

Assessment of Transversal Skills (ATS2020) European Project

JCT is delighted to be a partner in a new innovative research project. The Assessment of Transversal Skills (ATS2020) Project involves researchers, students and teachers from 11 countries across the EU.

Transversal Skills refer to a broad range of Key Skills that are known to be critically important to success in school, further education and the world of work. They include the ability to think critically, take initiative, use digital tools to solve problems and work collaboratively.

The focus of the Irish phase of the project will be the Key Skills of Junior Cycle education and their development through teaching, assessment and learning. 30 Irish schools will be involved and the first training day for teachers is taking place in Dublin in April 2016. We are joined by our partners in education H2 Learning who will assist in supporting the in-school pilot.

Schools will be supported in embedding ICT in teaching, assessment and learning in their practice

Students will receive support in engaging in goal-setting and self-reflection which in turn will help them to become more autonomous learners

Teachers will have an opportunity to undertake CPD in ongoing assessment, activation of Key Skills in their classrooms and embedding ICT to enhance teaching, learning and assessment.

At an EU level, the impact of the ATS2020 learning model will be validated and evaluated using mixed-method evaluation, collecting data from the piloting countries, in a range of classrooms from 250 schools involving 10,000 learners.

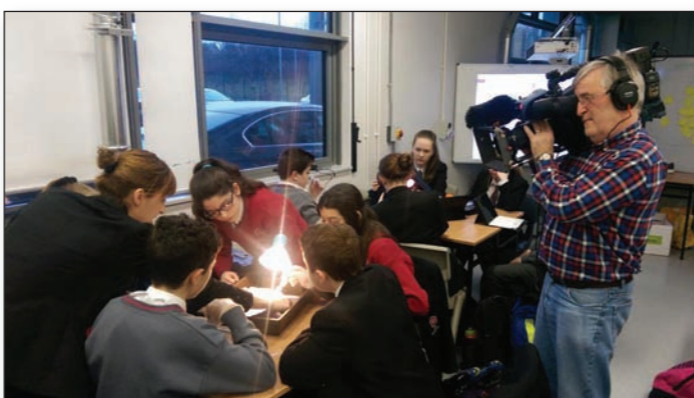
Further information on the ATS2020 project will be available on the Irish ATS2020 website <http://ats2020.eu/ireland> which launches at the end of April.



ATS2020
Assessment of Transversal Skills



ATS2020 team meet to discuss the European project.



Making teaching strategy videos.

Business Studies

The new Business Studies subject specification will be introduced in schools from September 2016. The JCT Business Studies team have been delivering workshops for teachers since March to prepare teachers for this curricular change. The workshops provide clarity around the curricular change involved in the new specification and how to use the specification to plan for effective teaching and learning. Over the course of the day participants spend time familiarising themselves with the learning outcomes in the three integrated strands of 'Personal Finance', 'Enterprise' and 'Our Economy'. The workshops are interactive and provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with one another. Formative assessment is embedded in all activities and classroom strategies and these are explored and modeled further on the day. Feedback to date has been very positive in relation to the new specification and the workshops.

Websites

The Business Studies section of www.jct.ie is now live.

This is an invaluable resource for teachers. It contains information on planning and assessment, as well as other helpful links. Upon visiting the site teachers should join our mailing list to ensure they receive updates on all forthcoming workshops, events and resources. Our twitter handle for Business Studies is **#JCTBusSt**

The Business Studies Specification is available online and can be found at:
<http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/Business-Studies>

Welcome

As we approach the end of the 2015/2016 school year, JCT looks back on what was a busy and challenging, yet rewarding year for everybody in the organisation. Our different programmes were delivered in schools and education centres across the country which saw over 10,000 teachers engage with our different courses and materials. Whether it was whole-staff, English or Science CPD, Business Studies, Level 2 Learning Programmes or Short Course CPD, the feedback from school leaders and teachers across the board was positive. We continue to develop creative and innovative CPD programmes, and all feedback we receive helps us to ensure that our supports continue to meet the needs of teachers. We look forward to a day when all teachers will be in a position to engage with and benefit from our services.

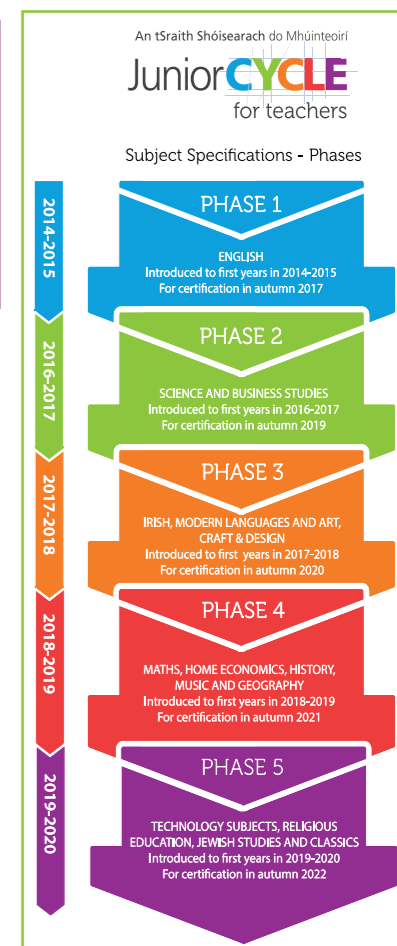
Circular 24/2016 spells out the arrangements for the delivery of Junior Cycle CPD next year. We are clearly entering a new era of CPD delivery at post-primary level in this country. JCT will endeavour to ensure that our CPD programmes deliver maximum impact for teachers, and for the school system in general. Each school has the option of closing for up to three full days next year to accommodate Junior Cycle activities. JCT will work hard to service as much of this time for individual schools as possible.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the teachers that engaged with us during the year, and I thank also all of our education partners that we worked closely with throughout the year, including the network of education centres. Working together we can make change happen, working together we can make change work for all of us – school leaders, teachers, parents and students. JCT is here to help, advise and support teachers throughout the reform process.

Dr. Pádraig Kirk
Director, CPD for Junior Cycle



Dr. Pádraig Kirk



Exploring Coding – A pilot initiative

This pilot CPD initiative is designed to support schools and teachers in trialling aspects of the new short course in Coding. JCT has linked with Intel Ireland and Lero – The Irish Software Research Centre, to provide key supports which includes; tailored training, online support and electronic devices which can allow students engage in technology and design-related activities. 19 participating schools were chosen from over 120 entries and have already participated in initial CPD events in early 2016, and are contributing to an online community to share their experiences and practice. The initiative will:

- Examine the current provision within schools for ICT-related curriculum components at Junior Cycle
- Collate resources which can support the implementation of the new Coding short course
- Capture the experiences of schools in their trialling of the new short course
- Explore further options to support schools and teachers in their implementation of the short course in Coding

Due to the unprecedented level of interest by schools in participating in this project, JCT are considering a further initiative in the coming months to share the learning from 'Exploring Coding'. Further information is available in the Short Courses section of www.jct.ie

Level 2 Short Courses

In 2015, JCT and a group of teachers from six special schools worked together to develop unique short courses for Level 2 students. These short courses are tailored to address the specific needs of the student in the context of each special school. Examples of the Level 2 short course titles are:

Water, Water Everywhere **Grow It, Cook It, Eat It!**

A project report is available in the Short Courses section of www.jct.ie



Michael Carey, JCT, Paul Phelan (Intel), Clare McInerney (Lero) and Conor Power, JCT at a recent 'Exploring Coding' CPD event in Kildare.

Prof. Pasi Sahlberg meets JCT Deputy Directors Karol Sadleir and Paddy Flood at an Education Conference in NUI Galway, 2015.



SCHOOL CLOSURE DAYS FOR JUNIOR CYCLE 2016/2017

JCT has engaged heavily this year with ETB and Community and Comprehensive schools providing whole-school support. This service places the needs of the school at the heart of the CPD process. School leaders and teachers have considerable autonomy in determining the content covered in the whole-school CPD day. A typical structure to this day includes:

- Introductory session, exploring the Framework for Junior Cycle, its context and the phased introduction of subjects
- Schools choose to focus on either Key Skills, Assessment, Short Courses, Statements of Learning or Level 2 Learning Programmes
- Teachers explore a range of teaching strategies to embed concepts in their practice
- The school plans for the next steps on their Junior Cycle journey

In order to avail of this whole-school day principals first have to register for the service on www.jctregistration.ie. The appropriate Team Leader from JCT then contacts schools individually to arrange the CPD requested.

The Department recently issued Circular 0024/2016 'Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to

school years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017'. This Circular sets out a detailed set of procedures for the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015). The circular gives approval to schools who are implementing the Framework in its entirety to close, subject to Board of Management approval, for a day of whole-school planning and self-evaluation for Junior Cycle implementation up to 2021/22.

To facilitate CPD activities in 2016/17, approval is also given for two school closure days (in addition to the whole-school planning day referred to above), subject to the approval of the board of management. Accordingly, schools may close for a total of three days in 2016/17.

The first of these closure days will be used for whole-school CPD/planning purposes.

The second closure day will be used to facilitate CPD activities, including subject specific CPD delivered by JCT.

The third closure day can be used, at the discretion of the Board of Management, to facilitate professional activities and agreed professional time and other professional collaboration activities related to planning and delivering the junior cycle programme. Schools may also opt to schedule this through full-day or half-day closures.

A further circular will issue in 2017 for the school years 2017/18 and 2018/19.

The Whole school team are in the final stages of designing content around the areas of Joint Practice Development (JPD) and Activating the Digital Elements of the Key Skills for whole-school CPD days in the coming year.



ETB CEO's Paddy Lavelle and Seán Ashe talking to participants in Intel at our recent Coding CPD day.



Minister Jan O'Sullivan visits the JCT stand at the IGC Conference 2016.

ENGLISH

This has been a busy year for the English team. The second English CPD Day took place in education centres across the country in November, December, March and April. In-school support visits for English subject departments commenced in January and continue to be in great demand. Schools were able to choose one of four different support options:

1. Collaborative Planning and Developing & Sharing Resources
2. Preparing for the Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meeting
3. Formative Assessment in the English Classroom
4. Using Poetry as a Stimulus for the Classroom Based Assessments

The English team have also designed a number of on-line in-school support screencasts that subject departments or individual teachers can access. These screencasts have been designed to support teachers/English subject departments with the implementation of the English Specification. The screencasts can be found in the CPD Supports section of our website www.jct.ie

An exciting new development in Irish education will take place in many schools across the country this May with the first Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings taking place following the Oral Communication Classroom Based Assessment. A SLAR meeting is where teachers meet to share and discuss samples of their assessments of student work and build common understanding about the quality of student learning. The meeting will be facilitated by a member of the English department. We are currently offering a full CPD Day to teachers of English who have been nominated by their school to facilitate the English SLAR meeting. This facilitators' CPD day focuses on developing the teachers' facilitation skills, as well as their knowledge and understanding of the two Classroom Based Assessments in Junior Cycle English. A number of resources to support the facilitator in their role have also been developed. These resources are available to download on our website. Check out our website at www.jct.ie

L2LP

The L2LP team have engaged with almost 1,000 teachers and have visited over 80 special schools to date. Our aim for this year was to revisit schools and meet with new teachers in additional schools. Our team has grown from 6 to 17 Associates nationwide as the interest in the Level 2 Learning Programmes increases. The team are all practicing teachers from a range of special and mainstream schools.

The L2LP Programme is well advanced in many special schools with some schools now entering their second and third years of the programme. Preliminary interviews with the Principal and lead teacher ahead of their second full day of CPD allowed the day to be customised for each school. Our second CPD day focuses specifically on the teaching, learning and assessment of the learning outcomes within the programme. The focus next year will be on the development of short courses within a school, and in particular within the Level 2 context.

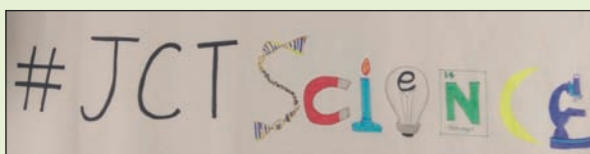
L2LP CPD will be incorporated into our school closure facilitated CPD days in mainstream schools next year. Some post-primary schools are already engaging with the programme and are being supported by school visits from the L2LP team.

The L2LP section of our website (www.jct.ie) has been updated and you will find resources and videos here for each of the Priority Learning Units, sample plans and timetables, curriculum links and sample assessment booklets.

Follow us on Twitter @JCFforTeachers



L2LP teachers engaging in whole-school CPD.



Since January 2016, 76 CPD events were rolled out across the country to science teachers in ETB and Community and Comprehensive schools. Science CPD was also provided through the medium of Irish.

Our Science workshops focused on the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) and the Science Specification, the inquiry continuum in Junior Cycle Science and working with learning outcomes. Supporting documents published online include the Junior Cycle Framework (2015), the Science Specification, the Science Assessment Guidelines and DES Circular letter 0024/2016.

Over 1,100 teachers attended these workshops and feedback from teachers was very positive. That feedback will shape the next round of CPD provision which the team are now developing.

Over 200 teachers have registered for our elective workshops in partnership with Science Foundation Ireland. These focus on the learning outcomes in Earth and Space. The Science Gallery workshop on 16 April was oversubscribed. Here, Science teachers worked with scientists and designers

to develop novel activities to promote student understanding, skills and values in science. The Step into Science project, with Epi-STEM, is working with 40 teachers to develop student science discussion and communication skills as the basis for school Science debates to be held during Science Week from 13 - 20 November 2016. Parents will be involved in this process.

The Science team was privileged to host the JCT stand at the Ploughing Championships in Laois, the BT Young Scientist exhibition in Dublin and the ISTA conference in the Limerick Institute of Technology. These events allowed us to engage positively with the general public and with teachers.

All CPD materials from our CPD days and elective courses are available on the Science section of our website www.jct.ie. More material will be made available over the coming months to support teachers as they plan for the introduction of the Science Specification in Autumn 2016.



JCT and SciFest personnel at the JCT stand at BTYSTE 2016



Pictured at a recent meeting of JCT and SESS personnel are (L to R) Madeline Hickey, Director SESS, Judith Callan Gough, L2LP Team Leader JCT, Angela Martin, SESS and Karol Sadleir, Deputy Director JCT.



The JCT Science team.



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