

ACCS

Newsletter Nuachtiris

Cumann na Scoileanna Pobail is Cuimsitheacha Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools

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Beannachtaí na Nollag

ACCS wishes all our schools a Happy Christmas.



In keeping with the spirit of Christmas, ACCS will make a donation to St. Vincent de Paul instead of sending Christmas cards.



ACCS In-School Management Conference 2013

Theme: 'Leaders Learning'



L-R: Mr. Michael Hallissy from H2 Learning presenting the report on "The Use of Tablet Devices in ACCS Schools" to Mr. Joseph Sweeney (Coláiste Chiaráin) who chaired the plenary session, and Mr. Seamus Ryan from H2 Learning presenting the report to Mr. Malachy Molloy (President ACCS).

A large group of Principals and Deputy Principals assembled in the wild and beautiful countryside beside Rosses Point in Sligo on the 14th and 15th November 2013 for the annual In-School Management Conference in the Radisson Blu Hotel & Spa. Everyone appeared in good form with hopes high that the current industrial dispute was nearing an end (maybe too optimistic given the ASTI recommendation to members since). All looked forward to the opportunity to meet up with colleagues in comfortable and uninterrupted surroundings.

ACCS President, Mr. Malachy Molloy opened the Conference and invited Mr. Ciarán Flynn (General Secretary ACCS) to address delegates on the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA). Ciarán described the complicated road travelled since September 2013 and congratulated Principals and Deputies on coping with the very difficult task of managing the situation since then. To date ACCS has issued seven updates and two information bulletins to support schools in dealing with the

fallout from one union's rejection and the other's acceptance of the HRA. ACCS will continue to advise schools while the dispute is ongoing.

Ms. Eileen Salmon (Assistant General Secretary) outlined the difficulties encountered by ACCS and the other management bodies in trying to influence the way the DES is rolling out Continuous Professional Development (CPD) around the new Junior Cycle. The disruption to teaching and learning from several teachers being released for full-days in-service, as well as the lack of whole-school in-service on key skills and assessment and moderation has been clearly articulated by ACCS. Unfortunately, the protests appear to be falling on deaf ears at the moment.

It was timely then that the first presenter at the Conference, Mr. John Foster (Carecall Associate Consultant), spoke about 'The Emotionally Healthy Leader' in a calm and reflective tone. Delegates were given an exercise to see how well they knew themselves and John described how the balancing act between positive and negative

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Please circulate to Board Members.



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emotions needed to be maintained. He outlined the core constructs of an emotionally healthy leader as being someone with an articulate vision, self-awareness, resilience, who could empower others, was encouraging and intuitive. John referred to inspiring and less inspiring leaders during his presentation and contrasted the leadership styles of Nelson Mandela and Principal Seymour Skinner from the Simpsons! He encouraged delegates to ‘hold the balance’ and follow their own Yellow Brick Road.

Concurrent workshops were held in the late afternoon, one on the new Anti-Bullying Procedures and the other on Numeracy. Each workshop was held twice which allowed all delegates to attend both. Mr. Jerry McCarthy gave workshops on “Demystifying Numeracy”. Jerry’s presentation was full of life with excellent examples of how numeracy could be embedded in school life and across disciplines. Jerry passed on great ideas and materials generated from practice in real-school situations. He came across as being a “Project Maths” all by himself and his work lived up to the title of the workshop. He was very well received by those attending.

The workshop titled “Anti-Bullying Policy” was presented by Ms. Eileen Salmon, Assistant General Secretary and Ms. Anne Marie Dillon, HR Manager, ACCS. It was a very practical dissemination of the recent circular and anti-bullying procedures produced by the DES. Schools have until Easter 2014 to finalise a new Anti-Bullying Policy that fully complies with these procedures. Delegates were informed about how to proceed and appreciated the clarity of the advice from the two presenters.

The Regional Meetings took place following the workshops and this gave our Principals and Deputy Principals the opportunity to discuss issues concerning them at school level. Of major concern in schools is the continuing industrial unrest and the difficulty of maintaining a good atmosphere amongst staff of different unions, the disruption to teaching and learning as a result of holding parent-teacher meetings inside school time, and the very complicated Supervision and Substitution position in each school. The proposed CPD for the Junior Cycle is causing great annoyance also. This is on top of the continuing shrinkage of Middle Management positions in our schools. School Management believe they are being asked to do the impossible.

On the following morning delegates had a presentation from Mr. Michael Hallissy and Mr. Seamus Ryan from H2 Learning on their report “The Use of Tablet Devices in ACCS Schools” commissioned by ACCS. The report was circulated to all delegates and Michael gave a detailed account of the literature review from other jurisdictions conducted by H2 Learning, the main findings from the ACCS Survey and site visits to our schools whose students are using tablet devices in class. Michael was very clear that there were many challenges for schools in introducing these devices including cost, training for teachers and training for students.

Mr. John McGuinness, Deputy Principal of Carndonagh C.S. gave delegates a very interesting and personal account of his school’s journey in using tablet devices with First Years in 2012/2013 and the benefits and challenges that occurred. Some problems had been anticipated, others never materialised. Demonstrating the indestructibility of the iPad in its case by throwing it across the room grabbed everyone’s attention!! Carndonagh C.S. has continued with the experiment with this year’s First Year Students having learned some valuable lessons along the way.

Mr. Seamus Ryan from H2 Learning gave practical advice to schools who may be considering introducing tablet devices. He emphasised the importance of good infrastructure, the necessity to have external support and he encouraged schools to draw a road map for their own



L-R: Mr. Paul Fiorentini (Chairperson of the In-School Management Task Group) presents a gift of Galway Crystal to Mr. John Foster (Carecall Associate Consultant) as a token of appreciation.

journey. Seamus pointed out that a school is the most challenging environment for wireless devices and that for sufficient coverage a school would probably need an access point in every classroom.

Mr. Pat O’Dowd from Trinity Comprehensive gave a different perspective on the reasons behind introducing tablet devices to one of his First Year classes last year. The main benefit for the class was increased motivation amongst the students. Pat has continued with the project by introducing the devices to another class this year.

Between the presentation from H2 Learning, the experiences described by user schools, the 74 page report distributed and a note from Ms. Patricia McDonagh regarding the introduction of iPads to Malahide C.S., delegates had plenty of information to make informed choices on the introduction of tablet devices to their own schools.

Mr. Ciarán Flynn made the final presentation of the Conference in launching the “Good Governance Guide: Risk Management in C&C Schools”. ACCS developed this guide with the support of the State Claims Agency. This will be a useful document in considering the governance responsibilities of our Boards of Management. While our schools are not State Bodies, the 2009 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies was highlighted by the Internal Audit Unit of the DES during an audit of one of our schools as a model of best practice that should be used by our Boards of Management.

As an overriding principle the Code of Practice clarifies the functions and responsibilities of State Boards as follows: “The Board is collectively responsible for promoting the success of the State body by leading and directing the body’s activities. It should provide strategic guidance to the State body, and monitor the activities and effectiveness of management. Board members should act on a fully informed basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care, and in the best interest of the state body, subject to the objectives set by Government.” The ACCS guide sets out a template which can guide our schools to comply with this principle of best practice in governance and the application of risk management.

Following an open forum that again highlighted the very real difficulties being faced by our Principals and Deputy Principals on a daily basis our President Mr. Malachy Molloy concluded the Conference by encouraging all present to keep talking to each other and the ACCS in these difficult times.

The In-School Management Committee received very positive feedback from delegates who appreciated the practicality of the presentations and who really enjoyed the lovely surroundings and atmosphere of the venue. In particular delegates valued the interaction with each other and the feeling that “we are not alone”!

Photocall of prizewinners from the In-School Management Conference

Mr. Séamus Ó Ceallacháin holds the Bishop Hegarty Trophy as winner of this year's golf competition.



L-R: Mr. Willie Culkeen (Ballinrobe C.S.) who organised the competition, Mr. Séamus Ó Ceallacháin (Pobalscoil na Tríonóide), Mr. Brendan Carroll from PCI, sponsors of the competition.



Mr. Joe McLaughlin from Cornmarket Group Financial Services congratulates Mr. Malachy Molloy (President of ACCS) on winning a prize.



Mr. Brendan Carroll (PCI) presents a prize to Mr. David McEvoy (St. Attracta's C.S.).



Mr. Eoin O' Doherty (ODoherty.Biz) presents a prize to Mr. John McKennedy (St. Colmcille's C.S.).

ACCS In-School Management Task Group for the coming year:

- Dublin:** Ms. Bríd Ní Annracháin & Mr. John McKennedy
- Leinster:** Mr. Joe Sweeney & Ms. Siobhán McCarthy
- Connacht:** Mr. Willie Culkeen & Ms. Concepta Moran
- Munster:** Ms. Bernie Heffernan & Mr. Denis Ring
- Ulster:** Ms. Martha Lievens & Ms. Ceola McGowan

Gala Dinner at In-School Management Conference



The happy retirees: L-R: Mr. Pat O'Riordan (Portmarnock C.S.), Ms. Mary McGillicuddy (Tarbert Comprehensive), Ms. Noreen Walsh (Killinarden C.S.), Mr. Seán Ó Broin (Kinsale C.S.), Mr. Malachy Molloy (President ACCS), Mr. Ciarán Flynn (General Secretary ACCS), Mr. Michael Brett (Ballinrobe C.S.), Mr. Pat McHugh (Ballyhaunis C.S.), Ms. Jean Curran (Royal & Prior Comprehensive), Ms. Antoinette Nic Gearailt (Vice President ACCS).

Following a reception generously sponsored by PCI, delegates and recently retired Principals and Deputy Principals relaxed and enjoyed a delicious meal on the evening of the In-School Management Conference. Mr. Pat O'Riordan, retired Principal from Portmarnock C.S., spoke on behalf of all the retirees. He thanked ACCS for its 'counselling service' and amused all with little gems of information about each retiree.



Mr. Pat O'Riordan (Portmarnock C.S.) speaking on behalf of retirees.

Electricity Procurement for Schools

The National Procurement Service has been active in working with schools to deliver savings on energy costs. In particular the most recent work undertaken was a competition for electricity providers to bid for service to those schools who had expressed an interest in being part of the competition. 1,870 schools were entered for this procurement competition for electricity through the NPS. 64 of the 94 Community and Comprehensive schools availed of this opportunity. The NPS has achieved savings of 10% on previous years as a result of this competition. Additional charges have been added to electricity bills in general since October so this makes the savings even more welcome for those schools involved. Prices in the energy market are likely to increase in the coming months so this guarantee of these lower prices for the next two years is very welcome for those schools that entered for the competition. Those schools which are still on individual contracts with electricity energy suppliers outside of the procurement process are subject to the vagaries of this volatile market.

Schools within the competition will have received notification from the NPS about their proposed new contracts by now. Each school will be shown in which lot they were entered, who the bidders were and the prices being

offered, and the energy supply winner for that lot. There will be an explanation of the expected savings over the 2 year period. There will be an explanatory letter from the NPS outlining the process to access the new prices by completing a contract and returning it to the NPS. Any further queries about the process or the contracts should be sent to schoolelectricity@opw.ie and we in ACCS may be in a position to assist if you require any further clarifications.

The external consultant to the NPS on energy costs also took an overall look at the cost base for 5 of our schools in addition to having them entered into the competition. There were savings to be made through minor adjustments to tariff setting with their providers and by opting for General Purpose Night Saver accounts. All schools made savings, these ranged from €1,000 to €3,000 per school per annum. The €3,000 saving represented 12% of the school's outlay on electricity. We will be writing up these 5 cases to detail how other schools might benefit from undertaking a similar review.

The DES officials are also working closely with the management bodies to deliver savings across a range of items. Schools are advised to engage fully with the process to take advantage of what is on offer.

ACCS Convention 2014

The 32nd ACCS Convention will take place on the 27th, 28th & 29th March, 2014 in The Malton Hotel, Town Centre, Killarney, Co. Kerry.

Dates to remember

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| 27th Dec, 2013 | Nominations for Presidency and motions for Convention to be submitted. |
| 27th Jan, 2014 | Draft agenda of business and nominations for Presidency and motions to be issued to Member Boards and Executive Members. Member Boards will be invited to submit amendments to the motions. |
| 27th Feb, 2014 | Latest date for receipt of amendments to the motions. |
| 13th Mar, 2014 | A final agenda will be issued to Member Boards. |