate, develop and communicate to make a narrative or play script which can include tension, symbols, roles, language, time, space, and plot.
- use object substitutions which echo children's later ability to use words to represent objects and ideas:

how often have you seen a child use a hairbrush as a microphone?

- extend their knowledge of events, actions and emotions and learn about others' experiences and feelings.

### Conclusion

I hope my story helps show what's possible when you use socio-dramatic play with infants. It involves active learning and higher-order thinking where children use representation and pretence, collaborative learning, and the development of social, emotional, physical, cognitive, numeracy and linguistic skills, all of which underpin our *Primary School Curriculum*. Therefore we should be confident and assertive in providing ample and quality opportunities for socio-dramatic play, safe in the knowledge that we are enriching our children's learning and development. The publication of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* in October this year offers significant potential to support those of us teaching infants to further promote play as a significant learning experience. *Aistear's* guidelines on play and its appendix on play resources will help guide teachers in providing rich learning opportunities for children.

My advice to any teacher thinking about using socio-dramatic play is to go for it. Be prepared to take some risks, to give the children choices and the time to direct their play using the props and spaces provided. So whether Sam and Jack are in military talks on how to decimate the two armed-two legged alien attacking them, or Rachel and Katie are disputing who looks more fabulous in their "Jimmy Choos", don't despair! Remember Carl Gustav Jung's claim that *'without this playing with fantasy, no creative work has ever yet come to birth. The debt we owe to the play of the imagination is incalculable'*.




**The NCCA wants to thank Fiona Giblin of St. Canice's Girls National School, Finglas, Dublin, for sharing her story.**

**You can access other stories contributed by schools on our [website](#).**

# Our virtual world

Exploring [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)

Have you visited  [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) lately? No doubt you've seen the many references to our website as you've read through this issue of *info@ncca* and may have clicked on some of the links in our articles to bring you to pages on the website.

You might be (pleasantly!) surprised at the range of content, resources and publications you can find if you explore a little further....

**How is our website arranged?**

Our homepage, with its distinctive coloured crescents, sets out the three sections of our website and lists some of what you'll find in each one.





### Clicking on the blue crescent

If you click into the blue crescent, you'll access the **corporate** section of our website. Here you'll find information about current work at the NCCA, who we are, our publications and information for parents. Our 'hot topics' items will bring you quickly into new areas of work and items required by teachers at particular times of the year, such as Report Card Templates.

Useful primary school related items can be easily accessed such as a DVD about the primary curriculum, *Aistear - our Curriculum Framework for Early Learning*, or guidelines for integrating ICT into teaching and learning in your school.

A post-primary teacher or principal can read about recent developments at senior cycle, get updated information about *Project Maths* or find out more about Assessment for Learning (AfL).

A parent can find information about standardised testing, about their child's school report or get tips on how to help their young child with early literacy.

Students can find subject fact sheets which give easy-to-read information on the range of subjects available at post-primary level. They can also participate in the senior cycle consultation process.



### Clicking on the red crescent

If you click into the red crescent, you'll access the **curriculumonline** section of our website.

All of the *Primary School Curriculum*, and junior cycle and senior cycle curriculums are available electronically to browse and search. As a teacher or principal, you may find this section useful for your planning.



### Clicking on the orange crescent

If you click into the orange crescent, you'll access the **ACTION** part of our website. ACTION stands for *Assessment, Curriculum and Teaching Innovation on the Net*, where the focus is on showing, rather than telling; the 'how to' of teaching and learning in schools. You might be aware that our work in recent times is focusing more on working directly with schools. ACTION contains sample materials that are developed and gathered with teachers, principals and students. Here, you can access resources such as podcasts about Assessment for Learning (AfL) or reporting on standardised test results to parents. Short video clips show teachers modelling teaching methods or lessons. Samples of students' work and examples from schools of how they have integrated ICT into their teaching and learning are available to view or download.

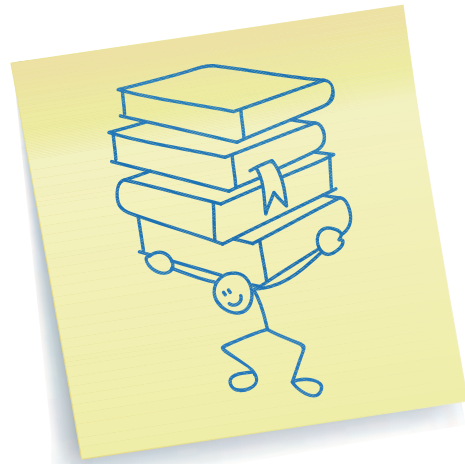
So, have we've motivated you to become Christopher Columbus in a virtual world or Neil Armstrong in cyberspace?

Click on to [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) and start exploring....

# Curriculum overload

Responding to the challenge!


The NCCA has reviewed six subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum*. A strong message coming from teachers and principal teachers was that they did not have enough time to 'teach it all' and they expressed their frustration at being unable to meet the needs of all learners in their classrooms. How will the NCCA respond to this challenge?



Is curriculum overload unique to Ireland?

No, nor is it unique to the primary school sector. It is widely reported in other countries and across all school levels. For instance, a recent review of the National Curriculum in the U.K. talked of the overcrowded curriculum and of insufficient time for every subject. In 2007 David Elkind, a child psychologist in the U.S., wrote about *The Hurried Child*. He noted that 'there is a temptation not only to fill the bottles faster, but also to fill them earlier'.

Curriculum overload is also an issue at junior cycle.

The approach we've taken to address this is what we have called  **rebalancing**. That means reducing overload within syllabuses and overlap between subjects, so as to provide more space and time to have the quality of learning engagement with students that teachers would like. Is rebalancing the solution to overload? This work is ongoing and the junior cycle remains a key area of our work. Keep up to date on rebalancing through future editions of [info@ncca](mailto:info@ncca).

## What are the demands on schools in Ireland today?

Pressure on schools is often contradicting. Parents and society expect that schools will prepare children for a changing world. However, they also want schools to continue to provide a solid foundation for children in the 'basics.' Schools, and curriculum development agencies such as the NCCA, are constantly asked to include programmes on a range of issues—from obesity to breast-feeding, road safety to etiquette and everything in between! There is also a strong demand in the current economic climate to equip children with new 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that will prepare them for a rapidly changing and unknown workplace of the future. Schools and teachers are now being asked to do all this with children and young people whose learning needs are broader, and whose backgrounds are more diverse than ever before, and with fewer resources!

## Has the text-book a role in curriculum overload?

Evidence the NCCA has gathered in the review of the primary curriculum showed that, for some teachers, textbooks have become the main driver for curriculum content: the 'what to teach.' Teachers may feel obliged to 'finish the books', to fill in all the worksheets. They may believe that parents have paid hard-earned cash to purchase the texts and workbooks and that they are obliged to ensure the children use them and complete them. In multi-grade classes, teachers must grapple with more than one set of curriculum objectives and, often, multiple textbooks. Little wonder then that teachers have given us clear messages about curriculum overload in primary schools. You can read about how one school has [ditched the textbook](#) by clicking on the link.

## How will the NCCA respond?

The more the issue of overload in the curriculum is examined, the more we realise there are no easy or quick-fix solutions. We are hoping to respond to the issue with a range of short to medium-term actions.

As all primary teachers know, the 23 books that make up the *Primary School Curriculum* include a document detailing content and another on methodology for each of the 11 subjects, as well as a general introductory book. The usefulness of the documents for planning and teaching was the focus of some discussion in the two phases of [curriculum review](#) carried out by the NCCA in 2005 and 2008. Some teachers referred negatively to the over-complication and breadth of the curriculum, the lack of helpfulness of content and the inaccessibility of curriculum language. Others reported that textbooks were more helpful than the curriculum documents in planning their teaching.

## So what's the response in the short-term?

In the coming months, we will look at re-presenting the statement of content objectives for each subject to allow for greater accessibility and navigation by teachers. We

will collaborate with the *Primary Professional Development Service* (PPDS) to extend re-presentation work that they have already carried out. The outcome should assist teachers in identifying more clearly the sequencing of curriculum content, progression and overlap from one class level to the next. As they are developed, the materials will be made available for download at [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie) and on [www.ppds.ie](http://www.ppds.ie). We will begin the work shortly with science, mathematics and Gaeilge.

## Will schools and teachers have a role?

As the curriculum re-presentation materials are developed, we will be asking some teachers to use them for their planning. These teachers are already working with the NCCA in the [Primary School Network](#). The practical feedback we get from these teachers will, hopefully, enable us to further improve the materials. Through this, we will gather information on the effectiveness of the curriculum. This will inform further work in responding to the challenges of curriculum overload.

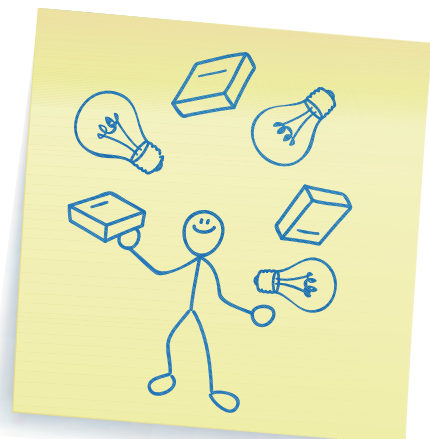
## What else are we planning?

The short-term strategy to respond to curriculum overload is re-presenting the *Primary School Curriculum*. However, we are also planning medium-term strategies. These will explore the content of the curriculum in greater detail.

As well as re-presenting the curriculum, we will investigate teaching methodologies and strategies that can help teachers to meet the needs of all learners in large classes and multi-grade settings. Some of these strategies include differentiation, the use of varied organisational settings (whole class/group work/individual instruction) and developing integrated units of learning.

No curriculum can remain static. Curricula need to be reviewed, adapted and changed over time to take account of the development of knowledge, societal change and needs and the global context in which we exist.

Schools and teachers will have a key role to play in informing the ongoing work on these issues. Watch out for further information on the medium-term strategy in future editions of [info@ncca](#) and on our website [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie).



# Learning by doing

## Changes in senior cycle science



**Leaving Certificate biology, chemistry and physics are among the first subjects to be reviewed as part of the developments at senior cycle.**

### So what's changing in these subjects?

The content is now described in learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are written in terms of what students should be able **to do** rather than as a list of what they should **know**. The five key skills (communicating, information processing, being personally effective, working with others, and critical and creative thinking) are embedded in these learning outcomes.

As part of Leaving Certificate science, students will **apply** their knowledge and understanding as they engage in a wide variety of activities, where they can develop key skills and use them across a range of learning areas, in both familiar and unfamiliar situations. The skills used in solving a problem or reaching an answer, are just as important as getting the right answer.

### What about the assessment?

The most notable difference to the assessment of science is that a second assessment component will be included, which will assess practical science work. The combination of the written and the practical assessments will give students more varied opportunities to show what they can do, as well as what they know.

### How will this affect teaching and learning?

The direct assessment of the application of science in a practical setting, along with the written paper, will reinforce and support teaching and learning methods that combine the process of science with the concepts, laws and theories. As with the present syllabuses, students will spend a lot of their time doing practical science. Assessment where their hands-on capability is explicitly rewarded will motivate students and encourage them to engage in the 'thinking behind the doing'.

### What will the practical assessment component look like?

The NCCA will work with a network of schools during the coming year to show what the assessment proposals might look like in action, and what they will involve for teachers and students. Last term, we wrote to all schools inviting them to take part and the response was very encouraging; over 170 schools responded. Out of these, 12 schools which represented the broadest range of schools were selected. These schools will work with the NCCA to produce examples of types of practical assessments, including questions, tasks, marking schemes, and video footage. As part of the work, teachers will try out the examples with students in their schools. These real examples, generated in an Irish context, will allow us to try out and explore the implications of the changes to assessment in a variety of school settings and situations. The examples generated in this exercise will then be included as part of the consultation on the revised science syllabuses. To accompany the second component assessment examples in the consultation, the NCCA will also generate sample examination questions and learning activities.

### How will you be able to tell us what you think?

Leaving Certificate biology, chemistry and physics will be included in the senior cycle consultation in the coming months. You will have a chance to read the syllabuses, look at the range of sample learning activities, check out the assessment arrangements and tell us what you think. To follow developments over the coming year, go to [www.ncca.ie/seniorcycle](http://www.ncca.ie/seniorcycle), check out the updates section of this newsletter and keep an eye on the 'what's hot' section on our homepage. Your feedback and comments will be very welcome.

# Junior Certificate

## Fact Sheet

A set of 24 fact sheets has been designed to let 6th class and 1st year students know about the subjects available in junior cycle. Download the other 23 from our [website](#).

# Geography



In Geography you will study about places, people and what shapes the environment. You will learn how the environment influences people, and how they change the environment. You will develop your ability to draw and understand maps, graphs and diagrams, as well as studying photographs and collecting information outside the classroom through fieldwork.

### What will I learn in Geography?

Some of the things you will learn include:

- where people live (the human habitat) and why they live there (population and settlement patterns)
- the natural world and what influences and shapes it
- the world of human activities and what influences and shapes it
- how to get and use information from different sources such as textbooks, maps, photographs, graphs, diagrams, newspapers, DVDs and the Internet.



### How will I learn Geography in school?

Some of the things you may do with your teacher and your classmates are:

- work on your own, but also share information with others
- collect useful information related to Geography both inside and outside the classroom
- learn and use important geographical terms
- learn how to read a map and find your way
- draw diagrams of natural and man-made geographical features.



### How can I learn more about Geography outside of school?

Some of the things you may do are:

- watch news reports and documentaries on TV and DVD
- research subjects from books, newspapers and magazines at home and in the public library
- use the Internet to research places and people
- observe differences in the landscapes when on holidays
- write to or e-mail people your own age in other countries
- do your homework!

## How will I know how I am getting on?

Your teacher will let you know:

- what you did well
- where you need to improve
- what you could do to improve.

Other things you may do are:

- ask a friend to look at your work
- look back over your work to see how you have improved.

## What is the Geography Junior Certificate exam like?

In the examination, you will answer twenty short questions in the first part of the paper, and three questions requiring longer answers in the second part. There will be questions on map-reading, and on explaining photographs, diagrams and charts. There is also an optional field-study project.

You can take the exam at Higher or at Ordinary level.

When the time comes to decide, your teacher will help you choose the level that suits you best.



## Is learning Geography anything like what I did in primary school?

In primary school, you have studied Geography as part of SESE. You have also learned about many geographical ideas through studying the local, national and global environment.

Junior Certificate Geography builds on these geographical ideas.



## Will Geography have anything to do with other subjects I will be studying?

In your studies of Geography, you will develop your communication skills as you would in English. You will study tables and draw graphs as in Mathematics. Geography, like Science, is concerned with the environment. Geography and CSPE both include themes such as care for the environment and issues concerned with the unequal division of the world's wealth and resources.

## How will Geography be useful to me?

Everybody uses geography in their daily lives. When you think of where to go on holiday or wonder what tomorrow's weather will be like, you are thinking geography. When you look at an atlas map, or a town plan, or a weather map, you use what we learn in Geography. Geography prepares you for careers in town planning, outdoor pursuits education, weather forecasting, tourism and transport. Geography keeps you informed of topics which arise in conversation, current affairs, newspaper reports, and on TV, such as climate change, renewable energy and aid to poorer nations.

## Will Geography be very different after the Junior Certificate?

In Leaving Certificate Geography, some of the topics will be familiar and will be covered in much greater detail. New topics will also be introduced such as regions of the world. There is also a geographical investigation, involving field-work, which is a compulsory part of the examination.



For more information about the Geography course  
[www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie)

For more information about the Junior Certificate exam

[www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie)

For more information about geography

[www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie)

[www.skool.ie](http://www.skool.ie)

[www.geography.learnontheinternet.co.uk](http://www.geography.learnontheinternet.co.uk)

This fact sheet and other fact sheets are available to download from [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)

**NCCA**  An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta  
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