Our Whole-school Team consists of seventeen full-time members, 8 Regional Team Leaders and 9 Advisors. Essentially, we are delivering two CPD days this year, with an emphasis on them as a professional learning experience for teachers.

Wellbeing in Junior Cycle

• Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Reporting

Our Wellbeing CPD day is being rolled out immediately to all Voluntary Secondary Schools and most Community and Comprehensive Schools, while our Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Reporting CPD day will begin in Education and Training Board schools from the end of 2018. The Whole-school Team have visited over 200 schools since the start of the current academic year.

Both days call on teachers to make critical judgements about the themes of the workshops in the particular contexts of their schools. The collaborative aspect of our whole-school support echoes Domain 4 of Looking at Our School (2016), focusing on teachers’ collective/collaborative practice. This approach supports teachers in acknowledging that a student is not the responsibility of only one teacher in a subject department, but the responsibility of all teachers in that department and indeed the school. This facilitates teachers in ‘Working together to devise learning opportunities for students across and beyond the curriculum.’

CPD delivery across all eight regions will be complete by March 2019. Whole-school Leaders and Advisors will continue then to provide advisory visits with schools (on request) reviewing CPD delivered and looking forward to 2019/2020.

TECHNOLOGIES

This school year 2018/2019 marks a milestone in the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle as the final phase of subject specifications (phase 5 subjects) are published. Among these subject specifications are the Technologies Suite of subjects (Applied Technology, Engineering, Graphic and Web Technology). These subjects will be available for 1st year students from September 2019. Teachers of these subjects will experience their first in a series of Professional Learning Experiences, (PLE’s) in the current academic year in the context of the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) school cluster-based subject-specific model of CPD provision.

In order to support teachers of the Technologies in implementing the new subject specifications in their classrooms and workshops JCT have established a new JCT4 Technologies Team. This team is headed up by a team leader, and comprises 14 full-time seconded advisors, along with 20 part-time associate teachers. This team is currently working hard on developing CPD for teachers to engage with during the forthcoming school cluster-based subject-specific CPD day which are due to start nationwide on the 12th November 2018.

If you would like to keep up-to-date with information regarding the Technologies you can follow our Technologies Team on Twitter at @jct4ed. Further information may also be found on www.jct.ie in due course.
The Visual Art team are delighted to have recently met with over 150 teachers at workshops in September/October 2018.

We are delighted to bring you some exciting updates regarding STE(A)M in Junior Cycle elective CPD for 2019. STE(A)M in Junior Cycle is a nationwide elective CPD initiative brought to you by Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) in partnership with a number of education outreach partners in the STEM and Arts fields. This initiative began in 2017/18 with elective CPD being offered to Junior Cycle Science teachers nationwide. This year, we are inviting all Junior Cycle teachers with an interest in STE(A)M education to attend. Our 2019 STE(A)M CPD programme will be of particular interest to teachers of Science, Mathematics, Geography and Home Economics.

STE(A)M in Junior Cycle seeks to provide Junior Cycle teachers with rich STE(A)M CPD experiences in keeping with national and international best standards; this provision will also allow for multidisciplinary responses to societal challenges in subject-specific and cross-curricular contexts.

SCIENCE

In 2017/18, 2nd year Science students engaged in their 1st Classroom-based Assessment: The Extended Experimental Investigation. Students worked as scientists to engage in authentic investigations, communicate their findings and display knowledge and understanding of science-related phenomena. Feedback from students, when they reflected on the process, was of rich learning and an enjoyable experience. Teachers spoke of the variety and range of investigations that students brought to the classroom and of their professional learning through engagement with the Features of Quality during the SLAR process.

Exploring learning outcomes continues to be the focus of elective CPD where the possibilities of Junior Cycle Science are being explored from the ocean floor to the galaxy next door. JCT Science were delighted to support Science teachers at a range of national conferences in recent months including Frontiers of Physics, Chem-Ed Ireland and the inaugural "Teaching Earth and Space in Junior Cycle" conference held at Birr Castle Observatory. Thank you to all Science teachers who took the time to work with us at these events.

We look forward to meeting Science teachers at the next CPD day where we will continue to provide opportunities and experiences for teachers to work collaboratively in developing a shared understanding of the role of assessment in Junior Cycle Science learning. A Junior Cycle Science webinar on 24th November is now available for download from www.curriculumonline.ie

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

To support schools in communicating the changes to Junior cycle with parents, JCT have created two parent presentations at www.jct.ie. The presentations have two different sections. Part one examines the rationale for change and explores such elements as subjects, short courses, L1LPs, other areas of Learning and student wellbeing. Part two explores the changes to assessment and reporting and takes a close look at the Junior cycle profile of achievement.

These presentations can be downloaded and adapted to suit the context and audience. A school may use different parts of the presentation to show to the parents of different year groups.

Junior Cycle students can now engage with Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes as appropriate. The Level 1 Learning Programme (L1LP) was launched by the NCCA in May 2018.

No doubt Ireland will be a different place in 2050 and this is the overarching theme for STE(A)M in Junior Cycle (2018-2019).

Modern Foreign Languages

Last year was a busy and very productive year for our JCT MFL team. The CPD day afforded teachers an opportunity to engage with the Specification for Modern Foreign Languages, further exploring learning outcomes and the dual-approach to assessment. This year we welcome two new Advisors, Salvo Cacciatore and Lisa Fitzsimons, to the MFL team. The MFL team is currently getting ready to deliver a new CPD day from early November this year. This will further support MFL teachers in planning, preparing for Classroom-Based Assessments and the Subject Learning and Assessment Review process.

The JCT MFL team has been busy attending conferences: MFL Alive 2019 in Maynooth University, the French Teachers’ Association, the Association of Teachers of Italian, and the German Teachers’ Association of Ireland, along with Gaeloid-eachas. The team was also represented at the European Centre for Modern Languages workshop “Towards a Common European Framework of Reference for Language Teachers” by the Team Leader, Cioclána McManamon, in October this year.

Currently, the JCT MFL team is collaborating in drafting subject statements for JCSS students in MFL. In addition, further resources are being created, including a webinar on Classroom-Based Assessment 1: Oral Communication. Watch the website www.jct.ie for details!