

# SCIENCE

September to December 2016 was an exciting time for Science education. The Curriculum Specification for Junior Cycle Science was introduced in classrooms across the country. In line with the Specification going live in schools, JCT Science began CPD workshop Day 2 with Science teachers. The fitting theme for this day is 'Moving into the Junior Cycle Science Classroom'. During CPD Day 2, teachers are given space for professional dialogue with colleagues regarding their thoughts, concerns and ideas around Junior Cycle Science. They are provided with professional learning opportunities that help develop their assessment practices in line with the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015. Ideas for developing pedagogical practice are shared, and assumptions around investigation in Science are challenged. Teachers also have an opportunity to develop ideas and collaborative practices with colleagues in subject departments and neighbouring schools, facilitated by the cluster model of CPD. Science CPD Day 2 will continue to run from January until March.

JCT Science are also supporting teachers at public events. At the recent BT Young Scientists' and Technology Exhibition, the Science Team worked with a vast number of teachers on an individual and subject department basis on Science planning. The Science Team have developed a suite of planning resources including videos, sample term plans and templates. These are all available on our website.

Finally, be sure to join in the online conversation! JCT Science now has its own Twitter handle.

Follow @jctscience for ongoing ideas, resources, and CPD updates to support your enactment of Junior Cycle Science.

efforts of the teachers and principals of the participating schools. Developing practice and leading learning for students in an innovative and new area of learning like Coding is a rewarding, but challenging task. The openness of teachers to contribute to the research element of the project and inform the pathway for schools is hugely appreciated.

A report will be developed which will share the learning from this initiative. A further CPD initiative is being planned to support schools who are committed to incorporating the Coding short course into their Junior Cycle programme.

The specification for the Junior Cycle short course in Coding is available at <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/>



L to R: Clare McInerney, Lero, Stephen O'Meara, Nenagh College, Kate O'Brien, Nenagh College and Michael Carey, Short Courses Team Leader during an Exploring Coding CPD event in the University of Limerick.



Teachers Orla Bergin (Coláiste Bhaile Chláir, Claregalway) and Miriam Bergin (Coláiste Mhuire, Thurles) during an 'Exploring Coding' CPD event in the University of Limerick.

## Junior Cycle Visual Art

The JCT Visual Art team are delighted to have begun to facilitate the first series of workshops in the **Introduction to Junior Cycle Visual Art Specification** across the country. In the workshop Art teachers are guided and supported in considering the aim, exploring the strands and elements and becoming familiar with the new language in the specification. The workshop has been designed to give time and space to Art teachers to process the content, to exchange ideas and share classroom practice with colleagues. Opportunities to engage with learning outcomes and to the identify rich learning experiences for students is also provided.

The team looks forward to meeting Art teachers over the coming weeks as they plan to introduce the specification to 1st years in September 2017. All materials from our CPD days will be available on the Visual Art section of our website [www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie)

## Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)

So much is happening right now for Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in junior cycle. Having begun our CPD Day 1 for teachers of MFL before Christmas, the momentum is set to continue in the coming months. The opportunity for teachers from neighbouring schools to come together to develop their understanding of the specification, as well as to share practice with colleagues, is truly exciting. The MFL specification in junior cycle supports us as teachers to further enhance teaching, learning and assessment. Junior cycle is, as we know, a pivotal stage in a student's language learning journey. It is often a student's first encounter with the chosen language(s) and as such is a time for them to 'enjoy a language-learning experience that will facilitate and encourage them to continue learning languages in future' (Specification, p. 6). The integrated nature of the strands of Communicative competence, Language awareness and Socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness optimises student engagement and learning in a meaningful way. Activities modelled on the day give an insight into the student experience and breathe life into the specification.

The MFL team is looking forward to working with you.

The Specification for Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages is now available on [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie)

## 'Exploring Coding' Update

This initiative was designed to support schools and teachers in exploring the new short course in Coding.

A total of 22 participating schools were supported by JCT, in conjunction with Lero – The Irish Software Research Centre – and Intel Ireland. As well as receiving training and online support, Intel Ireland donated a set of electronic devices to each school to allow students engage in design-related activities.

The initiative concludes in February 2017, and it is important to acknowledge the

## Welcome



Dr. Pádraig Kirk

Welcome to the 8th edition of our newsletter, JCT Today. The purpose of this newsletter is to update you on our work across all of the different subject areas, and more! We are about to embark on delivering our subject specific CPD nationally using a new model of delivery, the school cluster model. This model will see a cluster of schools, normally 6 to 8 schools, close to students on the same day, with all teachers coming together to engage in our CPD workshops. We piloted this model in counties Louth, Galway, Roscommon and Donegal before Christmas which proved that it could be done. Teachers particularly enjoyed the opportunity to meet and work through the new changes and challenges at junior cycle level with colleagues from neighbouring schools. This model also minimises disruption to teaching and learning in schools because instead of being staggered across the school year, all of our workshops take place in just one day for all teachers. All of our Advisors and Associates, across our whole-school CPD, leadership, subject, short course and L2LP teams, are looking forward to engaging with you over the coming months. I hope that you will have the opportunity to come along to our workshops and that you find the experience to be informative, and beneficial in your teaching.

Dr. Pádraig Kirk  
Director



JCT bids farewell to our colleague Mr Paddy Flood, former Deputy Director, who took up the position of Director of Schools with Cavan & Monaghan ETB in October 2016.

## Physical Education within the Wellbeing area of learning

Physical Education is an important component of the new Wellbeing area of learning which will be introduced from September 2017. Students must study physical education following either the existing junior cycle syllabus in physical education (2003) or the specification for the Junior Cycle short course in physical education (2016). Many schools are now considering the new short course as it allows students the opportunity to formally profile their achievement in physical education for the first time at Junior Cycle level.

Within the current nationwide cluster CPD events, physical education teachers have an opportunity to participate in a tailored CPD event. This day allows teachers to explore the key messages regarding physical education within the new Wellbeing area of learning. Teachers can develop and share their approaches to planning and assessment using learning outcomes from the new short course. It is also an opportunity to consider the first steps in introducing the Wellbeing area of learning.

The specification for the Junior Cycle short course in physical education is available at <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/>

## English

December saw the English team delivering our next full day of CPD across the country and we look forward to continuing to deliver it over the coming months. The day this year considers areas such as: Exploration of our vision and values for JC English, engaging with learning outcomes, deepening our understanding of the process of assessing student work in the CBAs, exploration of the Final Assessment and Assessment Task and consideration of the value,

purpose and range of modes of assessment for teaching and learning.

December also saw the completion of CBA2, the 'Collection of the Student's Texts', the associated Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting and the Assessment Task for the first time. For students currently in third year and who did not have an opportunity to complete their CBA2 and related Assessment Task in December 2016, a second window to do so is available in April 2017.

In November 2016, the team hosted a live online Q&A on both CBA2 and the Assessment Task. A transcript of all the questions and answers from this event can be accessed on [www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie) Further

supports for teachers around both CBAs and the Assessment Task continue to be available on [www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie)

The English team have also been facilitating two hour in-school workshops to English Departments nationwide. These workshops are resourced from the 14 hours of professional time allocated to English teachers for 2016/17. At present, the team are offering workshops on: 'Collaborative Planning and Sharing Resources', 'Formative Assessment in Junior Cycle English' and 'Preparation for the SLAR'. For further details on these workshops and/or to request a visit from an English advisor, please email [info@jct.ie](mailto:info@jct.ie)



## Business Studies

The Business Studies team is looking forward to delivering our Business Studies CPD workshop as part of the Cluster model. Our workshop is informed by the feedback received from teachers and further supports the new Specification for Business Studies.

Our second CPD workshop centres on the following themes:

- Exploring the Business Studies specification and deepening teachers understanding of Classroom-Based Assessments, with particular emphasis placed on the first CBA entitled 'Business in Action'.
- Teachers collective understanding of a unit of learning is developed through their experience of rich student learning activities relating to the consumer.
- Exploring formative feedback and how feedback provides an opportunity for student reflection to support learning
- Business Studies departments are provided with the space and support to plan for the creation of units of learning which they may use going forward.

All of our resources are available on the JCT website [www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie), under the Business Studies section. The team is looking forward to meeting and supporting teachers over the coming weeks.

## ATS2020



The in-school pilot phase of our ATS2020 research project is well underway and we are delighted to have 68 teachers across the country engaging in the pilot. Teachers are focusing on particular elements of the Junior Cycle key skills, using formative assessment to support student learning, developing learner autonomy and student reflection. Our pilot schools are also using ePortfolios to support student learning.

Teachers in the pilot project have engaged in two CPD sessions and initial webinars have taken place to support schools in setting up their ePortfolio platforms. A programme of webinars is being developed for the new term to promote collaboration and sharing of ideas and practice. JCT, in association with our partners H2, are currently developing a resource sharing site for the project to support teachers in collaborating. This site will host a range of support materials for teachers in the areas of key skills, ongoing assessment and ePortfolios.

JCT presented work from the Irish pilot schools at the most recent ATS2020 International Partner Meeting in Tampere in Finland in October 2016 and had an opportunity to visit a Finnish school and engage with teachers from the 'Finnish model'.



Irish partners pictured with their Finnish colleagues at the recent International partner meeting in Tampere, Finland:  
(L-R) Pádraig Kirk (JCT) Jarmo Viteli (University of Tampere), John Hurley (H2 Learning), Sinéad Tuohy (JCT), Anne Rongas (University of Tampere), Kaisa Honkonen (University of Tampere), Maria Fojk (H2 Learning).

## Gaeilge

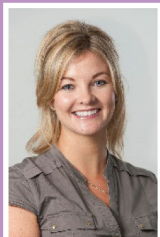
Ceapadh Foireann na Gaeilge mar fhoireann ábhair de chuid SSM (An tSraith Shóisearach do Mhúinteoirí) i mí Lúnasa 2016. Faoi láthair, tá ceathrar Comhairleoir lánaimseartha ann maraon le cúigear Comhalta (páirtaimseartha) agus táthar i mbun próiseas earcaíochta chun an fhoireann a mhéadú.

Is í an aidhm atá ag Foireann Ghaeilge SSM ná Forbairt Ghairmiúil Leanúnach (FGL) agus acmhainní ardchaighdeáin a sholáthar do mhúinteoirí Gaeilge ar fud na tíre le

linn chur i bhfeidhm na Sonraíochtaí Gaeilge don tSraith Shóisearach.

Cuirfidh an Fhoireann ábhar agus acmhainní ar fáil a thacóidh le múinteoirí dul i ngleic go praiticiúil leis na Sonraíochtaí agus a chuideoidh le forbairt tuisciana, eolais agus scileanna na ndaltaí. Gné lárnach den FGL a chuirfear ar fáil is ea cur chuige dalta-lárnach ar an bpleanáil, ar an teagasc agus ar an bhfoghlaim.

Chomh maith leis na laethanta FGL, cuirfidh Foireann na Gaeilge ábhar tacaíochta ar líne ar fáil. Tacóidh na hacmhainní seo le múinteoirí agus iad i mbun pleanála dá gcuid ranganna féin agus iad ag comhoibriú agus ag comhroinnt cleachtais le chéile.



## Leadership

As instructional leaders, Principals and Deputy Principals play an important role in leading curriculum and instructional change in schools. The DES circular letter 0024/2026, outlined a number of significant changes that schools need to implement for the academic year 2017. In response to this, the JCT leadership team developed and rolled out a national programme of workshops on curriculum planning and timetabling in the Autumn of 2016. The resources for this workshop are on the JCT website under leadership/ resources. We are currently planning the second leadership workshop for 2016/17. The topics to be addressed will include, implementing the wellbeing guidelines in schools, the next circular letter and the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement. The roll out for this workshop will occur in the weeks before the Easter holidays. All school leaders will be invited to attend.

## WELLBEING

The JCT Wellbeing Team has been busy liaising with our educational partners as we develop and design our CPD supports. Our CPD aims to support teachers in this new area of learning that builds on existing practice in schools. It aims to support student learning **about** and **for** wellbeing. It is a whole experience of wellbeing in curricular, policy, culture, and relationships. Supporting a young person's wellbeing in school requires a well-planned programme which enjoys the commitment and enthusiasm of school management, teachers, parents, students, and the wider school community

JCT training will support schools in examining current and potential wellbeing provision. The NCCA Wellbeing guidelines focus on building the capacity of the whole-school community to support student wellbeing, as well as supporting the role of the individual teacher. JCT also supports the role of teachers in developing engaging lessons that focus on knowledge, understanding and skills, through engagement with Learning Outcomes. The JCT CPD programme will support schools in collaborative planning for meaningful engagement in the design and implementation of their Wellbeing programme. Schools are at different stages of development with regard to their individual and unique Wellbeing programme. JCT support will reflect this, in the context of planning and school specific professional development. The NCCA guidelines provide the backdrop for JCT engagement with schools and teachers.

The focus of our Wellbeing workshops at whole staff level will be on the following:

- Exploring what, why and how Wellbeing matters for teaching and learning, and connects to the Junior Cycle Framework, 2015.
- Examining how students learn **about** wellbeing and **for** wellbeing in all subjects. The focus will be on creating positive curriculum engagement guided by the Framework for Junior Cycle and the Six Indicators of Wellbeing.
- Exploring how Wellbeing is visible in the curriculum, culture, policy and relationships in schools.
- Suggested first steps for setting up a Wellbeing Team and drafting the Wellbeing Programme.



The Minister for Education & Skills, Mr. Richard Bruton with Ms. Betty McLaughlin, Wellbeing Team Leader, at the recent Deep Dive into Wellbeing Regional Education Forum in Merlin College, Galway.

## Whole-school Support and CPD

In Autumn 2016 our Whole-school CPD team provided supports in schools across the ETB and Community and Comprehensive sectors predominantly. The day was put together in collaboration with schools but many contained an updates session on Junior Cycle Reform with special reference to Circular 24/2016. Other aspects included workshops on Assessment, Statements of Learning and Short Courses.

Teacher evaluation was very positive. It is clear that the reform is taking root in schools as more subjects are phased in. Our whole-school support team has designed a new CPD day for any school coming into the reform process for the first time. This merges previous elements, the various updates and reflects the experience gained in the reform in the subjects of English, Business Studies and Science.

Whole-school personnel will be participating in the cluster model roll out in Spring 2017 through facilitation of a workshop on the Junior Cycle Programme in Action. The team is happy to advise schools interested in taking a 3rd closure day this year (permitted under the terms of Circular letter 0024/2016) on how to use this day to build capacity in the school around junior cycle.

## Assessment

This year JCT has been on an exciting journey in the world of assessment. We have seen the welcome addition of an assessment team to our organisation, comprised of associate teachers, advisors and senior management. The team engage in research, pilot new practices in their own classrooms, design resource material for schools and work closely with teachers in CPD sessions. The team works alongside whole school team in providing support for schools.

To date, schools have received support in developing formative assessment

practices in the classroom, a core tenet of the approach to assessment in the new junior cycle. This includes exploring how formative assessment underpins the classroom-based assessments, the assessment task, the subject learning and assessment review meetings and the new final state examinations. Over 200 schools in the country have received direct support in this area. From a suite of options, schools have chosen the type of support most relevant to their context.

Assessment is on everyone's radar here in JCT! The new approach to assessment,

introduced under the junior cycle framework, is also a key component of all support provided for teachers by the subject, short course, level 2 learning programme and wellbeing teams. Teachers are given opportunities to engage with the new assessment structures and explore ways they can be translated into daily classroom practice.

All assessment support will be ongoing until 2022. Assessment has never been more to the fore in the support that we offer and we look forward to the year ahead.



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