Welcome to the ninth edition of our Newsletter, JCT Today.

This year is set to be an extremely busy one for us and we look forward to meeting and supporting as many teachers as possible throughout the year.

Dr. Pádraig Kirk
Director

Junior Cycle for Teachers
(JCT) Support Service

JuniorCycle for teachers

Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs)
The team were busy during the 2016/2017 school year facilitating workshops in both special and mainstream school settings. Workshops provided an Overview of L2LPs, “Teacher Planning and Timetabling”, “Planning to Assess”, “Teaching Learning Outcomes” and “Gathering Evidence”, “Building a Portfolio”, and “Using the Planning Toolkit”. These workshops will continue to be offered during 2017-2018.

We are delighted this year to be offering new workshops on “Wellbeing and Special Educational Needs”, “Exploring Short Courses: Teaching, Learning and Assessing”, “L2LPs and Technology”, and “Teaching and Moderating Priority Learning Units”.

L2LPs help ensure that schools can work towards becoming truly inclusive for their SEN students. We are looking forward to hosting several L2LP and Leadership workshops for Principals in Post-Primary settings this year.

Principals and teachers in Special Schools can also look forward to our first L2LP conference. Details to follow.

Business Studies

Our Business Studies team recently published their first newsletter highlighting key information for teachers. This newsletter is available to download in the ‘Resources’ section of our website.

We recently hosted our first webinar entitled ‘Using the Business Studies Specification’, for both English medium-schools and scoileanna Inaíochta. Thank you to all who attended and participated. The webinars and the accompanying resources have been uploaded to the Business Studies section of our website within the ‘Elective Workshops’ tab under CPD Supports. It is intended to continue this series of webinars as part of our programme of supports for teachers.

At present, we are designing our new CPD day workshop, the content of which is informed by the feedback received from teachers, and further supports the new specification for Business Studies. We are looking forward to delivering the day as part of the cluster model. Themes emerging for the day include student teachers, and further supports the new specification for Business Studies. We are looking forward to hosting several L2LP and Leadership workshops for Principals in Post-Primary settings this year.

Principals and teachers in Special Schools can also look forward to our first L2LP conference. Details to follow.

Focus on Wellbeing in Whole-School CPD

Our expanded whole-school CPD team is enthused at the prospect of providing a full day of CPD to all post-primary schools in this academic year. Those schools entering their third year of CPD with our team will, in the majority, avail of a day examining student wellbeing in a revised Junior Cycle. This day will also cultivate an appreciation of how Wellbeing links to the work schools are already progressing around formative assessment and the 8 key skills. Circular letter 0015/2017 requires all schools to have a Wellbeing programme covering 400 hours in place for incoming students by September 2020.

Schools who are beginning their journey with our service will, in the majority, avail of a day providing an overview of the implications of all aspects of ‘A Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)’ on learning and teaching in their context. Our team of regional leaders are available to support all schools and contact details can be found under ‘meet the team’ in the whole school section of our website – www.jct.ie

Contact details have also been circulated to all schools by post.

We would like to wish our outgoing Team Leader, Dr. John Hennessy, the very best in his retirement. John leaves a lasting legacy in the support services, dating back to his time in the JSSS. He has been a shining light for Science education in Ireland and will be missed by all in JCT.


So what?

Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) are designed to help all post-primary teachers in their respective roles. They are a way for schools to be informed and reflective about their role in the classroom.

Where?

L2LPs are designed for a student-centred approach to teaching, learning and assessment. They can offer an opportunity to develop knowledge, skills, and values necessary for real-life situations.

When?

L2LPs are made up of the 14th November (L2LP) and 16th December. Schools can offer it in one or all of the sessions based on the needs of their students.

JCT bids farewell to our colleague, Mr. Karol Sadleir, former Deputy Director. Pictured at her last management meeting, (L-R): Deputy Director, Dónal O’Mahony, Deputy Director, Karol Sadleir and Director, Pádraig Kirk.

Follow us on twitter: @JCTforTeachers - We currently have almost 8,000 followers and growing.
Last year was a busy and exciting year for the JCT Visual Art team. In the Introduction to the Visual Art Specification we had the pleasure of facilitating workshops in art rooms and schools across the country. The response from our art teacher colleagues was very positive and they shared their experience of working and sharing with other art teachers hugely beneficial and supportive. We were very grateful for the feedback we received on the day and it has been central in aiding us in our planning, preparation and delivery of CPD to be delivered this year.

This year’s first year students will be the first cohort of students to engage with the learning outcomes in the new Junior Cycle Visual Art specification. We look forward to hearing how art teachers are engaging with the changes and to continuing the conversations started last year.

All our resources from last year can be found on our website at http://www.jct.ie/visual_art/

Visual Art is also now on Twitter, follow us to keep up to date on upcoming news and events @jctVisualArt

The assessment changes, introduced with the Junior Cycle in September 2016, have underpinned all the support we have provided for teachers and schools leaders last year. Between whole-school days, subject days, cluster days and European ventures, life has been very interesting in the world of assessment.

Each school is on their own journey and we have made a commitment to support schools by providing workshops best suited to their individual context. We’ve supported schools in taking their first steps into the world of formative assessment, while also working with schools already firmly on the road of embedding formative assessment practices in every classroom in their school.

Our ongoing project, EU Erasmus+ Student Voice Project, in partnership with the NCCE and ETB, is planned to activate a series of EuroMeL languages projects, in conjunction with the European Centre for Modern Languages (www.ecml.pt). It considered the significance of the specification being broadly aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The project aims to activate students’ voices in the classroom space enabling students to take a central stage in their own educational experience. The new assessment approaches, with their focus on supporting and learning are an avenue through which this can happen. We are working with teachers in new schools in Cork and Cavan / Monaghan ETB. Considerable progress has been made and already students are exhibiting the positive impact having their voices heard and being heard. Watch this space!

Our 2016/2017 CPD day focused on working with the new MFL specification. It afforded us a wonderful opportunity to meet with MFL colleagues and to share insights and new ideas. Together, we further developed our understanding of the bigger picture of junior cycle reform and examined how the MFL specification sits within it. We familiarised ourselves with the learning outcomes of the specification and explored how we will shape our teachers’ learning and assessment practices going forward. Our next CPD day will have assessment as its primary focus. We will be working towards enhancing our understanding of how to implement, in all its forms, supports teaching and learning in the junior cycle MFL classroom.

Recent workshops with the MFL team attended a most informative workshop organised by the Post-primary Languages Initiative (www.pppl.ie), in conjunction with the European Centre for Modern Languages (www.ecml.pt). It considered the significance of the specification being broadly aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Few Associates joined our team recently and we are delighted that the MFL team is growing with such dedicated and enthusiastic colleagues.

Join us on Twitter @JCTMFL #jctMFL

The project team presented an update on the Irish project to partners in Zagreb earlier this year and also presented the project at the CESI conference in DCU and the JCTed conferencce in LIT.

Planning is now underway for an event in the current school year to showcase the findings from the Irish pilot implementation. We are most grateful to all teachers and students who have taken part in the project to date and also to the school leaders who have facilitated our interactions with their schools.

Our team are currently working on analysing the initial findings from our engagement in the formative phase of our ATS2020 project. These include observations from our case study schools (including interviews with teachers and students taking part in the programme), school visits, lesson plans and sample student work shared by teachers in the project, and trends emerging from the student online assessment. These findings will contribute to the European report on the project and will also support JCT in tailoring our ongoing CPD and school support, particularly in terms of Key Skills, Portfolios, Formative Assessment and the embedding of ICT to support teaching, assessment and learning. An online resources portal will make resources and materials from the project available to all schools in the near future.

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Dr. Michaela Keat pictured at ATS2020 International partner meeting in Zagreb with ATS2020 project leader Anastasia Economou (Cypriot), Croatian hosts CARiHT and members of the ATS2020 team from JCT and H2 Learning.