



**Maynooth  
University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

ISSUE 5 | NOVEMBER 2017

# EDUCATION NEWS

*Newsletter of the Department of Education  
- passionate about all things educational!*

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Welcome to the fifth edition of our newsletter! Hard to believe it is November already and as you will see, we have been busy over the past few months with lots of new activities in the area of partnerships, research and programme development.

We are so pleased to be welcoming two new additions to our team: Dr. Joe Oyler, who has joined us from the US to take up a position as Lecturer in Teacher Education, and who brings with him a wealth of experience working in school-university partnerships; and Kathryn Aherne who brings wonderful energy and technological savvy to her role as Executive Assistant. You'll be able to read more about them in their own words in the pages within.

We have also initiated two truly exciting programmes since the last newsletter: the Future Leaders Programme offers teachers a Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Leadership and Management in various centres across the country; and our new Doctorate in Education enables professionals to choose from one of two specialisms (Teacher Education and Educational Leadership). We've also been very attentive to your views as teachers and principals in our partner schools. You will see the results from the recent survey we collected. Thanks so much for your feedback and input! They really help us to deliver top quality programming.

Indeed, this quality has been recognised recently by Grad Ireland. We are simply delighted that they have shortlisted our PME programme for an award as best Post Graduate Programme in the Arts and Humanities, and I think it is testament to the commitment of all our staff and to you, our community partners, for enabling us to create such an innovative course!

However, as we are too well aware, there is still much to be done with respect to increasing diversity in the teaching profession. It remains a sad fact that not everyone experiences the same advantages when

it comes to post-primary and third level education. Whether this be because of class, ethnicity, gender, race, disability, sexuality or religion, our goal here is to turn the tide of this inequality and to contribute to making the teaching profession a representative one – a profession that reflects the increasingly pluralist face of Ireland. As a department that embraces a cosmopolitan outlook, where different cultures, abilities and beliefs can flourish, we seek to offer an inclusive atmosphere where all students feel welcomed. To this end, we are privileged to be collaborating on the HEA funded project 'Turn to Teaching', which you can read more about inside; this is an incredibly important initiative in that it is not just about 'recruiting' underrepresented groups into the profession, but it views the profession itself as needing the richness that diversity brings, so that all people who are part of contemporary Irish life can feel equally valued in our schools.

I do hope that you join us in supporting our efforts and invite you come to talk with us about any initiatives or queries you might have. Our doors are always open!

Professor Sharon Todd  
Maynooth University Department of Education



Professor Sharon Todd

## Artist in Residence

*Theatre Maker Peter Hussey*



We are excited to welcome theatre-maker Peter Hussey as Artist in Residence in Initial Teacher Education in a shared residency with the Froebel Department of Primary & Early Childhood Education.

The residency, supported by the Arts Council, has Connections as its theme and the process of story-making at its heart. It is the first such residency at second level initial teacher education in Ireland.

We are very much looking forward to working with Peter and our Froebel colleagues on what promises to be a hugely creative and dynamic joint project this year. Peter's first presentation in the School of Education was on the theme of "Generating Happiness" where he explored the impact of Youth Theatre work on young people's well-being, personal agency and intellectual development.

In addition to teaching in the field of theatre and learning, Peter is the Artistic Director of Crooked House Theatre Company and is the founder of the Kildare Youth Theatre group. He has worked extensively with young people whose experiences of being in school very often shape the hugely innovative theatrical performances he directs.

Over the past 25 years Peter has run many theatre programmes for children and young adults. His workshops focus on developing the person's innate skills in theatre-making to build and enhance a range of life-skills, and to celebrate what they bring naturally to the art form of theatre making.

He has developed and delivered courses in teaching drama for teachers and he is a well-known figure in Adult and Community Education, having worked at third level in Maynooth University and Dublin City University for the past number of years also.

Earlier this summer some members from the Kildare Youth Theatre performed a piece at the Maynooth University Education Forum (*Recognising the 12%: Migrant Trajectories through the Education System*). In the piece the young actors explored what it is like to be in primary and secondary school in this country if you come from a migrant background. It featured the real stories from children and their parents and was a rich and poignant commentary on the complexity of young migrants' trajectories through the Irish education system.

Peter is a strong advocate for the inclusion of theatre-making in schools, having recently addressed the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills about this and having also contributed to policy on this at European level.



*Peter Hussey (Centre) with staff and students at the 'Generating Happiness' seminar September 2017.*

## Reflections on Completing my PhD

*Dr. John McGarrigle*



### John McGarrigle reflects on his thesis: An Arts Based Narrative Inquiry into Learning in an Early Childhood Education and Care Degree.

My thesis explored learning and identity in an Early Years degree in Ireland. Arts based research allowed me to use poems, images, film and writing to explore emerging stories of learner, teacher and researcher and to disrupt dominant notions of research, intelligence and early childhood. As a researcher I examined the influences on my own voice and positionality within a rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) research text that prioritised an ethical duty to respect and promote the voice of research participants at each stage of inquiry.

I began with a 'Learning Carnival' where students were encouraged to explore learning through Gardner's multiple intelligence theory (Gardner, 1983). A later stage used students' writing, portraits, masks and images to explore how they constructed their lives in the final year of a professional Early Childhood course. In collaboration with the students, a short film called 'A Murmuration of Early Childhood' celebrated their artwork and collective poem 'Imagine a Child'.

As I struggled with presenting individual voices within a collective participant voice I devised an evocative performance text called 'A Dawn Chorus'. Arts-based narrative inquiry facilitated challenges to dominant understandings of learning and intelligences and offered creative alternatives to teacher education in the Early Years. An autoethnographic lens highlighted the complex political and social contexts that frame educational experiences and structure relationships between learners and educators and raised questions about the marginalisation and feminisation of childcare in Ireland. Of significance in this study are the ways that learners demonstrate their own agency within limited subject positions and the power of education to provide a route to exhibit and express a personal identity beyond that of mother, father, old, young, male, female, carer.

My personal learning journey has been enriched by engaging with the growing academic community I met through the structured programme of the Department of Education, narrative workshops and conferences <http://www.conference.ie/Conferences/index.asp?Conference=450> and Early Childhood conferences ([www.RECE.org](http://www.RECE.org)).



I hope that others will be encouraged to use arts-based approaches in narrative inquiry as I was through my supervisor, Dr. Grace O'Grady, who encouraged and inspired me through my study and whose expertise in the area guided the research. In narrative inquiry the sands appear to shift beneath your feet and she helped me find my feet and my voice.

*Dr Grace O'Grady, supervisor for Dr John McGarrigle's PhD thesis.*



## TEDx Tallaght - Michelle Stowe

Michelle Stowe, lecturer and tutor in the Education Department, was invited to share her passion for Restorative Practice in the Civic Theatre at TEDx Tallaght on 12th Oct.



Michelle's talk, 'Empathy; the Heart of Difficult Conversations', outlined the restorative values such as respect, empathy, personal accountability and community that we can easily migrate from in times of conflict. She outlined that although values light the way, what she loves about Restorative Practice is that it offers an explicit language, such as restorative questions, to breathe life into the values so that they are values in action. These are especially helpful in times of challenge when we can easily armour up, disconnect from our best selves and lose our values in power struggles.

"There is a huge empathy deficit in our culture", Michelle says, "and this is a skill set that we can teach and grow, and restorative questions can facilitate this. They invite us to see each other's perspective and to feel WITH one another which are key ingredients of empathy." Simply asking 'What happened that the homework isn't done?' instead of 'Why did you not do your homework?', can open up a dialogue that allows us to turn towards one other. A restorative approach moves us from blame and attack to empathy, the heart of difficult conversations.

To listen to the TEDx Talk, please click the 'Play' button below or visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UvDMQyBVLs>



## Gaisce The President's Award

Gaisce, The President's Award is a personal development programme that's open to young people



between the ages of 15 and 25 who want to commit time and effort into physical activities, developing personal skills and getting involved in their local communities.

For many young people, they are already involved in activities that meet Gaisce requirements and Gaisce allows them to gain national recognition for their efforts. There are three Gaisce levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold. A Bronze and Silver Award requires a minimum commitment of 6 months and a Gold Award requires a minimum commitment of one year. In 2016, 79% of all second level schools in Ireland offered the programme to their senior cycle students. Each school that offers the programme has at least one President's Award Leader (PAL) whose role it is to mentor participants to complete the programme, ensure all necessary administration is completed and supervise an overnight trip.

This year, seven PME Year 1 students participated in the Gaisce PAL Training which took place in the School of Education Building on October 7th.

Here is a personal account of the day by one of the participants...

### Very New to Gaisce - Glen Spratt, PME Year 1

The only thing I knew about Gaisce before the training was that it was offered to secondary school students, usually in TY. The day of training was a revelation for me, both personally and professionally. Niamh Hand, one of the Development Officers, explained to us the role and responsibility of a Gaisce PAL. She highlighted the importance PAL plays in the life of students and how it can benefit their future. It is a great thing to see on a student's CV because it shows self-motivated dedication and discipline.

The President's Award is a way of recognising young people's hard work, their quality character and their empathy through sporting activity, self-improvement, and community outreach. I also learned that you can carry on working toward your Gaisce so long as you have registered once. This means that if your students don't complete it one year due to extenuating circumstances, they can always return to the programme and complete their award. Furthermore, one can register beyond secondary school as it allows you to register between the ages of 15-25, which was unknown to me.

Based on what I now know of Gaisce, I've decided to register myself for the Gold Award. I'll be proud to work on my Gaisce so I can understand the work the young people I am mentoring will be putting in. I am looking forward to stepping up to my role as a President's Award Leader over the coming year.



From left to right: Sorcha Gleeson, Glen Spratt, and Rachel Flynn (PME Year 1).

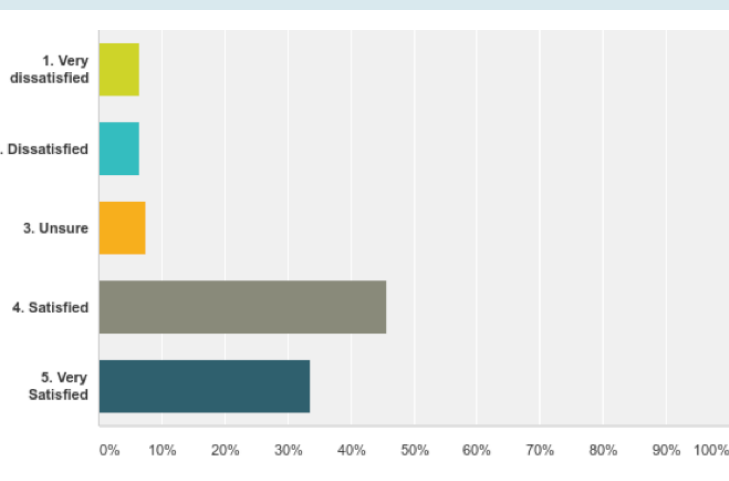
# School Placement Survey, Summer 2017

In April 2017, a survey was issued to all partner schools regarding their experience of engaging with the Department of Education at Maynooth University around school placement.

A total of 107 responses were received from principals, deputy principals and co-operating teachers. Respondents worked in a wide range of schools representative of the sector (voluntary secondary schools, ETB schools, Community and Comprehensive Schools, Educate Together schools and Gaelcholáistí) and were facilitating students across the BSC (Maths and Science), PME and Postgraduate Diploma in School Guidance Counselling (PGDSGC). The results of the survey give us a very large range of valuable information that we will use to develop and improve the work of the Department around school placement. Below is a short summary of the findings and some of planned actions as a result of these.

In response to our question regarding the overall satisfaction of schools about school placement arrangements, we were heartened to learn that 80% of schools reported that they were either satisfied or very satisfied (see Figure 1). Many of the open-ended responses commended the quality of the student teachers and the tutors who visit them. One of the main issues raised was the lack of continuity in placements and we hope that the grouping of Year 1 PME placement days will address this. This is something we will need to consider further in the BSC course.

Figure 1: How satisfied are you with the school placement arrangements of the Department of Education, Maynooth University for student teachers?



There was also a sense that the quality of information sent to schools about school placement was high but a minority felt that they did not receive enough information or that it was not sent directly to them. The vast majority of respondents felt that student teachers were being asked to teach an appropriate number of classes and that the balance between announced and unannounced visits by tutors worked well.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a number of statements. As can be seen from Table 1, these provided some positive results and some areas that can be developed further by us in the Department. While 63% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would know who to contact in the Department regarding a placement issue, close to one-third of respondents were unsure or disagreed with this statement. The majority of respondents indicated that tutors who visit student teachers on placement engage well with the principal and deputy principal(s) but the result was less positive about engagement with co-operating teachers. The reasons for this may be manifold but it is certainly something for consideration here in the Department. We were particularly heartened that over 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that student teachers engage well in the life of the school and that facilitating a student is beneficial to the school.

Table 1: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Total
I know who to contact in the Department of Education of Maynooth University if there is an issue with a student teacher on placement	26.09% 24	36.96% 34	15.22% 14	9.78% 9	10.87% 10	1.09% 1	92
Placement and University Tutors engage well with the principal and/or deputy principal during placement visits	31.52% 29	33.70% 31	17.39% 16	7.61% 7	3.26% 3	6.52% 6	92
Placement and University Tutors engage well with co-operating teachers during placement visits	14.44% 13	31.11% 28	24.44% 22	16.67% 15	11.11% 10	2.22% 2	90
Student teachers are prepared adequately by their course to engage in school placement activities	28.26% 26	44.97% 41	17.39% 16	7.61% 7	2.17% 2	0.00% 0	92
Student teachers engage well in the life of the school	37.36% 34	43.96% 40	8.79% 8	7.69% 7	2.20% 2	0.00% 0	91
Student teachers provide support to students and staff while on placement	33.70% 31	45.65% 42	13.04% 12	4.35% 4	3.26% 3	0.00% 0	92
The Department of Education provides suitable supports to student teachers and the school when issues arise	8.79% 8	18.68% 17	49.45% 45	9.89% 9	5.49% 5	7.69% 7	91
Facilitating student teachers on school placement is beneficial to the school	43.48% 40	39.13% 36	14.13% 13	2.17% 2	1.09% 1	0.00% 0	92

In the open-ended questions, respondents indicated that they would like to see greater offerings of CPD by the Department for partner schools and improved communications regarding school placement. As a result, the following actions have been identified:

- » Student teachers have been asked to invite co-operating teachers to complete a short survey to share their email addresses with the Department so that we can email information (e.g., handbooks, newsletters, notes of appreciation, etc.) directly to them. If you would like to be added to this list, please complete the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PMECooperatingTeacher> <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BScEdCooperatingTeacher>
- » The *Handbook for Co-operating Schools and Teachers (2017-18)* has been sent to each school and contains a short summary of key FAQs for school staff who want to understand the key components of school placement for Maynooth university. All student teachers have been asked to share this handbook directly with co-operating teachers.
- » We continue to reinforce with all tutors the importance of engaging with management and co-operating teachers on each visit where this is possible. The contact details of each tutor is included in the *Handbook for Co-operating Schools and Teachers (2017-18)* so that tutors can be contacted if necessary.
- » We are continuing to develop the CPD offerings to schools on an ongoing basis. The team teaching project will be undertaken again this year and all partner schools have been invited to attend the workshops and national seminar. We have also alerted partner schools to the Maths Support Centre where post-primary students can avail of free Maths support (see article in this newsletter). Partner schools are invited on an ongoing basis to events in the university such as the evening celebrating the work of Professor John Coolahan in October. We will continue to extend this range of supports into the future.

We would like to thank you once again for the time taken to complete the survey and we will use the data received to continue improving the ways in which placement is managed by Maynooth University. If you have any queries or comments regarding placement, please contact the School Partnership Co-ordinator at [Thomas.walsh@mu.ie](mailto:Thomas.walsh@mu.ie)



## New Staff

### Kathryn Aherne, Executive Assistant

Kathryn Aherne joined the Department of Education in October as the administrator for PGDELM and EdD programmes.

Kathryn has worked in similar administration roles within academic departments across Maynooth University including the Department of Sociology, the School of Business and the Department of Computer Science, assisting in the on-going administration of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Prior to this, Kathryn worked in MU's JPII Library as a Subject Librarian providing subject and service support for numerous departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences. Kathryn is enthusiastic about the value of education in today's society and is passionate about supporting the learning, teaching and research needs of students and staff within the Department. Kathryn is a graduate of MU with an MA in Geography, PGDE in Education and a graduate of UCD with an MLIS in Library & Information Studies.

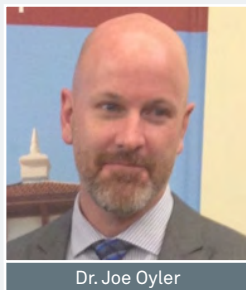


Kathryn Aherne

### Dr. Joe Oyler, Lecturer

I'm very excited to join the Maynooth University Department of Education as Lecturer in Teacher Education.

Prior to joining the department, I served various roles in the Center of Pedagogy and Department of Educational Foundations at Montclair State University (MSU), New Jersey, USA. My work at MSU included coordination of a three-year induction program for new teachers, coming out of the Newark Montclair Urban Teacher Residency and the design and implementation of Project BUILD - a School-University Partnership, aimed at recruiting and developing Teacher Leaders. Additionally, I served as a Senior Research Associate on a multi-university study of Dialogic Teaching, funded by the US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences and collaborated with the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC), on a number of projects and in various capacities. Over the past 15 years, I've taught courses in Philosophy, Philosophy of Education and Curriculum and Teaching. My research interests revolve around the use of collaborative, discussion based, school and classroom practices. My current research aims at developing a deeper understanding of how experienced facilitators engage students in Inquiry Dialogue and how similar practices can impact school culture.



Dr. Joe Oyler

## Maynooth University Department of Education at ECER

### ECER 2017

Reforming Education and the Imperative of Constant Change: Ambivalent roles of policy and educational research

22 – 25 August 2017  
European Conference on Educational Research – ECER  
& Emerging Researchers' Conference (21 – 22 August)

University College UCC, Copenhagen, Denmark



### The European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) was held in Copenhagen in August 2017.

ECER is the largest annual educational research conference in Europe and this year's theme was "Reforming Education and the Imperative of Constant Change: Ambivalent roles of policy and educational research."

The Department of Education of Maynooth University was represented by ten staff and students who presented on a wide range of themes and topics across a range of networks. Please see the table below for an overview of the contributions and a link to the papers/presentations. In addition, one of the four keynote speakers at ECER this year, Professor Carl Anders Säfström from the Södertörn University Stockholm, has been recently appointed as Professor of Educational Research in Maynooth University.

Presenter	Title of Presentation
Dr Majella Dempsey	<a href="#">Deconstructing environments of learning</a>
Dr Rose Dolan	<a href="#">Teacher preparation programmes: A systems view</a>
Dr Rose Dolan and Dr Anthony Malone	<a href="#">A study of pre-service teachers' development through use of action research and lesson study</a>
Ms Audrey Doyle	<a href="#">What is the emerging story of the process of curriculum reform in the open complex system of lower secondary education in Ireland</a>
Dr Pádraig Hogan	<a href="#">The "folly" of learning: On hearing Erasmus afresh</a>
Dr Catriona O'Toole	<a href="#">A Reprise but not a Fix for Childhood Stresses: A Participatory Study of School based Mindfulness in an Irish Primary School</a>
Dr Victoria Showunmi and Dr Maria Kaparou	<a href="#">The challenge of leadership: ethnicity, culture, gender and class among school leaders in England, Malaysia and Pakistan</a>
Professor Sharon Todd	<a href="#">Ethical Curriculum in Ireland: The Question of the Other</a>
Dr Thomas Walsh	<a href="#">Exploring Concepts of Children and Childhood in Ireland (1900-1940) from an Historical Education Policy Perspective</a>

## Empower Conference 2017 Orla Canning, PME Year 1

While on my first week of school placement I was asked if I would like to take part in the Empower Conference. Naturally, as a first year PME, and it being one of my first few days in the school, I was willing and very eager to get involved in as many school activities as possible, but I never realized the scope and importance of this event.

Organized by St. Peter's College (Dunboyne) teachers Sinéad Edmonds and Aileen Flood, the Empower conference is an amalgamation of many different organizations, including Maynooth University, Design for Change, WorldWide Global and LMETB Schools. The fantastic event is aimed at encouraging young people to take action and make a real difference in the world. Specifically targeting Transition Year students, Empower provides them and their teachers with a wonderful opportunity to network, engage, and discuss real issues and share ideas in the hope of providing them with a platform to investigate and evaluate their roles and responsibilities as the next generation and as global citizens.

With hundreds of students divided into fourteen different groups, each group took part in a workshop run by some of the most influential organisations involved in Development Education today. The group I was involved in coordinating had the privilege of having Tara McGrath from Design for Change as its speaker. Tara introduced students to the idea of Design for Living. The Design for Change school challenge asks students from the ages of 12 to 19 years in schools, clubs and



PME students at the Empower Event in Maynooth University, September 2017.

youth or community groups to design social impact projects that bring positive change to their local and global communities. Tara facilitated many discussions, questioned possible ideas and really got the students thinking. From my point of view, what started as a very shy group of tired looking teenagers suddenly turned into an energetic, enthusiastic group of global campaigners eager to innovate and invent! I definitely feel that the students left the Empower Conference with the desire to begin exploring how they and their schools can begin to make a difference. Although it was only my first year being involved I feel that it was a roaring success and I very much look forward to working with Development Education programmes in the future.

## Second Level Volunteer Teaching with the Maths Support Centre (MSC) Dr Ciarán Mac an Bhaird, Lecturer and MSC Director)

The MSC opened in Maynooth University in 2007 and has offered free maths support on a drop-in basis to secondary school students since 2009.

This service typically runs on Monday evenings during term time, and has had over 5,000 student visits to date. We provide a friendly, non-judgmental atmosphere where students of any level can feel comfortable asking questions. Feedback from students and parents is generally very positive, for example:

*Just wanted to drop you a note to say that my daughter, who is a 2nd year student in Maynooth Post Primary School, has attended the maths support for the past 4 weeks...I am writing to say thank you so much for this service. She has gained so much confidence in her ability since attending and the help she is receiving from the tutors is really beneficial. She looks forward to attending and comes out with a spring in her step.*

Key to the success of this initiative has been the contribution of Science and Mathematics Education students. Every year, a group of these students help out as volunteer tutors. The volunteers are usually second year students who tutor every second week. They indicate that they have thoroughly enjoyed the experience, one student reports:

*Helping secondary school students has really enabled me to see areas that students struggle with and has allowed me to review my own teaching methods to try and come up with better explanations and examples.*

These volunteer tutors report a positive impact on their own teaching in secondary schools and many continue to volunteer during the 3rd and 4th year of their course, and indeed during their postgraduate studies. Further information on the MSC is available [here](#). Some of the tutors for 2017-18 are photographed below.



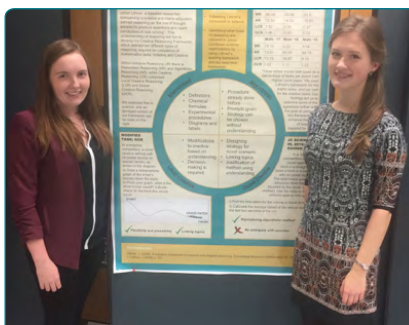
Andrew Cussen (PME student), Nicole Hyland (PME student), Amra McCalliog (BSc Ed student), Claire Horgan (BSc Ed student), Siobhán Lee (PME student), Áine Hayes (BSc Ed student), Richaelle Askin-Larkin (BSc Ed student), Nathan McJames, (BSc Ed student).

## SPUR Maynoth University Undergraduate Research Programme

Aishling Reilly and Ailbhe Garry, Year 4 BScEd

For six weeks from the beginning of June, we worked under the guidance of Dr Majella Dempsey and Dr Ann O'Shea (Maths Department) on a project focusing on the idea of reasoning.

The aim of our project was to extend Johan Lithner's 2008 framework for mathematical reasoning to science, and to then use our framework to develop tasks requiring different types of scientific reasoning. We also used it to analyse and classify Junior Certificate examination tasks according to their required types of reasoning. We were instantly drawn to the project as we knew it would be hugely beneficial to us as teachers, and we were also excited at the opportunity to develop resources and tools which could be of real use to our peers. Over the course of the six weeks we gained an insight into the world of academic research and writing as we began work on a paper outlining our research. Our mentors were always on hand and provided us with invaluable help, and we're really looking forward to continuing the project with the hope of bringing the paper to completion.



Pictured are Aishling Reilly and Ailbhe Garry presenting their research at the SPUR Symposium during Research Week in MU. They won first prize for their research project. Aishling is doing her teaching practice in Ardee Community School and Ailbhe is in Scoil Mhuire Community School in Clane.

## Team Teaching Project 2017-18

In 2017-18, the team teaching project, a collaborative partnership between the Department of Education Maynooth University and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), entered its fourth year.

This project is undertaken by Year 2 PME student teachers and teachers in all partner schools have been invited to attend. The aim of the project is to promote effective planning, team teaching, co-assessment and collaborative reflection among participating teachers and student teachers. This is achieved through two workshops on team teaching that are delivered regionally in Maynooth, Carlow, Navan and Tallaght between October 2017 and January 2018. The workshops provide opportunities for participants to develop their understanding of team teaching, to explore their experiences of it to date and to investigate different models of team teaching. A national seminar on team teaching will be held on **22nd February 2018** and this will provide an opportunity for project participants to share and celebrate their work and to engage with other educators around team teaching.

Further information and resources on the project to date are available at: <http://www.pdst.ie/teamteaching/MU>. This includes the slides from the various workshops, poster presentations from the national seminar in February 2016 and February 2017 and videos of team teaching from post-primary classrooms in Ireland. We will be in contact with partner schools in due course with further details on the national seminar in February 2018.



Participants at the Team Teaching Workshop in Navan, October 2017.



## TY Work Experience

*Caoimhe Tate-Shaw and Dearbhaile Tate-Shaw, Scoil Dara, Kilcock*

We are Caoimhe and Dearbhaile from the transition year programme in Scoil Dara, Kilcock. From the 3rd of March to the 12th of May 2017, we undertook work experience in Maynooth University, taking part in so many different things.

We got our own projects to do, we went to different lectures, we worked with new people, we worked at conferences and assisted in a tutorial class. The decision to come here was based on the fact that we wanted to experience the university because it is our first choice for third level education after the Leaving Cert.

The research project we were given included taking pictures of old classroom equipment and creating a PowerPoint comparing the old equipment to the modern version. We photographed a total of 23 pieces like Over Head Projectors, old video tape recorders and a typewriter.

The lectures we went to over the course of the 8 weeks were Anthropology, E-Marketing, Lighting and we also sat in on a meeting between two students working on a documentary and their lecturer. They were an hour to two hour long classes but the time went by quickly and they were all very intriguing. We really got to see what college life was like and honestly enjoyed it.

When you're a TY student doing work experience, you can feel really young and out of place in comparison to everyone around you, but this was the complete opposite. Our time here was really enjoyable and it didn't feel like work in the slightest. Going to lectures wasn't nearly as complicated as we thought. We could understand everything that was going on and already knew answers to the questions being asked. We felt like we belonged and that what we were doing was important. If we had the chance to do work experience again we would definitely take up the opportunity.

We would like to say Thank You to Rose Dolan, Ann-Marie Cudden, Kathleen Gorman, Rod Walsh and to the lecturers for giving us the chance to come to the university and not only work but to have a great time while doing it.



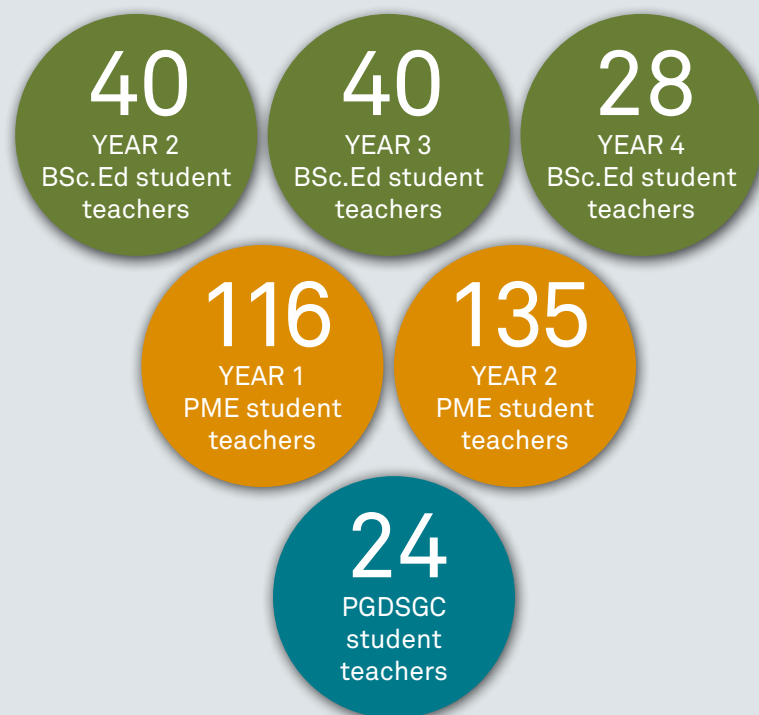
Left to right: Caoimhe Tate-Shaw, Dr Rose Dolan, Dearbhaile Tate-Shaw, Ms Anne-Marie Cudden and Ms Kathleen Gorman.

## School Placement 2017-18

An integral element of all initial teacher education courses and of our Post Graduate Diploma in School Guidance Counselling (PGDSGC) in the Department of Education is school placement.

During placement, student teachers have the opportunity to observe and teach classes, engage with experienced teachers and to gain an understanding for the wider work of a school community. We are fortunate to have such a large number of partner schools that facilitate the placement of our student teachers across the BSc (Maths and Science), PME and PGDSGC. This year, we have 383 students undertaking placements in 210 schools within 160km of Maynooth University. This is the highest number of partner schools we have worked with and we are delighted to strengthen relationship with many schools and to work for the first time with other schools. We are aware of the additional work that school leaders and teachers undertake in supporting our students on placement and we hope that our student teachers, in turn, enrich life within your schools.

The change of school placement days for the PME has occurred without too many issues and our students are reporting that the blocking of days in Year 1 is working well for them. We will issue a survey to schools later in the year to gather feedback on the change from a school perspective. We will also be in touch later in the year with regard to school placement arrangements for 2018-19 and we hope to be able to build our relationship with your school into the future. Below is an overview of the number of student teachers on placement across various courses.



## Learning to Disagree, L2D



Erasmus+

Dr. Anthony Malone and Dr. Majella Dempsey have been awarded significant Erasmus + research funding to support and assess social and civic competences in History across 12 EU countries.

They will lead a systemic review of current competency-based models and will develop an international toolkit to support the development and assessment of these competences in the teaching and learning of History.

Outcomes are focused on developing students' ability to express, recognise and understand alternative perspectives; to engage effectively with others in and across diverse groupings; to negotiate and communicate divergent viewpoints in addition to displaying socio-political knowledge and awareness.



Competency here is more than just developing and displaying knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands by drawing on and mobilising higher-level cognitive resources (including attitudes) in particular contexts.

Working in partnership with Euroclio and 11 other EU countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Spain and the UK) the project will begin in November of this year and run until late 2021.

We look forward to working with partner schools and organisations during this exciting project.

## New Cycle of TL21 Programme Gets Underway

September 2017 marked the start of a new cycle of the TL21 Research and Development Programme. “Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century” is an innovative CPD programme for post-primary teachers that invites them to play a key part in shaping and pursuing their own professional development.



The programme is provided by the Education Department in Maynooth University in co-operation with ten of the regional Education Centres. Led by an accomplished Co-ordinator in each Centre the new cycle includes teachers and school leaders from over 90 schools, mainly in Leinster.

Originally funded by Atlantic Philanthropies from 2003-2007 as the “TL21 Project”, the programme has, over the economic downturn of the last decade, overcome many challenges. It has continued to advance, take on new features, and cultivate highly prized enhancements in the learning environments of the schools. The two main aims of the TL21 programme have remained deliberately the same and deliberately simple: (1) to strengthen teachers’ capacities as the authors of their own work, (2) to enable students to take a more active and responsible part in their own education. These clear-cut aims are informed by an ever-emergent fund of research insights; mainly from action research initiatives that have been acclaimed internationally, including action research carried out in Irish schools by the programme’s own participants. TL21 has progressively won the support and enthusiasm of teachers, school leaders, and the main educational partners. It has recently concluded an agreement with the Department of Education and Skills for part funding of the 2017-19 cycle, but this does not alter its character: it remains

an exercise in voluntary co-operation between schools, Education Centres and the university.

CPD as a requirement for renewal of professional registration has become a key issue for the teaching profession internationally in recent years. Significant developments on this front are likely in Ireland in the next few years as the Teaching Council’s *Cosán* policy moves from an initial to a more fully-fledged form. The continuing success of ventures like TL21 shows that teachers and their leaders can fruitfully influence such policy development and promote practices that are relevant and enriching to the professional needs of teachers and the learning experiences of students.

With the start of the new cycle, Dr Anthony Malone takes over as leader of the TL21 Programme from his colleague Dr Pádraig Hogan. The TL21 website address is [www.maynoothuniversity.ie/TL21](http://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/TL21).



## Department of Education Trip to China

Educational partnership and the exchange of information and ideas are central to the work of the Department of Education in Maynooth University. It is through engagement with others that we deepen and develop our own thinking and practices.

It was in this spirit that Professor Sharon Todd and Dr Thomas Walsh undertook an educational trip to China in the last week of May 2017 alongside Ms Helen Kirrane from the International Office. The first stop was the Hailiang International School (<http://www.hlcis.com/en/>) located in the Zhejiang Province where six of the Department’s PME students were undertaking a school placement for more than a month over the summer period. This is the second year in which the school has facilitated the placement of Maynooth University PME students and two students who travelled last year remained teaching at the school following their graduation from the course. The school has a very impressive campus and caters for students from Kindergarten to post-primary education across a range of different types of schools. Maynooth University PME students undertook their placement in the Cambridge International School and in the Hailiang Foreign Languages School. They also organised a range of Irish cultural offerings for students, including sporting, musical and dance events. Professor Sharon Todd and Mr Ying Xin, General Principal of the Hailiang International School, unveiled a plaque celebrating the practicum arrangement and relationship between both institutions. During the two days spent on the campus, Professor Todd and Dr Walsh had an opportunity to visit the classrooms of a number of Irish student teachers as well as Chinese and international teachers in the Hailiang Foreign Languages School. The visit culminated in a presentation to invited language teachers from across the campus entitled *Thoughts on Teaching: Reflections on Hailiang International School*. The presentation focused on current issues in

education in Ireland and China and offered some suggestions on strategies for developing teacher professionalism into the future.

Following the visit to Hailiang International School, Professor Todd, Dr Walsh and Ms Kirrane undertook a fruitful meeting at the East China Normal University (ECNU) in Shanghai (<http://english.ecnu.edu.cn/>). ECNU is a renowned university in China and has its origins in teacher education. Maynooth University has a strong partnership with ECNU and already engages in formal student exchanges. During the meeting, possibilities about extending this partnership within the Department of Education were explored. Many areas of overlap in terms of the philosophy of both departments became apparent during the meeting and discussions included the possibility of both staff and student exchanges. Further work will be undertaken in the coming months to advance the discussions and to build on the progress made at the meeting.

Overall the trip was highly educational and revealed many commonalities across the education systems. Many avenues for future partnership were identified at a research and exchange level. We look forward to building and extending these relationships into the future and to offering increased opportunities for a placement abroad to our student teachers. Further information on the partnership and a short video on the experience of the six student teachers who travelled to China in May 2016 is available at <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/education/student-teacher-placement-china>.



Professor Sharon Todd and Mr Ying Xin unveil a plaque to celebrate the relationship between Maynooth University and Hailiang International School.



From left to right: Professor HUANG Zhongjing, Head of Department of Education (ECNU); Dr YANG Fuji, Associate Professor and Director of the International Affairs Division of the Faculty of Education (ECNU); Mr. WANG Subin, Deputy Director, ECNU International Exchange Division; Professor Sharon Todd; Dr Thomas Walsh; Ms Helen Kirrane.



# Maynooth University responds to the challenge of diversifying entry to initial teacher education programmes

## The persistent problem of under-representation in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes

Despite efforts to increase higher education participation in Ireland, students from particular socio-economic backgrounds, Travellers, students with disabilities, mature students and ethnic minorities remain under-represented in higher education compared to their peers. This under-representation is particularly acute in ITE programmes. An examination of data relating to who enters ITE clearly points to a trend; pre-service teachers in Ireland tend to be overwhelmingly white, female, settled, Catholic and middle-class and their exposure to diversity is limited.

The barriers facing under-represented students in accessing ITE programmes are well documented. They include inadequate financial resources, comparatively lower attainment at post-primary level, lack of confidence and awareness to opt for a teaching career, structural barriers (for example in the social welfare system), disclosure issues (for students with disabilities), low teacher expectations and prior negative or discriminatory experiences of school. These challenges are exacerbated by the current high points for ITE programmes, the Irish language requirements for entry and the denominational nature of education in Ireland.

## Why we need to diversify initial teacher education

The role of the teacher is rapidly changing. Teachers are now expected to have much broader roles, taking into account the individual development of children and young people, integrating students with special needs, the management of learning processes in the classroom, to be sensitive to culture and gender issues, to promote tolerance and social cohesion, to respond effectively to disadvantaged students, to utilise formative and summative assessment measures, to be familiar with ICT pedagogies, and to develop the entire school as a 'learning community' with connections to the local community and the wider world. As such, the demands on teachers and schools are becoming more complex and multifaceted than ever before. One thing is clear; further investment and innovation are required to meet the demands of an increasingly changing landscape. Diversification of teachers is critical to responding to these challenges and ensuring that children and young people from a myriad of backgrounds see themselves, and people like them, in their teachers.

## Maynooth University's response

Maynooth University is proud to have the most diverse student body across the University sector. The University wishes to build on our record of success to ensure the diversity in our ITE programmes reflects the diversity of Irish society. *Turn to Teaching* (TTT) is the University's response to this challenge. TTT is a €1m euro collaborative initiative between the Maynooth University Access Programme, Department of Education, Department of Adult and Community Education and the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The project is funded by the Higher Education Authority and Maynooth University.

TTT aims to reconceptualise the pathways into ITE with a view to widening participation for the most disadvantaged groups. TTT comprises three innovative educational interventions which have been designed to address existing barriers and support the participation of marginalised groups in initial teacher education:

### 1. Aspiring Teachers, Rising Leaders

Aspiring Teachers, Rising Leaders is a leadership programme for young people attending DEIS schools and their teachers. Aspiring Teachers is the student element of the

programme which will equip young people with the skills needed to access ITE. Students in the programme will participate in mentoring led by trailblazing educators as well as placements to cultivate their passion for teaching as a future career. In addition, participants will contribute to the development of a national campaign to raise awareness of the importance of diversity in the teaching profession. Rising Leaders is the teacher element of the programme which will build teacher capacity, providing opportunities to develop leadership skills, connecting educators to next generation teachers and supporting them to understand their potential to transform school culture.

### 2. Think about Teaching

Think about Teaching is a one-year foundation course which aims to prepare 25 students annually who have experienced deep educational disadvantage for entry to ITE degrees. The course will support students to develop the necessary skills, knowledge, understanding and competencies associated with preparedness to teach.

### 3. Tar linn ag Teagasc, Targeted Gaileage Supports for Students

All participants in TTT will be supported with access to a tailored Irish language competency based module, designed and facilitated through the Irish Language For All Students Programme (ILASP) and the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. These targeted supports aim to assist participants to reach the required entry standard for ITE and to encourage participants to become future teachers of Irish.

The TTT Project team is currently being established and the programme roll out will start after Christmas. If you would like to know more about the Turn to Teaching Project please contact [grace.edge@mu.ie](mailto:grace.edge@mu.ie)



Ms Grace Edge, Disability Officer at Maynooth University Access Programme.

## PME Shortlisted for Postgrad Course of the Year

The Department of Education's Professional Master of Education (PME) has been shortlisted for the Postgraduate Course of the Year (Arts and Humanities) in the GradIreland Higher Education Awards 2018.

This is a great recognition for the calibre of the PME in the Department and is the only PME course in the country to be shortlisted. The overall winner will be announced on 24th November 2017 so fingers crossed!

Further information on the GradIreland Awards can be found at

<https://gradireland.com/events/gradireland-higher-education-awards-symposium-2018>

and <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/news-events/pme-shortlisted-postgrad-course-year>.



# Pushing Boundaries, Expanding Vistas: Celebrating the Work of John Coolahan

On Thursday 26th October, educationalists, family and friends of Professor Emeritus John Coolahan gathered in Renhan Hall, Maynooth University to celebrate his contribution to and impact on education in Ireland. John was Head of the Department of Education in Maynooth for 17 years and during this time, he profoundly influenced the educational landscape across all sectors. In the 1990s alone, he particularly played a pivotal role in the development of educational policy across the early childhood, primary, post-primary and adult education sectors.



Contributors with John Coolahan. From left to right: Ms Niamh Breathnach, Ms Catherine Byrne, Professor Marc Depaepe, Professor Emeritus John Coolahan, Professor Emeritus Sheelagh Drudy, Mr John Bean.

The celebration of John's work was opened by Professor Sharon Todd (Department of Education) and Professor Philip Nolan (President of Maynooth University). Both praised Professor Coolahan's work in the Department of Education at Maynooth University as well as his contributions beyond the university. As Sharon remarked, as his successor, she has big boots to fill!

There were five key contributors on the evening and these were introduced individually by five 'interlude speakers'. The role of the interlude speakers, who had all studied or worked with John over the years, was to share their personal recollections of engaging with John and to focus on his impact on their lives and work. The five interlude speakers were Professor Aidan Mulkeen, Dr Maeve Martin, Dr Thomas Walsh, Dr Rose Dolan and Dr Anthony Malone. A vast array of anecdotes and insights emerged from the five speakers and the overwhelming theme was the high esteem in which each holds John and the privilege it has been to have had the opportunity to work with John over the years.



Interlude speakers with John Coolahan. Left to right: Professor Aidan Mulkeen, Dr Thomas Walsh, Professor Emeritus John Coolahan, Dr Rose Dolan, Dr Anthony Malone, Dr Maeve Martin.

The first speaker on the night was **Professor Marc Depaepe** from the University of Leuven. Marc spoke about John's influence in the international context and the significance of his work as a social historian of education.

**Ms Catherine Byrne**, current Chair of the ARK and former Deputy General Secretary of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, focused on John's contribution to the arts in education. She noted that John's commitment to making the arts central to education was longstanding and commended the recent developments in which she felt John's influence had been central.

**Mr John Bean**, principal of Hartstown Community School and a former student and colleague of Professor Coolahan, reflected on the substantive changes to the practice in schools in the last few decades. He praised the visionary nature of the educational policy documents that Professor Coolahan was central to developing in the 1990s and enumerated the many positive changes that have subsequently occurred in the lives of teachers and students.

**Professor Sheelagh Drudy**, Emeritus Professor of Education at UCD and former colleague of John at Maynooth, focused on John's contribution to education through his prolific research output. She noted John's key belief that it is not possible to understand the present or plan for the future without comprehending the past.



Left to right: Professor Philip Nolan, Professor Emeritus John Coolahan and Professor Sharon Todd.

The final contributor on the night, **Ms Niamh Breathnach**, former Minister for Education, provided a clear insight into the complexity and challenge of developing and enacting education policy at the highest levels. She praised John's pivotal contribution to policy during her time as Minister and asserted that many of the positive developments would simply not have happened in his absence. She labelled John a 'national treasure'!

Professor Coolahan delivered an erudite response following the inputs of the contributors and showed great humility in terms of his personal contribution to the education landscape. He urged that we continue to be confident in our educational provision and to continue to develop the education system from the current position of strength.

Further news from the evening of celebration will be shared on the Department of Education's website in the coming weeks.



Professor Emeritus John Coolahan.



# Woman (26) Left Blind after Brain Tumour Surgery Defies the Odds to Train as Teacher

Original Irish Independent article from October 4th reproduced here with the permission of Katherine Donnelly

Excited and assured - some initial tummy butterflies aside - Claire Shorten is like any trainee second-level teacher making the big leap into classrooms this term to gain the practical experience necessary for her professional qualification. But unlike the rest of the estimated 1,000 students who have just started the two-year, post-graduate Professional Master of Education (PME) (Post Primary), Claire is blind.

The 26-year-old Dubliner is a rare example of a working teacher who is fully blind, and the first fully blind student to undertake the PME in Maynooth University (MU). It was while she was a first year undergraduate in Maynooth, in 2011, that Claire unexpectedly lost her sight, following surgery to remove a brain tumour.

Understandably, she was very upset at first. She had to re-learn how to do everyday tasks, stopped driving and questioned whether she could ever be a teacher.

But while the surgery, the recovery period and adjustment to life without eyesight interrupted her studies, the can-do attitude Claire brings to her life meant there was no obstacle to her fulfilling her career ambition.

Her confidence was restored during a training course with National Council for the Blind Ireland (NCBI) in 2012-13, and she dismissed the notion that she couldn't be a teacher. "I just thought to myself, 'Of course I can if I want to, I'm not going to let anyone tell me I can't.'"

She returned to Maynooth in 2014, restarting in first year with a new combination of subjects.

Claire graduated last month with her BA in Geography and History, and went straight into the PME, a combination of work experience and study.

In the past few weeks, she began her placement at the 770-pupil St Mary's Holy Faith school in Glasnevin, Dublin. Her routine is two days a week teaching history and geography there, and three days in Maynooth.



Shorten teaching a geography class in St Mary's Holy Faith, Glasnevin, Dublin.  
Photo: Tony Gavin

And, that, she says, is the "message we want to get out; It's about having faith in themselves, and hope".

Maynooth University has a strong record in enrolling students from under-represented groups and according to Prof Sharon Todd, head of its Department of Education, they are "quite used to students with different disabilities, but Claire is our first fully blind student".

Claire's return to MU in 2014 prompted discussions between the education department and the college Access Office and, apart from some obvious practical supports, such as particular software or the need to provide class material very early, they were very much guided by Claire as to what she required.

"We decided just to approach Claire and ask her what works," says Prof Todd.

In return, she says, what Claire brought to Maynooth is "a very nice way for us to interrogate the way we do things. We have to be a bit more reflective about how we teach our own students - it's about being inclusive".

Prof Todd hopes the lessons they are learning, and sharing, as teacher educators will spill out into the system as their students take up teaching roles.

As an example, she says "even when we are using visual material, just to to describe what is happening - it is not such a big thing".

While an undergraduate, Claire lived on the university campus, but is now back at home. In anticipation of her placement, she had worked out her two-bus route from Ballinteer on the southside of Dublin to Glasnevin on the northside, and was satisfied that it was "very easy". However, as part of the ongoing college supports, Maynooth provides a taxi in the morning for the cross-city journey, while she travels home on public transport.

Lecturer Angela Rickard, course leader for the first year of the PME programme, says Claire is an ideal candidate for her chosen career. "The minute you meet her, you realise this person is perfectly capable of teaching. She demonstrates the kind of qualities we would look for in a teacher. She thinks about what will work, what her strategy will be for certain students."

Rose Ryan, Director of Access at MU, says

“the key to Claire's success is herself - she is passionate about her subject and the characteristics she has will make her a wonderful teacher.”

Because it is important children see themselves reflected in their teachers, she believes Claire will be great role model and will effect change.

This year, Maynooth has about 700 students with disabilities, including 23 with visual impairment, 18 with hearing impairment and more than 100 with mental health difficulties. The college is currently involved in a major project called 'Turn to Teaching' to promote diversity in the profession by reaching out to under-represented groups.

<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/education/going-to-college/woman-26-left-blind-after-brain-tumour-surgery-defies-the-odds-to-train-as-teacher-36194340.html>

“It's all going absolutely brilliantly,” says Claire. “The kids don't take any heed that I am blind, although they are very helpful. The staff are amazing. It is what I have dreamed of. After so long waiting, it is exactly what I want to do for the rest of my life. I love every minute.”

Even teaching such a visual subject as geography presents no issues and she brings with her the benefits of her learning experiences in NCBI, such as the value of touch.

"I have always wanted to be an interactive teacher," she says.

In the classroom, Claire uses presentation tools such as Powerpoint, as necessary, to display images, such as maps or diagrams "and once I know what the picture is, I can explain". As concepts become more complex, she will create 3D models.



School Principal Bernie Bourke

School principal Bernie Bourke says the first time she spoke to Claire on the phone, she "just knew" she had the makings of a great teacher. "She is innovative, bubbly, motivational. We are delighted to have her," she says.

The principal taught for years in Rosmini Community School, Drumcondra, Dublin, which is closely associated with the National Education Centre for Blind Children, and from the outset, was "very comfortable" with the idea of having a teacher who is blind.

Beyond Claire's skill in teaching, she already sees the extras her new trainee is bringing to the school. She recalls when Claire entered a classroom and raised her arm to illustrate a gesture: "She said to the pupils 'there is no point doing that, I won't see it'. All the communication is verbal, that is how they connect."

Because of the way Claire has dealt with adversity, the principal sees her great capacity to inspire pupils.

“The kids have great respect for her - they see her and admire her. She is living proof that everybody can achieve their goals.”