Welcome to Linked

This term’s newsletter kicks off with a colourful feature showcasing some of the many highlights of the Education and Library Boards’ hugely successful ‘Celebrate Education’ event, which was held at the Waterfront Hall last term.

Northern Ireland’s use of technology in education, which has been hailed as ‘ahead of the game’, is the subject of a report on pages four and five. This is followed by round-up of the ever-increasing range of resources and facilities available on Learning NI to support teaching and learning.

This edition of Linked also features news and updates from a range of education partner organisations, alongside a selection of reports submitted by schools which provide an interesting insight into the ongoing implementation of the revised curriculum.

As always, we welcome your comments, correspondence and contributions. Please contact us at info@pmbni.org.uk if you have a suggestion or story you would like to share with us.

Linked is also available online on the www.nicurriculum.org.uk website. Previous editions of the newsletter can be found by clicking on ‘PMB News’.

Have you logged on to www.neelb.tv yet?

This web-based educational television channel, developed and managed by the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB), provides video and audio resources for education professionals throughout Northern Ireland that can be accessed in a variety of formats, on demand and at a time that suits the viewer.

Currently, NEELB TV hosts a number of online programmes covering a wide range of topics. Among the most recently added content to the website is a major online conference aimed at supporting primary schools across Northern Ireland in the effective use of data.

The conference, which is introduced by the Chief Inspector of Schools, contains video presentations by serving principals from a cross-section of primary schools in Northern Ireland. It is hoped that this opportunity to share good practice will be of value to schools as part of school self evaluation and improvement. The online conference will be supported by subsequent face-to-face cluster meetings and further online collaboration.

Further information can be found at www.neelb.tv.

Video-conferencing is transforming the classroom learning experience for children and young people in schools across Northern Ireland. A report entitled ‘Technology in Education’ can be found on pages 4 and 5.
Two

A celebration of 36 years of Education, Library and Youth Services provided by the five Education and Library Boards took place at Belfast’s Waterfront Hall on Friday 4th December.

The hugely entertaining programme of music, song, dance, drama and comedy from the cream of Northern Ireland’s young talent, was compered by the BBC’s Noel Thompson, headlined by the Ulster Youth Orchestra, and performed in front of a sell-out audience.

The event programme featured video messages from a host of local celebrities reminiscing about their school days.

Stars from the world of television and entertainment included Brian Kennedy, Barry Douglas, Tim McGarry, Christine Bleakley, Lynda Bryans, Sarah Travers, Pamela Ballantine and Nualla McKeever.

Among the many schools from all five board areas represented were UK Rock Challenge winners Ashfield Girls’ High in Belfast, Rosstulla School in Newtownabbey, and Dalriada School in Ballymoney.

The Ulster Youth Orchestra paid tribute to the music of the Beatles and performed the stirring ‘Ride of the Valkyries’ by Richard Wagner.

Speaking at the event, the President of the Association of Northern Ireland Education and Library Boards, Rev Selwoode Graham commented: “During the past 36 years our Education Service has gained a reputation which is the envy of these islands. All this was achieved during a period of community tension and civil unrest.

“Our Boards have served us well – supporting our schools, providing high quality services to pupils, staff and the general public and ensuring our Education Service played a role in developing a society at peace with itself. We are celebrating what has been achieved over almost four decades.

“During that period there have been many significant developments in the Education, Library and Youth Services which have been taken forward by the Boards - the transfer of children in special care schools from Health and Social Care to Education, the introduction of new approaches to learning, a revised curriculum, the introduction of Local Management of Schools, the development of technology to assist teaching and learning and delivering library services, new ways of identifying and meeting special educational needs and many, many more,” Rev Graham said.

Arthur Webb, BELB Arts Education Adviser and producer of the “Celebrate Education” show, said: “We are delighted to have the opportunity to showcase some of the most creative talents of children and young people from across Northern Ireland. Since their establishment in 1973, the Education and Library Boards have positively promoted and supported arts education, enabling us to celebrate the unique and special richness of our pupils’ skills and talents.”

“I would like to pay particular tribute to the teachers who prepared the children and young people for the event. It was such a great idea to mark this occasion and it will be a wonderful learning experience and positive memory for so many of our children and young people for many years to come.”

Celebrate Education
Technology in Education

A world leading authority in the use of interactive technology in schools has praised Northern Ireland’s use of technology in education as a model of excellence to be used in other parts of the world, particularly North America.

Julia Shildmyer-Heighway of the Centre for Interactive Learning and Collaboration based in Indiana, USA, made the comments during ‘A Good School Knows No Boundaries’ conference. Ms Shildmyer-Heighway, who specialises in the use of interactive video-conferencing, said that Northern Ireland stood out internationally for its “level of commitment” to technology, specifically video-conferencing integration within education.

She said: “Schools in Northern Ireland are very fortunate to have one central point, such as C2k, for supporting their technology needs compared to the US which is extremely fragmented. The result is that technology adoption and integration in schools is much easier when a support network has been built which makes processes simple. Judging by the success of this model in effectively supporting 1200 schools in Northern Ireland it provides an excellent template for such an approach to be adopted in the United States and elsewhere in the world.”

C2k is the public sector body tasked on behalf of the five Education and Library Boards with the delivery of education technology services to schools in Northern Ireland.

The Department of Education, through C2k, will continue to provide all schools with access to world leading technology resources.

Virtual classrooms now a reality in schools

According to Jimmy Stewart, C2k Director, schools across Northern Ireland are perfectly positioned to take on the challenges and opportunities of the digital world.

“Thanks to a far-sighted investment by the Department of Education in the technology provided to all schools through the C2k service, every child in school today has access to as rich a range of educational technology and digital resources as will be found anywhere in the world,” he said.

“During the last five years C2k has established a single educational network which joins all schools together and delivers relevant and modern digital resources into every classroom in support of the revised curriculum.

“The bulk of this initial investment was in infrastructure and connectivity - to provide access to an expanding pool of digital resources and tools that help young people develop the appropriate skills to live and work in the world of the future. This technology supports personalisation of every pupil’s learning experience and encourages teachers to become managers of learning.

“In schools across Northern Ireland the technology is enabling young people to work at their own pace, in ways that suit their learning preferences. They can collaborate with other children from around the world in real time. They can discuss writing and storytelling with the authors of the books they are reading. They can visit NASA or the Louvre without leaving their desks and see, at first hand, the wonders of science and of the past. They can submit their homework and have it marked online by their teachers. They can share their work with their parents and a world-wide audience. All of this is now possible in every school and as a result places Northern Ireland as a model of best practice for the rest of the world,” he added.

But what will schools of the future be like?

“The technology that is now present in our classrooms has laid a foundation to break down the barriers between schools and between home and school,” explained Jimmy Stewart.

“There is a growing recognition that formal learning will increasingly extend beyond the boundaries of our schools and beyond compulsory school ages. Northern Ireland’s learning environment now has the potential to link any school with the home and with other learning institutions within and beyond Northern Ireland.

“Already we are seeing measurable benefits from the introduction of these services. Teachers are finding that using educational technology in much of their work motivates pupils and improves the teacher-pupil relationship. It is particularly effective in developing critical skills and encourages pupils to take more ownership of their own learning. Young people quickly embrace the technology and find that it is fun to use, helps them produce high quality work and encourages them to engage with their teachers to agree their learning paths. Increasingly they are using the online services well beyond the normal school day with the network really only being ‘quiet’ between 1am and 6am.

“However, technology is constantly changing, becoming more personal, more portable and more pervasive. This technology will change the very nature of the schools within which we educate our children. Our schools will become community-based learning centres that provide flexible learning spaces and flexible programmes of study that can be shared with partner schools and with the wider community. Parental involvement with the learning programme will become the norm and services and support will be available beyond the normal school day.

“The teaching practices in our schools acknowledge that pupils will have access to a much richer pool of information than ever before and will be living in a connected community that takes social networking for granted. The relationships between teachers and pupils will become more personal and pupils will engage in many more collaborative activities with shared outcomes. The assessment systems will need to inform the learning paths that individual pupils are encouraged to follow and will need to address collaboration.

“Education will continue to be a very high priority for our society. This ability to work in collaborative networks and to partner will be what will empower our educational services in the future. Our 21st Century schools are faced with a very demanding challenge - to deliver a constantly improving service that supports our national economy by providing flexible learners.

“To meet the challenge we, in Northern Ireland, have chosen to work in partnership with the technology industry so as to keep our schools abreast of developments. This in turn enables us to focus on developing our teaching profession as learning facilitators and visionary leaders.

“If our formal educational services are to remain relevant we must deliver on this agenda. It is my belief that if we build and continue to invest in such a service, our young people will continue to engage in their learning and our community and economy will prosper,” he said.

The next edition of Linked will feature case studies illustrating examples of good practice in the use of ICT in schools across Northern Ireland.
LearningNI, Northern Ireland’s own secure, web-based learning environment for schools, offers an increasingly diverse and valuable range of facilities to support teachers, as well as the opportunity for collaborative learning both within and between schools. The latest additions include **NI Maps** and **Video on Demand**.

### NI Maps

NI Maps, the new online mapping service for schools and educational organisations, is now available through LearningNI. This exciting web-based application is a Geographical Information System (GIS) and is designed to be used right across the curriculum in primary, post-primary and special schools.

NI Maps provides teachers and pupils with online access to digital mapping from Land and Property Services, previously Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland. The service is free, fun and easy to use, and provides access to a wide range of current Northern Ireland maps, historical mapping and aerial imagery, European and world maps.

NI Maps also contains a wealth of curriculum-relevant resources such as photographs, videos, notes, web links and play lists that support the integrated use of ICT and mapping across the curriculum in schools.

This new service is constantly evolving with ever increasing functionality and content. For the most up-to-date help materials you should search the LearningNI Library (‘Staff’ area) for ‘NI Maps’.

Alongside the launch of this new program is the publication of a detailed [NI Maps User Guide](#), which includes suggestions for its use across the revised curriculum.

### Video on Demand (VOD)

A video-sharing website enabling schools to upload and share self-generated educational video content has been hailed as Northern Ireland’s answer to YouTube and is considered to be the first of its kind to be used in schools throughout the UK and Ireland.

The service, known as Video on Demand, will enable teacher-generated video to be easily uploaded so that it can be shared and watched by teachers and pupils across Northern Ireland. It will enable users to star content on the same basis as YouTube with the most popular videos featuring first.

Jimmy Stewart, Director of C2k, said that the service has been developed in response to the growing use of social media among young people and reflects how emerging technologies can be used to deliver a more open and personalised approach to learning, supporting young people’s skills in creativity and innovation.

Video on Demand has been welcomed by teachers. Alan Reave, Head of Business Studies and ICT at Lurgan College, previewed the new service and said that it would extend the range of self-generated learning material available locally.

He said: “This new service will enhance the learning experience for all school children. The use of self-generated video content will provide a new and fresh dimension to the range of resources available. This will bring subjects to life as well as catering for different learning styles and delivering this in a fun and dynamic way. The important aspect of this service is that schools have complete control and can ensure that the type of content made available to pupils is appropriate for use in a school environment.”

One of the first videos to be uploaded onto the Video on Demand service is an animated film by the pupils of Gaskistown Primary School called ‘Earl Saves the World’ - a short tale of an Antarctic Scientist and his penguin friends who save the world from overheating.

For further information on the Video on Demand service please contact Geraldine Timoney by email gtimoney@c2kn.i.org.uk

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### LearningNI Award Scheme

LearningNI now has its own award scheme. There are currently two levels: LearningNI User Award and LearningNI Leader Award. The scheme is the first to have been badged by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland and is closely mapped to the GTCNI competencies.

Alastair McCullough, a Senior Teacher at Methodist College, Belfast who has used the scheme, commented: “This has proved a really good framework for training. Departments within the school are encouraged to develop strong subject uses of ICT, supported by a Development Group of six staff who pioneer new uses for ICT and provide training to others in INSET days. This group was the first to pass through the LearningNI User Award and other teachers are now following suit.”

“All members of the English Department are working towards or have already achieved the User Award, with an emphasis on pupil collaboration and showcasing of work.”

“This approach seems to bring advantages as the staff involved have the same initial focus and can support each other in the early stages, while allowing scope for individual learning activities.”

The scheme has been such a success that teachers are developing their own scheme based on the same model, rewarding teachers who demonstrate competence in digital sound recording, they intend to trial this and make it available to all Heads of Department in the school this year.

Alastair McCullough added: “We see developing independent, home-based use of LearningNI as a priority for our pupils, and the ‘Discussion’ and ‘Workspace’ areas of LearningNI will be key to this. The LearningNI Award scheme will help to develop the skills of our staff and help them to support the pupils in their use of the environment.”

Another aim for St Patrick’s is to use LearningNI as a mechanism for pupils to showcase their work in the My Sites area, in a move towards online assessment. The Award scheme has served to increase the understanding of the online environment and, in doing so, allows staff to support the students in their use of LearningNI.

Mary sees the LearningNI User Award as just a beginning. She is particularly keen to exploit the safe and secure access to the LearningNI platform, allowing pupils to work online from outside school. Both Alastair and Mary have gone on to complete the LearningNI Leader Award.

For further information about the User and Leader Awards, search the staff area of the LearningNI library. For additional information you can email LNAward@c2kn.i.org.uk or contact Stephen Roulston on 028 9027 9000.

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### LearningNI Courses

**Year 3 teachers within SEEiB have been enrolling on to a LearningNI course as a means of accessing resources and providing a forum in which to network and share good practice.**

To support the implementation of the revised curriculum Year 3 teachers attended autumn cluster meetings. These focused on embedding ICT across the Areas of Learning through the use of Programmable Devices such as Beebots and Constructa-Bots.

Teachers were presented with a variety of tasks linked to the Ideas for Connected Learning (ICLs) and Thematic Units for Years 3 and 4.

As a way of distributing these resources I created a LearningNI course for Year 3 teachers and demonstrated its use at the cluster meetings.

Many teachers instantly realised LearningNI’s potential in accessing relevant and ready to use teaching resources.

An additional strength of LearningNI is its ‘Workspace’ facility, allowing teachers to upload their own teaching resources to inform other colleagues and to share the wealth of good practice and creativity that exists amongst our P1 teachers.

I certainly would describe myself as a LearningNI convert and hope to extend its use in the future as an effective tool in enhancing learning and training.
Children’s Books Ireland Festival

Last term children and teachers across Northern Ireland participated in the Children’s Books Ireland Festival which brought authors, illustrators and poets into schools for a month-long programme.

The regional event, funded by the Department of Education through the Northern Ireland Literacy Steering Group and organised by the Education Library Service and the Curriculum Advisory Support Service, featured 16 visiting performers who worked with school groups ranging from Nursery up to Key Stage 3.

The purpose of the programme was to support children’s development in literacy by giving them access to writers and illustrators within their own schools, broadening their experiences and challenging many of their attitudes to reading and writing.

The brief for the artists was to work creatively with the children to encourage them to produce work of their own or to develop their skills in talking and listening. Each performer brought their own particular approach to the classes using a variety of tools to encourage participation.

Paul Stickland’s pop-up and dinosaur drawing workshops gave children of a wide age range the opportunity to create illustrations and match them to short pieces of text. His work is published in many countries and he uses a range of tools to encourage participation.

Pupils enter the ‘Forbidden Room’

Year 9 pupils from St Mary’s High School in Downpatrick and Saintfield High School enjoyed collaborating on a tie-in with the South Eastern (BASE) Education Library Service literacy project on LearningNI as part of the Children’s Books Ireland Festival.

Four teams, comprising pupils from both schools, used LearningNI’s ‘Workspaces’ and ‘Discussion’ areas to complete activities centred on the themes of the novel ‘The Forbidden Room’ by Sarah Wray. A total of 366 messages were exchanged as pupils collaborated to create leaflets and posters online.

Sarah Cunningham, a Year 9 pupil at St Mary’s High School, said, “I found LearningNI’s ‘Workspace’ and ‘Discussion’ areas easy to use and very safe. It was reliable with prompts to help you out if you got stuck. Overall, I found it simple to work with team members from Saintfield High School using LearningNI.”

The ‘Discussion’ and ‘Workspace’ features of LearningNI are proving to be very useful tools in facilitating collaborative learning within and between schools. Coordinator of the course, Kathy Dunseath, Education Librarian with BASE Education Library Service, commented: “This reaches out to children in a way that a class lesson can’t. It allows them to work together beyond their normal geographical boundaries and to continue to take part at times that suit them. Children and their teachers really enjoy chatting about the issues raised within the course.”

The project culminated in an exciting face-to-face event where participants from the two schools met each other as well as Sarah Wray, author of ‘The Forbidden Room’.

Caribbean poet Val Bloom presented pupils and teachers with a challenge of another kind using Jamacian Patwa to create poems and interactive stories.

Creole poet Val Bloom presented pupils and teachers with a challenge of another kind using Jamacian Patwa to create poems and interactive stories.

Her journey through history, describing the development of Patwa as a secret language used by the slaves blended beautifully into her description of Jamaican life past and present. This led seamlessly into the literacy problems and challenges facing immigrants to Britain in the 1950s.

Key Stage 2 pupils in a number of schools worked with Czech author and illustrator Petr Horacek to create murals based on their local environment. Before the visit the pupils identified and photographed a local feature which they felt was important. Petr used these images as the background for a mural which the children developed with their own drawings.

It is impossible to describe all of the events which featured in the festival in one article but the project opens up opportunities for creativity in so many ways. The pupils and teachers who participated were challenged to examine their attitudes to literacy and encouraged to look at their work from many angles. Teachers found the visits inspirational in many cases and pupils had the opportunity to meet real authors, poets and illustrators and learn how they work.

One pupil who attended a Giants and Heroes workshop featuring local storytellers An Craoibhthigh who worked in Irish and English said, “This has been the best day of my life.” This quite striking reaction sums up the potential impact such events can have on participants and sets a challenge for everyone working with children to offer these sorts of experiences in as many ways as possible.
Helping children become independent readers

Cooley Primary School at Sixmilecross is at the forefront in parental involvement having thrown open its doors for an evening on reading in which parents played an ‘active’ role by returning to the school desk to see, hear and more importantly participate in elements of the school’s forward-thinking literacy programme.

The principal Mrs Karen Atchison told those present: “We at Cooley Primary School are determined that every child will have the chance to succeed and achieve their full potential. Children need to develop skills and capabilities for lifelong learning and for operating effectively in society. Literacy is at the heart of the revised curriculum. Communication, which includes reading, writing, talking and listening is one of the cross-curricular skills that needs to be developed.”

Mrs Atchison highlighted that the school is very much in line with the Department of Education’s ‘Every School A Good School’ - A Policy for School Improvement’ and its aim is that every child should leave school with an acceptable level in literacy. She emphasised that literacy has always played a major role in Cooley Primary School’s development plan where the main aim is to improve pupil literacy skills.

Parents also discovered that shared reading allows the children to practise skills the teacher has previously modelled but within a positive, supportive and interactive environment. They saw how being among a ‘community of readers’ helps take the fear out of the reading process as it is done with the whole class so it gives the children an opportunity to read aloud and at their own level without feeling isolated or intimidated. The children participate with guaranteed success and satisfaction as they become familiar with the text which in turn helps develop a positive attitude to reading.

Mrs Carrothers also explained how important discussion and questioning of the text was, followed by a range of differentiated activities to extend the pupils’ understanding and thinking skills.

A DVD that the school had made of a shared reading lesson in Years 4 and 5 was then shown to the parents.

By playing the role of the pupil, parents gained a much greater understanding about what shared reading, story mapping, move cube, card sorting and hot seating were all about.

As a result of the evening’s activities, the school feels that parents will now be much better equipped to support their children with reading. Before they left, parents were given an information leaflet detailing how they can help their children to read at home (please see side panel).

Feedback from parents about the reading evening was extremely positive. One parent said: “It gave us a great insight into the active learning our children are doing in school. Another added: “It eliminated the preconceived ideas that we had of shared reading and clarified what was really meant by shared reading. If we are enjoying it, obviously our children are enjoying it and learning at the same time.”

Cooley Primary’s Parent Guide

How to help your child with reading

PHASE 1 - Role Play Reading

- Read with your child as often as you can
- Encourage your child to choose the books you read together
- Talk about the books you read and ask questions
- Enroll your child in the local library
- Make sure your child sees members of the family reading
- Teach your child nursery rhymes and songs
- Talk about everyday print e.g. “We are going in here to post a letter. See the sign, it says Post Office.”
- Accept and praise your child’s attempts to read
- Visit the local bookshop

PHASE 2 - Experimental Reading

- Help your child to tell stories from pictures in the book
- Talk about the characters, plots and settings of stories
- Encourage your child to join in when reading familiar stories
- Draw attention to print on packages
- Write shopping lists and talk about what you are doing

PHASE 3 - Early Reading

- When reading to your child stop sometimes and ask: “What do you think might happen next?”
- Occasionally ask some “why” questions about the story e.g. “Why do you think the author put that bit in the story?”
- Talk about the books your child has read at school
- Reward your child’s efforts with praise or concentrate on all the things he/she does right, not on the few errors
- Play word games

PHASE 4 - Transitional Reading

- Ensure that your child knows what you value and enjoy reading yourself and read some of the books your child enjoys
- Encourage your child to read to younger brothers and sisters
- Encourage your child to read and follow instructions such as in recipes or games

PHASE 5 - Independent Reading

- Ensure your child is exposed to a wide range of reading materials; e.g. newspapers, letters, recipes, TV guides, magazines, comics, puzzle books, instructions for use of new appliances
- Encourage your child to talk about books he or she has enjoyed or disliked
- Foster thoughtful criticism and comment
Improving Learning in Mathematics Programme

A key element of the Numeracy Strategy last academic year was the Improving Learning in Mathematics Programme which was offered to mathematics departments in every post-primary school across the five ELBs. This resource was produced by the DfE in England and Wales and was the outcome of research carried out by the Standards Unit on its behalf.

The three-day programme placed an emphasis on classroom practice and effective reflection. Days 1 and 3 were out-centre days led by ELB Officers while Day 2 was an in-school day led by the Head of Mathematics with the focus on departmental development.

The first out-centre day examined the use of effective questioning in the maths classroom and strategies for exploiting pupil misconceptions in mathematics. Teachers engaged in a range of activities and were encouraged to reflect on how they would make best use of these in their own classrooms and across their departments.

Following this initial training, participants used their in-school day to share with other colleagues in their department and to begin integrating these activities into their planning and classroom practice.

Each ELB used Learning4N1 to support the programme by making all materials and additional resources available on a course site. All participants were encouraged to contribute to the discussion forum on these courses and, where possible, to upload their own materials to share with others. Feedback from the online discussion has been very positive with teachers commenting on improved pupil participation and motivation.

The second out-centre day (Day 3) focused initially on the dissemination of effective practice through sharing teacher experiences and evidence of enhanced pupil learning. The day then examined ways to promote collaborative working and pupil discussion in the maths classroom.

The programme was evaluated within schools and by the Inter-Board Mathematics Officers. As a result of this, it was agreed to offer further support in the 2009-10 academic year with an additional out-centre day in November/December 2009. The focus for this day was on the use of structured versus unstructured tasks in the maths classroom.

The programme, which was jointly planned and delivered across the five ELBs, aimed to reinforce the key messages of the revised curriculum and the EITI document, “Better Mathematics”. The programme was well received by teachers and was highly regarded as one of the major initiatives taking place in Northern Ireland with inputs from Heads of Mathematics detailing how they have used the resources to develop practice within their schools.

As part of the drive for increased financial capability for young people, a number of schools in Northern Ireland organised a series of Money Events, which have focused on improving money management for pupils and have provided opportunities to explore money-based topics such as budgeting, value for money, financial decision-making and savings.

Carrownore Primary School, Newtownards, organised a Money Event for their Year 5 pupils based on Healthy Eating. Pupils were allocated a budget using real coins and were asked to plan a healthy lunch, taking account of costs and healthy food options. Others chose items from a selection of food options within a £2 budget and calculated the change they would receive based on their purchases. Within these activities, all pupils were given the opportunity to handle coins, work with a budget and develop their mental maths skills.

After watching a recent episode of the BBC’s Dragon’s Den, Year 7 pupils at Ballymacgey Primary School, Bangor, were asked to create a new product idea for a particular target market. Working individually and then in groups, they considered the costs of the raw materials, labour, production and marketing. Once they had created their prototypes and formulated their presentations, they pitched their product to a Dragon’s Den of teachers and class mates. Not only were children highly motivated by the activity, they were also developing their Communication and Using Mathematics skills in an engaging context.

During the Carrickfergus Model Primary School Money Event, Year 4 pupils used the online Financial Capability resources (www.nicurriculum.org.uk) as an initial stimulus to look at household budgets. Following this, pupils then discussed their perceived needs and wants before making decisions about how best to use money left after essential spending. Pupils then created a Priority Pyramid— to suggest the most effective ways to deal with a monthly budget and from this gained a valuable insight into the constraints and demands on a modern family budget.

The Money Events delivered to date have all proved to be a huge success and many more are planned by schools for the coming year. Feedback from teachers involved has highlighted the value of these activities to promote the development of mathematical skills, as well as aspects of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities. The events have also provided pupils with opportunities to explore their understanding and attitudes to money which will be essential throughout their lives.


Many of the Money Events held throughout Northern Ireland will be showcased at the first Northern Ireland Financial Capability National Conference, which will be held on 23rd March 2010. Schools will receive an invitation to this conference in February.

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Contact Us

If you would like to access further information or support for a Money Event or any other aspect of the delivery of financial Capability within your school (both primary and post-primary) please contact the Financial Capability team online via the link below. The team will also be able to provide various levels of training and support, allowing you to empower your pupils when making their own financial decisions.


([PMB (2007) Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stages 1 and 2 in Key Stages 1 and 2 Curriculum Support and Implementation Box, CCEA, Belfast])
Developing Effective Assessment Opportunities

In November 2009, more than 150 teachers volunteered to attend a series of workshops and participated in follow-up online courses for the cross-curricular skills of Communication and Using Mathematics.

This was in response to an invitation from CCEA to participate in preliminary courses designed to embed the skills and develop good practice in relation to assessment generally.

The purpose of each course was to enable teachers to identify opportunities for Communication and Using Mathematics and to design effective assessment activities which could help embed pupils’ skills in the context of their subjects.

The preparatory, face-to-face workshops provided teachers from a variety of disciplines with an opportunity to become familiar with the structure of the online course.

Teachers were also encouraged to begin to plan and discuss ideas for a subject-specific activity which they would then develop in pairs within their online community.

Throughout the course, advice and guidance were provided to teachers online by CCEA Professional Associates. The Associates facilitated discussion forums between subject teachers, encouraging teachers to find naturally occurring opportunities for acquiring, developing and assessing Communication or Using Mathematics within their subject.

The use of the Virtual Learning Environment for these discussions ensured that teachers from the same subject strands were able to share ideas and network.

The purpose of each course was to enable teachers to identify opportunities for Communication and Using Mathematics and to design effective assessment activities which could help embed pupils’ skills in the context of their subjects.

As a result of the course, Hugh has developed a Communication task to assess reading skills through the analysis of political cartoons.

Hugh McShane, Vice Principal and teacher of History at Sacred Heart Grammar School in Newry, attended a Communication workshop at the beginning of November and participated in the Virtual Learning Environment during the weeks that followed.

He said: “I believe that these types of cartoons demonstrate perfectly that we should not just concentrate on the standard examples of evidence such as the written word, oral, film, photographs etc, as cartoons are a rich and informative source of evidence that are sometimes ignored or glossed over as being light or irrelevant.

“Not only do they highlight issues such as utility, reliability, bias, motive and propaganda, but they can be used across many subjects, not just History.”

Hugh has also found that the use of the cartoons as a stimulus has helped to enthuse and engage the pupils because they are a good basis for generating discussion and reflection and they have a visual quality that is appealing. They can also be used to discuss the issues around the use and value of evidence in History generally.

After participating in the online course, Hugh has now developed a variety of activities using political cartoons which he feels will benefit the pupils’ studies in History. All of these activities will address the main strands of Communication.

Cartoons, like the one pictured below, are historical sources just like photographs, newspapers, paintings, diaries and documents. They are often biased and can also be humorous, serious, gentle, and vicious, thought provoking, or daring. Just because a cartoon is unreliable or untrue does not mean that it is not useful as evidence.

Cartoons often focus on a person, group, or event or are about local, national or international issues. Many make a lasting impact - saying a lot without the use of very many words.

Examples of questions that could be asked about a cartoon

• What is the point of view of the artist?
• When was it published?
• What was the context (what were the events surrounding it)?
• What was the cartoonist’s purpose in drawing the cartoon?
• Is the cartoonist’s purpose likely to be shared by a lot of people?
• Is it propaganda?
• Does it distort or lie?
• Does it reliably reflect the evidence we have about the topic?

Assessment Gallery

Upon completion of the online course, teachers are given access to an online Assessment Gallery which contains the full range of subject-specific assessment activities developed by teachers during the course.

This Assessment Gallery is intended to showcase and share good practice in authentic assessment task development.

Registration

Registration for the next series of Communication and Using Mathematics workshops to be held in April 2010 will open in February 2010 and will take place online at www.nicurriculum.org.uk.

Further Information

For further information about Communication or Using Mathematics at Key Stage 3, please contact:

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The Education Minister unveiled a new state of the art £1.2 million facility known as the STEM Truck or STEM Module at Stormont last term.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects are a top priority for education. Last term, the Education Minister launched the STEM Report and unveiled a new state of the art £1.2 million facility known as the STEM Truck or STEM Module.

The STEM Report represents the most significant review of STEM education for a decade. Covering all aspects of STEM education in schools, colleges, and universities here in Northern Ireland, the report considers the future growth of our economy and examines the match between supply and demand for STEM knowledge and skills.

The 58 square-metre STEM Truck, financed through the Innovation Fund, is the first mobile, flexible, teaching laboratory and workshop for STEM subjects.

This facility provides an interactive workspace with interchangeable teaching resources, allowing it to transform from a biology laboratory one day into an engineering workshop the next.

The STEM Truck, as a regional facility in the first instance, will travel around STEM specialist schools and other schools in Northern Ireland to facilitate and capture the interest of primary and post-primary pupils in STEM subjects. It will also enable the schools to provide a unique and innovative learning opportunity for pupils and raise awareness of the key role STEM plays in the economy.

The STEM Truck will be managed as a regional facility in the first instance by the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) on behalf of the Department and then by the Education and Skills Authority.

Science partnership to benefit teachers

The Science Learning Centres are a national network for professional development in science teaching. There are 10 Science Learning Centres, one to serve each of the nine English government regions, and a National Science Learning Centre (NSLC) based at the University of York which provides training for anyone from England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. These centres aim to improve the quality of science education and raise the level of pupils' engagement in science through effective teaching and the use of innovative contexts and resources.

Although each of the centres has a main base, they are currently in the process of developing satellite centres across the UK. In 2006 a pilot programme was developed to adopt and adapt materials from the NSLC for use in Northern Ireland.

Dr Gill Humes (BEELB) and Uel Dougherty (SEELB) liaised with professional development leaders in York to design and implement a course entitled ‘Managing Science in the Revised Curriculum’. The course was initially run in partnership with Dr Sally Montgomery at W5 - the award-winning science and discovery centre based at the Odyssey in Belfast. It proved to be very successful and has now run five times, most recently in collaboration with Professor Valerie McKelvey-Martin at the University of Ulster.

To date, 125 teachers from across Northern Ireland have attended 375 days training, and the participating schools have received bursaries in excess of £40k from The Wellcome Trust under this pilot. The courses have followed a proven training model which requires teachers to undertake a ‘gap task’ which is then disseminated to colleagues on the final follow-up day of the course.

Helped by the success of the initial pilot, and with increasing emphasis on STEM subjects in schools, the NSLC is now developing formal strategic partnership links with the Education and Library Boards. This collaborative partnership will deliver high quality Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses throughout Northern Ireland for both primary and post-primary science teachers.

Teachers attending courses will be eligible for an ‘Enthuse Award’ worth £200 per day which can be used for substitute cover, travel, accommodation or resources. Courses running in the 2009/2010 academic year will cover themes such as contemporary science, practical work and thinking skills. More detailed information will be sent to schools in due course.

It is hoped that this exciting partnership will provide considerable opportunities for science teachers in Northern Ireland over many years to come, and will help to build a clear CPD structure specifically related to science. It is anticipated that the promotion of high quality science teaching and learning will ultimately lead to increased participation in science study and improve all young people’s perception of and engagement with science.

For further information please visit www.sciencelearningcentres.org.uk
Peripatetic Support Service demonstrates Best Practice

A leading expert on dyslexia has praised the Belfast Education and Library Board’s Peripatetic Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) Support Service as “the best example of good practice” that she has encountered.

Dr Kate Saunders, British Dyslexia Association (BDA) Education and Policy Director, was in Northern Ireland to attend a major conference held at the Lagan Valley Island Centre but took time to visit the BELB’s Peripatetic Support team and presented the Associate Membership of the BDA (AM BDA) Certificates to 12 members of staff.

“One of the biggest barriers to children with dyslexia is a lack of expertise within the education system. I am delighted that so many teachers within the BELB Support Service have achieved the highest recognised qualification in specialist dyslexia training,” said Dr Saunders.

In June 2009 Sir Jim Rose’s long awaited report on ‘Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties’ was finally published and is available to download from www.dcsf.gov.uk.

In his report Sir Jim Rose outlined his main findings and an extensive list of recommendations in order that high quality interventions for children with literacy and dyslexic difficulties are implemented. He goes on to say that “It makes good sense to ensure that specialists have expertise in dealing with a range of specific literacy difficulties and it is important that they are up to date with best practice and research in promoting literacy for all children”. The specialist qualification awarded to the BELB peripatetic team is recognised in the report as the highest level of expertise in this area.

Mrs Valerie Haugh, Head of Service, said “The AMBDA qualification is official recognition of the commitment of the teachers in the BELB Peripatetic Service and of the expertise which they bring to a hugely important and challenging role within the education system.”

Following the publication of the NI Task Group Report on Dyslexia, the Department of Education requested training across the region on developing ‘The Dyslexia Friendly Learning Environment’. The BELB Peripatetic Service has developed a comprehensive model of intervention and training for schools within the board area to meet this request.

Their support and teaching currently involves:

• Dyslexia awareness training to enable mainstream and special schools to develop a dyslexia friendly learning environment;
• Training in strategies and adjustments for classroom teachers to highlight the barriers to learning that can prevent their pupils with dyslexia reaching their learning potential;
• The publication of suitable resources and materials to support wave one quality first teaching in the classroom;
• Specialist individual teaching for pupils within primary schools who meet the regional criteria for the provision of individual support;
• A literacy centre, based at Ulidia, to provide advice and support to teachers and parents with a range of literacy materials;
• Assistive technology assessment for pupils with specific learning difficulties.

In light of the Rose recommendations it is hoped that the Department of Education’s ‘Special Educational Needs and Inclusion’ review will strengthen and build on the commitment already displayed by the BELB Peripatetic Support Service in their provision to meet the needs of young children to the world of words.

Teaching Awards National Winner

Elaine Loughran, a Special Educational Needs teacher from Northern Ireland, scooped a top award at the Teaching Awards UK ceremony in London last term.

Elaine, who won the UK award for ‘Special Needs Teacher of the Year’, is Special Needs Coordinator and member of school management team at St Joseph’s Primary School in Antrim.

During the ceremony, she was described as a “kind, gentle but extremely tenacious primary class teacher whose special needs expertise and influence pervades every classroom”, and that she was “exemplary” in her commitment to special needs education and the children in her care.

Northern Ireland’s approach to phonics impresses education experts

Two of the UK’s most respected names in Early Years education visited Northern Ireland recently to observe first hand Linguistic Phonics – a new approach being used by schools to help welcome young children to the world of words.

Esteemed Early Years experts, Janet Moxles and Wendy Scott spent two days visiting primary schools within the Belfast area. The visit resulted in an extremely positive article which was published in the October 2009 edition of Nursery World - a leading professional weekly magazine for those involved in Early Years education and childcare.

The report suggested that ‘all educators should take note of an early literacy system now being used in Northern Ireland’. 
**Educational Visits**

By Dr. Linda Clarke, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, University of Ulster, Dr. Michael Cross, CASS Advisory Teacher, Magilligan Field Centre, WELB and Dr. Dave Riley, CASS Advisory Teacher, Magilligan Field Centre, WELB

Outdoor learning has a significant relevance for Science and Geography. The new (2009) CCEA GCSE Specification in Geography includes in its aims to:

- develop and apply their learning to the real world through fieldwork and other learning outside the classroom opportunities and
- use geographical skills, appropriate technologies, and enquiry and analysis skills.

The issues and responsibilities around fieldwork can prove to be quite daunting for teachers, particularly those for whom this represents a new experience. It is pertinent therefore that this forms part of the University of Ulster’s Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Geography students’ training at Magilligan Field Centre.

**GCSE Geography Fieldwork: Collaborative Learning at all Levels**

In recent years successive cohorts of student teachers on the PGCE Geography course at the University of Ulster have joined the pupils and staff of St Patrick’s and St Brigid’s College in Claudy at Magilligan Field Centre (MFC) for a joint fieldwork experience which has benefits for all involved. MFC is a WELB Curriculum Advisory and Support Service facility.

This fieldwork takes place each September, at an early stage of the PGCE course before the students begin their first teaching practice in non-selective schools. The students are given a chance to work with pupils who are completing their GCSE Geography fieldwork in a structured but informal outdoor learning setting.

For the student teachers, the day begins with an interactive briefing on organisational and practical aspects of fieldwork by MFC staff. The students are given an opportunity to consider the benefits and challenges of fieldwork. They learn about the importance of effective planning including detailed risk assessment. The range of teaching strategies that may be incorporated in fieldwork are also discussed, including significant opportunities to promote literacy and numeracy. After this they join the pupils for their pre-fieldwork briefing, where learning outcomes are established, and, after lunch, the field trip begins.

Once in the field, the student teachers work alongside the pupils to see fieldwork from a pupil’s perspective. They also begin to learn the teaching strategies which are required in order to support fieldwork effectively. These include the organisation and management of group work, appropriate communication strategies in the outdoors, and the use of challenging and effective questioning in the field.

A significant underlying theme is the management of groups outside the classroom.

On returning to MFC, learning intentions are revisited and the collaborative learning continues. Student teachers stay into the evening to help pupils with the write-up of their course work. This begins with the compilation of the fieldwork data and its presentation in graphs and in writing.

Mrs Cathy Turton, Head of Geography at St Patrick’s and St Brigid’s College in Claudy, sums up the benefits of the experience: “Student teachers fully interact with pupils and can see the learning challenges which arise in a fieldwork setting. They get involved in the whole fieldwork process from beginning to end, including preparation, data collection in the field and the final write-up.”

The school’s Head Boy, Conor Deeney, said: “I found the students of great help today. I always find cross-section diagrams hard but with their help, it was simple. We had great fun and got loads of work done.”

PGCE students Anita Paul and Sarah Gray worked with another group of pupils. Anita said: “All of pupils were very enthusiastic in the field and eager to learn. They were very responsive to our help which was very encouraging. The fieldwork day also helped us to start to get to know the other members of our class at this early stage of the PGCE course.”

The benefits of this approach are also apparent to Field Centre staff. Michael Cross said: “It’s an intensive day’s teaching and training, but it’s hugely rewarding observing the learning that goes on at a variety of levels - pupils and students.”

Natalee McLucar, also from Magilligan Field Centre, added: “During my own teaching practice we had limited fieldwork experience. I think this joint venture is excellent and very rewarding for all involved. It was great having the student teachers with us in the Centre and I hope to see them again in the future.”

Learning outside the classroom develops skills that lie beyond the scope of classroom learning and teaching. Leading pupils in outdoor investigations and activities is a vital part of present day teaching in both geography and science. This collaborative, out of school activity is an innovative model that has proved to be a thoroughly enjoyable and successful approach to meeting the needs of initial teacher education.
Children, staff and invited guests enjoyed plays, poems and songs written and performed by the children. The wonderful array of art work produced over the week was displayed around the hall. The staff had worked hard to create an art-gallery atmosphere and life size sculptures were displayed alongside woven baskets, willow umbrellas, 3D street scenes and much more.

This project gave the children opportunities to develop their thinking skills and personal capabilities as outlined in the revised curriculum. Our children had numerous opportunities to work with others [the Year 3 children wrote and performed a weather report], to problem solve [the Year 4 children needed to investigate the properties of different materials to make their waterproof clothes], decision making [Year 1 children had to decide which resources to choose to make their larger than life-sized spider] and of course being creative [Year 6 created menus for their Parisian café].

As the week progressed it became obvious that the children were becoming more confident, independent learners and the celebration event was clear evidence of this. Or as the children put it: “It was fun because we had no work to do”.

Further information about the scheme can be found at www.takeonepicture.org.
Primary schools have been getting active with Sport Northern Ireland’s Activ8 Challenge. The campaign encourages children to take part in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day, as recommended by the Chief Medical Officer.

The campaign promotes eight steps towards a more active and healthy lifestyle: Move your body; Be part of a team; Create your own game; Involve your family; Eat Well; Go outdoors; Be a leader; and Measure your success.

The initiative also provides teachers with a menu of suggested learning activities designed to help them promote physical activity by connecting learning across the curriculum in a fun and enjoyable way.

Eamonn McCarron, Chief Executive of Sport Northern Ireland, commented: “The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games are about now: setting the scene for tomorrow’s champions.”

The Activ8 Challenge, aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils, was hugely successful with a total of 200 Primary schools across Northern Ireland taking part during the summer term.

Pupils were asked to complete an Activ8 Diary for one week, which encouraged them to participate in 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Pupils who successfully completed the diary were given a certificate to acknowledge their achievement and promote sustained involvement in physical activity. Diaries and certificates can be downloaded from [www.sportni.net/activ8](http://www.sportni.net/activ8). All participating teachers received a free laminated ‘We Are Learning To (WALT)’ poster.

In addition, teachers and pupils were invited to create a connected learning classroom display to show how the Activ8 themes are linked to the six learning areas within the revised curriculum and can help develop thinking skills and personal capabilities.

Two winning displays were selected from each of the five ELB areas. The 10 winning schools received a free school trip (including transport) that promoted physical activity or £250 worth of sports equipment. In addition they also received a visit from a sports personality.

Mrs Mary Gough, Principal of St. Joseph’s Primary School in Lisburn (one of the winning schools) said: “This is the revised curriculum at its best! Theme-based learning which provides children with the skills necessary to lead an active life.”

Mr Terry Leathem, Principal of Glenwood Primary School in Belfast, another one of the winning schools, said: “When I first heard about Activ8 it seemed like a really beneficial scheme, helping children to learn about having a healthy lifestyle in a fun and enjoyable way. It did not disappoint - the children loved taking part and they all worked really hard on their classroom display as well as finding new ways to get active.”

Each of the participating schools were encouraged to take a creative approach to their Activ8 Challenge. Year 4 pupils at Lisbellaw Primary School in County Fermanagh, reinforced the Activ8 themes through a connected learning approach:

- The World Around Us - Pupils researched different Olympic sports and planned activities for their family using the ‘Active Places’ website, they also made healthy lunches;
- PDMU - Pupils designed a new game to play with a partner called the ‘Balloon Race’;
- PE - Pupils took part in team events and relays in a school Olympics Festival;
- Numeracy - Pupils produced a training diary for the school Olympics Festival;
- Literacy - Pupils wrote and performed acceptance speeches for the awards ceremony;
- The Arts - Pupils made maps of active places within their local community.

Mrs Logan, Principal of Lisbellaw Primary School, said: “Being a Health Promoting School the children really enjoyed taking part in Activ8 which I think they portrayed clearly in their classroom display.”

For further information about forthcoming Activ8 initiatives please visit [www.sportni.net/activ8](http://www.sportni.net/activ8).
Understanding at Key Stages 1 and 2, and Learning for Life and Work at Key Stages 3 and 4. This aim links in with and supports the revised curriculum, relating to putting their best foot forward and leaving the car at home.

The Travelwise Schools team organises a number of events each year targeting parents, pupils and staff, as well as using classroom-based activities, encouraging teachers, parents and pupils, where possible, to put their best foot forward and leave the car at home.

The Travelwise team works with partners, such as Sustrans, the Public Health Agency and Translink, in partnership with the Department of Education, DOE Road Safety Branch, Sustrans, the Public Health Agency and Translink.

Travelwise is made, easy to use classroom activity sheets. For Key Stage 2 it provides 'Best Foot Forward For Schools', a CCEA approved education pack with ready made, easy to use classroom activity sheets. For Key Stage 3 it provides 'Making the Links' a resource produced by Sustrans. Both resources are available on CDROM and are compatible with an Interactive White Board.

Other ongoing initiatives, open to all schools, include WOW - the 'Walk Once a Week' campaign to encourage pupils to walk to school on a regular basis. Resources for this include wall charts, certificates and stickers. Pupils can be challenged to 'Walk Our World' and cover the equivalent distances to various landmarks around the world over a period of time.

Carla McManus, Travelwise NI School Coordinator said: "At Travelwise we know that it is not possible for every child to walk to school, but we encourage every child that can to do so.

"Our biggest event of the year is the annual Walk to School Week: Last year 220 schools and 53,000 pupils in Northern Ireland got involved. This year’s Walk to School Week will run from 17-21 May 2010. Every school is invited to take part in this event which aims to encourage more people to walk to and from school. Each year Walk to School Week has a theme and we provide resources for schools based on this. These resources will also be made available in Irish."

Schools participating in Walk to School Week are automatically entered into a prize draw to win one of ten bikes and all schools are invited to enter a competition where the school showing the most innovative approach to promoting Walk to School Week wins a time capsule which can be buried within school grounds. The winner of last year’s Time Capsule was Ballykelly Primary School in Limavady.

As a whole school Ballykelly got everyone involved in Walk to School Week, linking the activities each class participated in to the revised curriculum.

Year 1 and 2 pupils were taken on different walks each day by their teachers. Each class talked about the benefits of walking during Circle Time and the week culminated in some fun with a "Silly Walks" activity in the playground.

Year 3 pupils completed an activity where they drew around their shoe and then wrote as many 'sh' words inside it as they could think of.

Year 4 pupils made charts to record whether they walked to school or not. They discussed tally charts and then the children shared and designed their own charts, making clear links between POMU and Mathematics.

Year 6 pupils constructed a graph of ways in which they travel to school, making clear links between POMU and the Data Handling topic. They also discussed the concept of safety when walking to and from school.

The school also got parents involved using the school newsletter and by holding a "Design a Walk to School Week Poster at Home" competition.

Julie Crooks, POMU Coordinator at Ballykelly Primary, said: "Walk to School Week is a fantastic initiative that actively gets parents and children involved in something that is of benefit not only to themselves but also to the local environment.

"Every class throughout the school came up with some wonderful ideas to promote Walk to School Week, from charting the distance walked to drawing maps of what they saw along the way. Children have become very aware of the benefits to be had by walking to school and some of them have even changed their mode of transport for good! This has certainly been a very worthwhile project and one that I would encourage all schools to participate in."

For further information visit www.travelwiseni.co.uk, email info@travelwiseni.co.uk or contact Tracy Arlow or Carla McManus at Travelwise via helpline number 0845 378 0908.
Summer School
- A Platform for Sharing Good Practice

The overarching theme of the Regional Training Unit’s Summer School 2009 was ‘Sharing Learning’. This focused on the guiding principle that improvement in our schools is often best facilitated by the sharing of the excellent practice which is continually being developed by teams of teachers and support staff in response to the need to increase the effectiveness of learning.

The four-day event held in Stranmillis College and at a number of other centres, offered teachers, classroom assistants, school leaders and other educational professionals access to a rich portfolio of programmes and experiences. The return to Stranmillis College with its state of the art facilities as the main venue was welcomed by both course providers and participants.

Commenting on the level of continued support and participation in Summer School, Dr Tom Hesketh, Director of the Regional Training Unit, described it as “a key positive indicator of the tremendous professionalism and commitment that exists among teachers in our schools”.

A total of 2,326 participants attended in the week prior to schools starting their new term. Feedback reflected a high degree of satisfaction with what was on offer. The following comments are representative of the level of positive reaction: “really excellent course - very enjoyable and full of things that can be taken back to the classroom. There should be courses like this happening in every school”, “thoroughly enjoyed the course - I am enthusiastic about trying out new ideas when classes begin in the new term”, “what a truly amazing two days - it was a total inspiration to be surrounded by educationalists, teachers and like-minded people”.

The application process for those wishing to offer programmes in Summer School 2010 is now open and practitioners are being urged to take up the opportunity offered to use the public platform of this annual event to share good practice.

It is acknowledged that the continuing success of Summer School owes much to the professionalism and commitment of course providers and they are again invited to submit course proposals.

Professional Learning Matters’ is the adopted theme for 2010, with a continuing focus on pedagogic practice, leadership practice and innovation in practice. The important work that is currently being undertaken in our schools across all phases and sectors can be celebrated and shared on this common platform and can make a significant contribution to promoting high standards through ongoing practitioner learning.

Summer School provides a unique opportunity to tap into local, national and international best practice and offers a veritable festival of professional development. Further information is available at www.rtuni.com.

Revised Professional Qualification for Headship (NI)

Against a backdrop of considerable change and challenges within the education system, the Regional Training Unit has undertaken a review of the Professional Qualification for Headship (NI) (PQH (NI))

The review examined a range of fundamental issues, such as: recruitment arrangements, intake routes, assessment and development processes, and success indicators, including through put into vice principals and headships.

Following consultations with key stakeholders and a creative and energetic response from PQH (NI) colleagues, PQH (NI) has been redesigned. The revised PQH (NI) builds on the strengths of the current model but with more emphasis on the complexities and challenges emerging from a rapidly changing schooling system and ambitious education reform agenda.

Giving a rapidly changing schooling system the revised model seeks to align leadership development provision to new organisational forms, new curricular and assessment challenges, and new demands in terms of accountability. It also takes account of changes in the pedagogy and methodology which attaches to best leadership development with a greater emphasis on workplace learning enhanced by coaching and mentoring techniques.

Additionally, the revised model is flexible and personalised allowing aspiring principals to both build on prior experience and take full control of their own learning. Most significantly of all, the revised model calls for an enhanced contribution from serving principals in building leadership capacity both for their own schools and for the system as a whole.

The Department of Education, in its recently published (April 2009) policy document ‘Every School a Good School: A Policy for School Improvement’,

• recognises the importance of supporting school leaders;
• refers to the McKinsey study ‘How the world’s best-performing school systems come out on top’ which highlights not just the importance of teacher quality but of getting the right teachers to become principals and providing them with the right set of skills to become effective leaders; and,
• points to the need to look closely at the route to becoming a principal and at the programmes available to prepare aspiring principals and support existing principals in their leadership role.

It is envisaged that the review of the PQH (NI) by RTU and the resulting revised PQH (NI) will support the Department’s policy objective for school improvement. Further information can be found at www.rtuni.com.

Principals in Focus

A book entitled ‘In a class of their own’ has been published by The Teaching Awards and the Department for Education in Northern Ireland.

This beautifully illustrated publication, written by Education Correspondents Kathryn Torney of the Belfast Telegraph and Simon Doyle of the Irish News, features a collection of case studies showcasing the passionate, committed and optimistic leadership of eleven principals who have each won a Teaching Award in the last decade.

The principals are influential leaders of a wide range of schools and each has a unique story to tell.

Electronic copies of the book are available to download from http://www.teachingawards.com/attachments/inaclassoftheirown.pdf
Area-based Inspections

Inspectorate pilots new model in West Belfast and Ballymena

The three key themes in the most recent Chief Inspector's report (2006-08) recommend that those responsible for an individual's education need to:
- build more effectively on the skills, knowledge and attributes which the learner has developed in the preceding phase of schooling;
- help learners to understand better the connections in their individual programmes of learning and how that learning connects to a better future for them and their community;
- be confident that they are including all learners and working together to help them to achieve their full potential.

In order to evaluate the extent to which organisations in a specific community are working effectively together to provide coherent and relevant educational pathways for learners, the Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) has developed a new model of an area-based inspection.

In February and March 2009, the Inspectorate piloted area-based inspections in Ballymena and in West Belfast, during which it visited and held wide-ranging discussions in pre-school centres, primary, special and post-primary schools, alternative education providers, training organisations, further education college campuses and youth organisations.

The discussions also included parents, students, local employers, community groups, employing authorities and the careers service.

The evaluation was structured around three areas: strategic planning for education and training within the area; the quality of learning for young people within the area; and the effectiveness of the transition arrangements for young people within and across the various sectors.

The report of each area inspection can be found on the Inspectorate's website at:
http://www.etini.gov.uk/evaluation_of_ballymena_area.pdf and

The next area-based inspection is scheduled to take place in Downpatrick in March 2010.

Schools Working Together

A TV programme has been produced to highlight the achievements and challenges in developing Area Learning Communities (ALCs) within the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) area.

The programme entitled 'Perspectives – Learning Communities' can be viewed online on the NEELB TV website (www.neelb.tv). It focuses on the 11 ALCs within the area and takes the form of a Question Time production with the chairs of four ALCs answering a range of challenging questions from an audience of teachers, parents, pupils and other educational representatives.

There are currently 29 ALCs in Northern Ireland comprising of schools from all management types working together collaboratively to deliver access to the Entitlement Framework. The Entitlement Framework (EF) is an integral part of young people's education within the revised curriculum at Key Stage 4 and post-16. The target date for the full implementation of the EF is September 2013. From that date, schools will be required to provide pupils with access to a minimum number of courses at Key Stage 4 (current target 24) and a minimum number of courses at post-16 (current target 27).

Many schools will have to work in collaboration with other schools, FE colleges, and training providers in order to meet this target. Collaboration, shared expertise, increased motivation and access to a greater range of academic, professional and technical courses are just some of the potential benefits of Area Learning Communities.

The EF will guarantee all post-primary pupils age 14 and above greater choice and flexibility by providing them with access to a wide range of learning opportunities best suited to their needs, aptitudes and interests, irrespective of where they live or the school they attend and will help them fulfil their potential and become active contributors to society and the economy.