



Catholic Education An Irish Schools Trust

news from ceist...

28 October 2011

CEIST is the trustee body for the voluntary secondary schools of the Daughters of Charity, the Presentation Sisters, the Sisters of the Christian Retreat, the Sisters of Mercy and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

Feature

Boards of Management

CEIST congratulates all newly appointed members serving on our Boards of Management for 2011 - 2012.

The Board plays a crucial role in nurturing and developing the ethos of the school and CEIST would also like to thank members who have agreed to continue serving on the board and to all who assisted in the nomination of members.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of those who are ending their term. Each new board will be inducted by a member of the CEIST team at their inaugural meeting.

We remind members of all boards, not just those renewing this year, to avail of the joint Trustee/JMB training taking place on Saturdays throughout November.



CEIST News



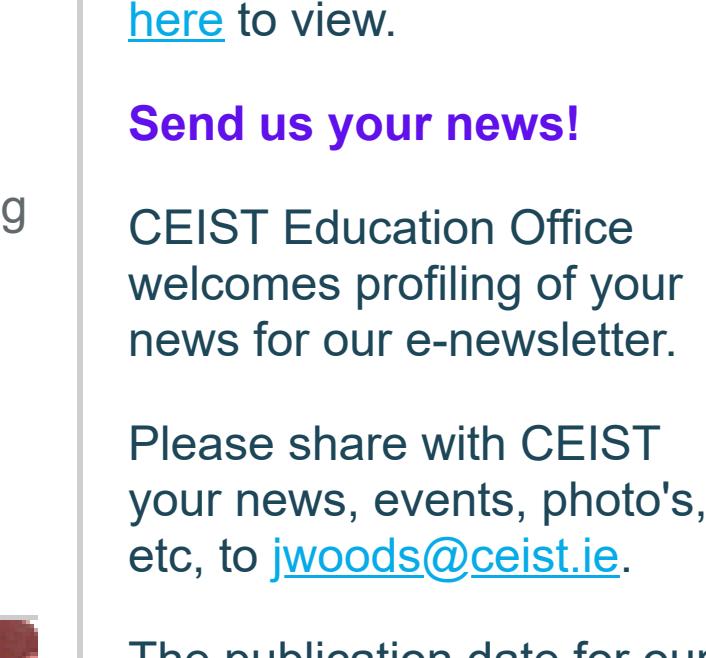
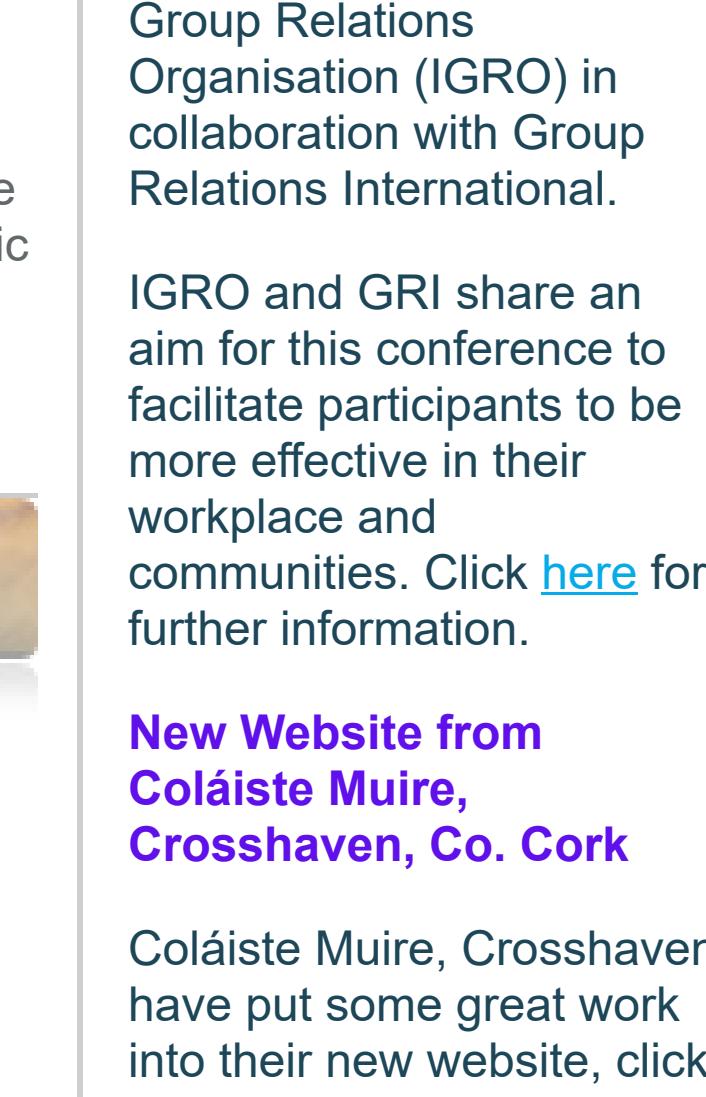
CEIST Education Conference 2011 Review

The Sixth Annual CEIST Education Conference was held in the Sheraton Athlone Hotel, Athlone, Co. Westmeath on Thursday, 29th September and Friday, 30th September, 2011.

The CEIST Education Office were greatly encouraged with the number of School Principals, Deputy Principals and Chairpersons of our Boards of Management who attended this year's conference, which proved to be our biggest attendance to date.

Many of the workshop presentations and keynote speeches have now been added to the CEIST Members' Area.

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Resources

[Click to view useful resources >](#)

Leading and Sensemaking at Work

An International Non-Residential Group Relations Conference is being held at the Emmaus Retreat and Conference Centre, Swords, Co. Dublin from the 12th - 15th January 2012.

This conference is being organised by the Irish Group Relations Organisation (IGRO) in collaboration with Group Relations International.

IGRO and GRI share an aim for this conference to facilitate participants to be more effective in their workplace and communities. Click [here](#) for further information.

New Website from Coláiste Muire, Crosshaven, Co. Cork

Coláiste Muire, Crosshaven have put some great work into their new website, click [here](#) to view.

Send us your news!

CEIST Education Office welcomes profiling of your news for our e-newsletter.

Please share with CEIST your news, events, photo's, etc, to news@ceist.ie.

The publication date for our next issue is Wednesday 30th November, 2011.

View past editions of CEIST E-News

We have archived all of our 46 E-Newsletter editions to date and they can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

Don't Forget



CEIST Annual Statistical Returns 2011-2012

The annual statistics form has been revised for new school year 2011-2012. We have added new sections such as Faith and Ethos and made some other amendments to the form.

The data collected from these statistics are crucial in informing the Education Office of underlying trends and standards adhered to in our schools.

Please e-mail jwoods@ceist.ie if any issues are encountered completing.

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Global Schoolroom - Sharing Educational Experience Worldwide

Global Schoolroom is currently recruiting primary and secondary school teachers from Ireland to volunteer on the UCD-accredited Teacher Education programme in India and Uganda this coming July.

The ripple effect of this innovative development model means that one Irish teacher sharing their experience and teaching skills for one month will contribute hugely to building better standards for 50 local teachers. When these 50 teachers return to their communities this will impact on the education of 10,000 pupils!

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Faith-related Issues



Joining the Dots runs in Christ King Secondary School, Cork

Christ King Secondary School, Cork became the latest school to successfully run Joining the Dots. 12 staff members from a host of different subject areas took part.

Joining the Dots is a school based programme in theology and spiritual renewal for all staff.

There are no fees, no travel and no exams! It involves about 90 minutes one evening a week for five weeks.

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Minding Our Teachers

"I really enjoyed the time for spiritual reflection with other people - the combination of intellectual rigour, the experiential and the prayerful relaxation."

So one participant wrote in her evaluation of Joining the Dots: a programme in theology and spiritual renewal for staff members in Catholic schools.

Teaching has become a difficult profession, far beyond its inherent challenges. Healthy spirituality can be a sustaining force, helping teachers to thrive rather than simply survive in our schools today.

Click on 'more' link below to read full article published recently in "The Furrow" from CEIST Faith Development Co-ordinator Amalee Meehan.

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News from CEIST Schools



St. Joseph's Rush Celebrates Golden Jubilee with Tree of Life Sculpture

This year St. Joseph's Secondary School in Rush, Co. Dublin is celebrating 50 years since opening its doors to provide post primary education for the community and has commemorated the Golden Jubilee with a sculpture by artist; Paul Flynn called 'The Tree of Life.'

The sculpture was unveiled by Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Gerry McGuire during a ceremony held on Saturday, 15th of October last, in the school garden.

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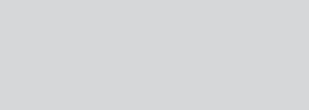
News from Presentation Secondary School, Curryslea, Tuam, Co. Galway

Meave Treacy who is a 5th year student in Presentation College, Curryslea, Tuam, Co. Galway recently participated in the Foroige Presidential Debate in the Royal College of Physicians, Dublin.

Presentation College, Curryslea also launched the school's competition 'What Makes Me Happy'.

The aim of the competition is to promote positive mental health and runs in conjunction with World Mental Health Week.

[MORE >](#)



North Presentation Secondary School Farranree, Cork, Sacred Journey to India

On October 28th next, four Leaving Certificate students Niamh Forde, Lisa Corkery, Hayley Leighton and Jessica Eivers will leave Cork to spend their mid-term break in Chennai, India.

While in Chennai, the four students will work with students in our partner Presentation school Sacred Heart Matriculation Higher Secondary.

There are over 2,000 students in this school and in some classes there are over 70 students!

[MORE >](#)

Presentation Secondary School, Clonmel 15th Annual Presentation Awards Day

Presentation Secondary School, Clonmel celebrated the 15th Annual Presentation Awards for Excellence in St. Mary's Church Inishtown last Tuesday.

The awards acknowledge the tremendous achievements of the girls across the whole spectrum in education in the school.

The awards recognize that this pursuit of excellence is not confined to academic achievement but encompasses the whole range of activities that makes for a rounded and balanced education.

[MORE >](#)

Great showing by Presentation College Carlow F1 team in Malaysia

A TEAM of students from Presentation College Carlow narrowly missed out on a world title at the F1 in Schools competition in Malaysia recently.

Fifth year Students Oisín McHugh, Brian Rowan, Grace Byrne, Graham Power and Richard Myhardt travelled across the globe to compete in the international contest, where they were crowned runners-up in the New Teams category.

[MORE >](#)

Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont - Common Purpose Leadership Course

Aishling Harnett, Leanne O'Brien, Yasmeen Harati and Michelle Ward all students from Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont, Dublin took part in a Common Purpose Leadership Course, May 2011 as part of their Transition Year Programme.

Common Purpose is a not-for-profit organisation that brings together people from a wide range of backgrounds to help them become more effective leaders in society.

[MORE >](#)

Technical Tips

E-Mail and Web Scams: How to help protect yourself

Microsoft have put together a very useful site on IT security where they have included many helpful suggestions on making your interaction with your pc and the internet safe.

In the following article Microsoft discuss ways of recognising E-Mail and Web scams and provide tools for prevention.

[MORE >](#)

Technology made easy in Education

Ciarán McCormack has been doing some great work in highlighting Apps in Education through his website Technology made easy in Education (<http://www.tme.ie>).

The aim of the site as described by Ciarán is to help you to use your latest purchase from the gadget world and show you how it can be used in your classroom.

On a regular basis video tutorials are created to teach you how to use these purchases.

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CEIST Education Conference 2011 Review

Thursday 6th October 2011

The Sixth Annual CEIST Education Conference was held in the Sheraton Athlone Hotel, Athlone, Co. Westmeath on Thursday, 29th September, 2011 & Friday, 30th September, 2011. The theme for the conference was "*For Everything there is a Season*" Ecclesiastes 3:13

The CEIST Education Office were greatly encouraged with the number of School Principals, Deputy Principals and Chairpersons of our Boards of Management who attended this year's conference, which proved to be our biggest attendance to date.

The atmosphere was fantastic at the conference and the Principals, Deputy Principals and Chairpersons availed of the opportunity to network and share ideas with each other. We received very positive feedback for all the workshops this year and indeed for our keynote speakers. CEIST would like to very much thank our keynote speakers and workshop presenters for their time and energy given to the conference.

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to the three excellent school choirs who participated at the conference. The three schools were Meán Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál Choir, Roscommon, Ardscoil Mhuire Choir, Ballinasloe and Mercy Secondary School Choir, Ballymahon. The choirs really energised everybody at the conference and were a credit to the schools.

The keynote speeches and Workshop presentations has been added to the [CEIST Members Area](#) under News and Events Section.

CEIST Conference Programme 2011

Click [here](#) to download the brochure for the conference.

Workshop Presentations

1) "The Catholic School as it says on the tin - current challenges". John O'Roarke, Principal, Mercy Secondary School, Mounthawk.

School self-evaluation... In the educational landscape, Catholic schools are open to many factors that could modify the agenda for the education we provide in our CEIST schools.

In this context, it is important that we are clear on what is distinctive about the Catholic education we offer. We are then in a position to ensure that we continue to do 'what it says on the tin'.

This workshop explored a few of these factors, in particular WSE / MLL inspection, as a catalyst for school self-evaluation within the Catholic tradition

2) "Literacy & Numeracy Strategies". Department of Education & Skills.

Following the directive from Minister Ruairí Quinn, many schools are challenged on the best way to implement improvements in literacy and numeracy. A task force within the Dept of Education would like to start a National Conversation on the most effective method with Principals, Deputies and Chairpersons.

This workshop discussed practical strategies, which will assist schools in their planning and implementation.

3) "Healthy Resilience - From me out". Paddy Hanna.

Building Resilience for Me and My School.

- The training seeks to dispel some of the traditional myths about stress, and will focus on building resilience for Principals and their staff.
- It will provide an introduction to the concepts of Well-Being, Personal Well-Being and Organisational Well-Being.
- It will outline a model programme for creating healthier working environments in Schools.
- It will demonstrate how Principals can develop a personal plan to create energy and restore balance in their lives.

4) "Shared Distance Learning - subjects being taught via innovative technology / fizzbooks instead of schoolbooks". John O'Donovan, Principal, St. Joseph's Secondary School, Ballybunion & Richard Wang, IT Eireann, Tralee.

Speakers: John O'Donovan Principal, St. Joseph's School, Ballybunion, and Richard Wang IT Eireann, Tralee.

St. Joseph's Ballybunion teaches Agricultural Science to Mercy Mounthawk, Tralee, through video link.

Mercy Mounthawk teaches Chemistry to St. Joseph's through video link. This shared learning is to facilitate minority subjects in schools to enhance subject choice and improve school teacher allocation. The Principal, teacher and IT advisor demonstrated and shared their experience of this technology.

The workshop covered the following themes:

- Increasing awareness around the use of technology
- Understanding the IT processes involved
- Identifying the costs involved in sharing of subjects
- The positive outcomes of shared learning.
- Discussion on the use of Fizzbooks over schoolbooks.

5) "Employment Legislation - Best practice in relation to schools". Allianz plc. & Hugh Millar, Crowley Millar Solicitors.

This workshop focused on the current legislative issues in relation to the employment of staff in schools. Employment legislation is an area that has the potential to cause significant disruption to a school if not followed correctly.

The workshop was sponsored by Allianz and presented by Mr. Hugh Millar of Crowley Millar Solicitors who provided an update on employment legislation and offered guidance on best practice in this area.

6) Impact of Inspections on Schools - WSE/MLL & Incidental Inspections. Department of Education & Skills.

This workshop shared the latest findings and objectives of the WSE/MLL inspection.

There is an element of concern about the impact of incidental inspections and the workshop will focus on the best preparation and inform on the objectives of the visit from the inspectorate.

7) Ensuring Integrity in Financial Management

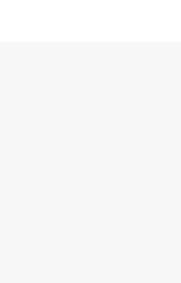
This workshop discussed the financial challenges that may be encountered by Boards of Management, Principals and Deputy Principals as a result of poor financial management in schools. The latest "hot topics" in financial compliance was presented along with recommendations and suggestions as to how your school can address/manage these challenges e.g. PAYE/PRSI Compliance, School Enterprises, OLCS, Supervision and Substitution, Cash Handling, etc.

Feedback from the Conference

We are in the process of compiling a summary from evaluation sheets returned by attendees. Many thanks to all of you who completed as this feedback will be invaluable in planning future conference programmes.

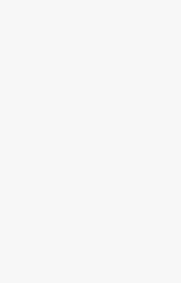
If you would like to view Principals feedback from the conference please click [here](#) to request via email. We will also be posting a summary of evaluations received in the CEIST Members Area shortly.

Photo Gallery



Click to enable Adobe Flash Player.

CEIST Awards to Retired Principals



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Is Your School Ready For Winter Weather?

Monday 24th October 2011

Over the past two years many schools have suffered significant loss and/or damage to their premises as a result of the severe weather conditions that we have experienced in Ireland.

Apart from the financial cost associated with such losses they can also seriously disrupt the day to day operation of the school and causes emotional distress to staff, pupils, parents and the community in which the school is located.

In many cases the losses and disruption could have been prevented or reduced by the implementation of good maintenance and loss prevention measures. Last year Allianz plc published a guide "**Protecting Your School from Fire and Weather Related Losses**". This guide provides information on how to protect your school as regards:

- Frost / Freeze
- Storms
- Flooding
- Fire
- General Maintenance

Included also is a simple checklist that you should complete as soon as possible. This will help in reducing the possibility of any damage or disruption that might be caused over the coming winter months.

Both the Guide and Checklist was distributed to all schools last year and can be accessed by clicking on the following link: http://www.allianz.ie/Other_Products/Schools/Resources/Frost_Protection/





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Global Schoolroom - Sharing Educational Experience Worldwide

Wednesday 17th October 2012



Sharing Educational Experience Worldwide

WANT TO HAVE A REAL IMPACT WHEN YOU VOLUNTEER THIS SUMMER?

SHARE YOUR TEACHING EXPERIENCE WITH TEACHERS IN INDIA AND UGANDA AND THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS WILL BENEFIT.

Global Schoolroom is currently recruiting primary and secondary school teachers from Ireland to volunteer on the UCD-accredited Teacher Education programme in India and Uganda this coming July.

The ripple effect of this innovative development model means that one Irish teacher sharing their experience and teaching skills for one month will contribute hugely to building better standards for 50 local teachers. When these 50 teachers return to their communities this will impact on the education of 10,000 pupils!

1 MONTH X 1 IRISH TEACHER X 50 LOCAL TEACHERS = 10,000 PUPILS!

Global Schoolroom is a charity registered in Ireland that seeks to promote the sharing of educational experience between communities worldwide to help eradicate poverty, promote economic development and build sustainable communities.

We work directly with teachers and communities to build a strong framework for high standards of teacher education. The Global Schoolroom programme is designed to be sustained by local networks. This is achieved through the forging of respectful links between educational partners to their mutual benefit.

This sharing of good educational practices enriches the collective educational experience, widens the cultural horizons of everyone involved and expands each individual's scope for opportunity. Children in the communities involved receive a better quality education which ultimately leads to greater economic development and higher standards of living.

For more information or to get an application form, go to www.globalschoolroom.net or email info@globalschoolroom.net.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF COMPLETED APPLICATION FORMS IS FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30th, 2012

Global Schoolroom 2013 Application Form

[Global Schoolroom Application form](#)



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Joining the Dots runs in Christ King Secondary School Cork

Wednesday 19th October 2011

Christ King Secondary School, Cork became the latest school to successfully run Joining the Dots. 12 staff members from a host of different subject areas took part.

Joining the Dots is a school based programme in theology and spiritual renewal for all staff. There are no fees, no travel and no exams! It involves about 90 minutes one evening a week for five weeks.

Teaching can be so life-giving but it can also be draining. Joining the Dots offers soul time - an opportunity for teachers to catch their breath, to reflect on their life experience, to ask good questions, and to remember that even if we are tired of looking for God, God never tires looking for us.

What participants have been saying:

"I always felt encouraged and loved the use of different media – text, visuals, music. It was a very positive experience. I could not make a negative comment."

"It gave me allocated time to stop and think - something we tend to assume we do naturally but are too often rushed."

"I enjoyed the programme very much and thought it was a great way to stand back in this busy world and examine life and faith."

"It took me on a journey, especially as I am not a religion teacher. I think I appreciate my faith and how it helps me in my work and home."

Initiated in Mercy Mounthawk by Amalee Meehan and John O'Roarke, this is the fifth run of the programme. In each case, approximately 12-15 teachers from a host of different subject areas took part.

For further details on Joining the Dots, or to read more feedback from participants, go to www.ceist.ie and select **Faith Development** or contact Amalee Meehan at ameehan@ceist.ie or 086-1704714.

Comments from Previous Participants

[Joining the Dots Pilot Project](#) (December 2009)

[Joining the Dots completes a second successful pilot run](#) (May 2010)



Minding Our Teachers

Amalee Meehan

Teaching has become a difficult profession, far beyond its inherent challenges. The problems of a society tend to be reflected in its schools. A recent OECD report identifies problems such as opportunities for continuing professional development, for partnership and input to policy, the conditions of work, opportunities for diversification, and supports in times of difficulty. The report also admits further difficulties among which are the lack of teacher induction systems, the unsatisfactory condition of some school buildings, inadequate investment in teaching resources and equipment, high pupil teacher ratios, and the stress levels in some teaching contexts. Another problem, emerging from the policy of pupil integration, is the training of classroom teachers as well as learning support assistants for pupils with disabilities.¹ When these factors are appraised, they reflect a complex, changing, and challenging world of teaching.

In the face of these difficulties, one might wonder why teachers stay in the profession. American education researcher Sonia Nieto concludes that what keeps teachers going has largely to do with their inner lives. Nieto's findings resonate with an emergent body of literature which concludes that it is the inner spirit that makes and sustains good teachers.² Teachers give so much of themselves, and every teaching day is so busy. Daily events and encounters can be life-giving while others can be draining. Making sense of the experience of teaching, which is so dependent not only on good relationships and reflective practice, but on life-integration and self-transcendence, is largely a matter of the spirit. Nourishing the spiritual lives of teachers is crucial; healthy spirituality can be a sustaining force, helping teachers to thrive rather than simply survive in our schools today.

The Christian tradition

The Catholic Christian tradition is a rich resource for nourishing the spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools. Indeed it considers, because 'the Catholic educator must be a source of spiritual inspiration . . . formation is indispensable . . . and must be kept up to date . . . and in harmony with human formation as a whole'.³ In the Catholic tradition, there is nothing in everyday life that is irrelevant to the spiritual life. Despite the religious history of education in this country, there appear to be very few opportunities either in teacher preparation programmes or in continuous professional development for teachers to explore the spiritual dimension of the human person, or more specifically, and perhaps more importantly, of themselves.

CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust)

¹ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (OECD, 2005).

² See for instance the work of Parker Palmer.

³ The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith #62 accessed Aug 2nd 2011; available from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19821015_lay-catholics_en.html

CEIST is a new organisational framework for exercising educational trusteeship set up by the Daughters of Charity, the Presentation Sisters, the Sisters of the Christian Retreat, the Sisters of Mercy, and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. In existence since 2007, CEIST has responsibility for 110 schools associated with the five collaborating Congregations in the Republic of Ireland. One of my first school visits as Faith Development Coordinator with CEIST was to Mercy Mounthawk in Tralee where the principal, John O’Roarke, engaged me in a conversation on the need to support teachers in Catholic schools. A lot of work with teachers focuses on what they do or how they do it. The Christian tradition also wants to focus on ‘who’ is doing it and why. Of course this is an issue that many groups concerned with Catholic educational ethos have been addressing. As we lamented the lack of a formal formation programme on offer of the type described above, we remembered that CEIST in its charter is committed to building school faith communities where staff are supported and facilitated in their vital role within the school and which provide opportunities for spiritual and personal development. The challenge for us was to try to offer a new contribution to the ongoing challenge, a fresh approach, appropriate to today. With that conversation the first seeds of *Joining the Dots* were planted.

The challenge for all teachers

It is not just Church sponsored schools that are concerned with spiritual matters. Section 9 of *The Education Act (1998)* obliges schools to ‘use [their] available resources to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students.’ In other words, all schools have a responsibility to foster the spiritual development of their pupils. Of course, talking about the role of schools and education in this way is an abstraction. The responsibility ultimately lies with the trustees of each school, the Board of Management, and of course, the principal and teachers. Adequate preparation and ongoing support of teachers to provide for the spiritual wellbeing of the children in their care is something traditionally given little, if any, attention. The right of every child to spiritual development through education is an unrealistic, even unjust expectation if the spirituality of the teacher is neglected or ignored. This presents an enormous challenge.

Defining ‘spirituality’

Spirituality is a human phenomenon. It does not assume any particular religious tradition or religious faith at all, although when in positive, dynamic relationship, spirituality and religion can be mutually enriching. But it does account for the search for what is meaningful in life, and places this search within a transcendent horizon. It is concerned with the ultimate value and purpose to life. When the ultimate values are rooted in the God disclosed in Jesus Christ, in whose life we share through the action and presence of the Spirit, then we are dealing with a specifically Christian spirituality. Thus any attempt to foster Christian spirituality must have as its centre the personal lived relationship with Jesus Christ. Spirituality in a Catholic school is embodied in the Catholic Christian tradition.

Joining the Dots: A programme for teachers and other staff in Catholic schools

Joining the Dots: Life, Work, Faith, Life is a programme in theology and spiritual renewal for staff members in Catholic schools.⁴ Like CEIST itself, *Joining the Dots* is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition. It finds many ways to explore that tradition, for instance through music, art, literature, and particularly Scripture – both Hebrew and Christian. There are no fees, no travel and no exams; it involves approximately ninety minutes one evening a week for five weeks. *Joining the Dots* is an invitation to every staff member in the host school, of every subject area, to explore their faith and connect it to their life, especially their work life. It lifts up the moments of grace – the experiences in daily life that nurture spirituality, such as experiences of community, feelings of being connected, and being appreciated, or experiences of making a difference such as facilitating student achievement and growth.

The programme emerged as a response to suggestions from within the teaching profession. John O’Roarke’s challenge to CEIST was echoed in schools around the country: What was this new trust body prepared to do to nurture the spirituality of teachers? *Joining the Dots* was designed to address the challenge of linking one’s experience of life, personal spiritual quest, and work in a Catholic school. This includes quotidian work such as achieving high quality teaching and learning, providing pastoral care for all and encouraging respect for every child, parent, teacher and member of the school community. The programme is an opportunity for teachers in conversation with the Christian tradition to catch their breath, to ask good questions of life, of relationships, of themselves and of God. It gives teachers the opportunity to explore both their own spiritualities while simultaneously lifting up the richness and wisdom of Christian spirituality and theology. Participants are given time and space to reflect on the personal-lived reality that is their own spirituality, how this integrates with their lives, including ‘work lives’, and to come to know for themselves the Christian ultimate value that is a personal lived relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The 5-five week programme outline reads as follows:

- a) Spirituality and life’s journey: living life with meaning
- b) Being a reflective practitioner: is it possible and why bother?
- c) *Imago Dei*: Who am I and Whose am I – and whose are those kids!
- d) Jesus - the face of God
- e) Living and working from a Christian spirituality: what this means for me, for us and for our school.

The programme is not and could never be another burden for teachers – something they feel they ought to do. It is more about answering their own desires for space to reflect on the moments that providentially fill their days and allowing access to age old methods of discerning these moments: Scripture and tradition and habits of prayer which ask ‘how does the word of God speak to me in my experience of life today? Where is the Good News in the stuff of every day?’

⁴ Joining the Dots was initially designed for teachers. This turned out to be a limited view of potential participants. By the time of the third and final pilot run it was clear that others beyond the teaching staff were also interested, namely Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) and administrative staff. This was an added bonus, adding breadth to the discussions about the life, work and spirituality of the school and its members as well as extending the bonds of community. It also suggests a range of other possibilities – *Joining the Dots* for parents, for members of Boards of Management, for alumni, or even combinations of these groups. It is certain that with some minor adjustments the programme could be adapted in this regard. However, the programme as it stands and as presented here is written with teachers and other school staff in mind.

Joining the Dots does not presume the religious faith of the participant. Indeed, it is cognisant that, just as there is a diversity of student in Irish schools, so there are staff members of varying faith levels - and none – and from various faith traditions – and none.

Joining the Dots so far . . .

Joining the Dots: Faith, Life, Teachers, Teaching and Theology was piloted in Mercy Mounthawk, Tralee in the autumn of 2009. The second pilot run took place in St Mary's Secondary School, Mallow in spring 2010, with a third hosted by Coláiste na Toirbhíre, Bandon, in autumn 2010, and a fourth in St Mary's Secondary School, Nenagh (2011). A fifth has just commenced in Christ King Secondary School, Cork. In all instances, between 12 and 15 teachers from a host of different subject areas took part. Participants are surveyed by means of a confidential questionnaire in the final week of the programme. To date, over 90% of participants have said that *Joining the Dots* enhanced both their faith understanding and their own spirituality. One participant summed up her experience as follows: "I really enjoyed the time for spiritual reflection with other people - the combination of intellectual rigour, the experiential and the prayerful relaxation."

Some participants explicitly 'joined the dots' of life, faith and work in their evaluations: 'It helped and pushed me to think about myself, God, and how I relate to others, [things] that I would normally not think about or ask myself'; [Most helpful was] 'finding the spiritual side of myself, looking at my relationship with God and relating this to students that I teach. I reflected a lot.'

In summary, *Joining the Dots* is one, modest attempt to meet the spiritual needs of teachers and through them, of their students and school communities. The response from participants has been positive and energetic – particularly remarkable in the current climate of uncertainty, cutbacks and austerity measures - not least in the education sector. One of the most interesting outcomes has been the level of surprise among participants. This type of work has typically not been offered in teacher preparation and support, and teachers of all ages are surprised at how relevant and restorative they find both the process and the content. Whereas one can in no way extrapolate from the very new experience of *Joining the Dots* to form reliable conclusions regarding the desires of teachers or the success of the programme, it can serve to remind us of the importance of teacher spiritual welfare. Further, the evidence that school communities desire such a programme, that members are prepared to commit a most precious resource - time - and the resoundingly positive feedback to date might give confidence to potential providers of such programmes in the future.

Conclusion

No amount of curriculum innovation, standardized testing, or technological aids are sufficient to make a good school. A school is only as good as its participants – students, parents, auxiliary staff, leaders, and of course, teachers. So much depends on the spirit of teachers and therefore on what is likely to sustain their spirits. The Catholic Christian tradition is a rich resource and dynamic partner for programmes to nourish spirituality.

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St. Joseph's Rush Celebrates Golden Jubilee with Tree of Life Sculpture

Monday 24th October 2011

This year St. Joseph's Secondary School in Rush, Co. Dublin is celebrating 50 years since opening its doors to provide post primary education for the community and has commemorated the Golden Jubilee with a sculpture by artist; Paul Flynn called the 'The Tree of Life.'

The sculpture was unveiled by Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Gerry McGuire during a ceremony held on Saturday, 15th of October last, in the school garden.

Unveiling the sculpture Mayor of Fingal Cllr Gerry McGuire said, "I am honoured to have been asked to preside over the ceremony. I am very familiar with the town of Rush, and have a good many friends living in the town, some of whom would have been past pupils of this school."

I am aware of the important role a post primary school plays in the community and how it strengthens the fabric of a town. I myself live in Donabate and we have only in recent times obtained our own secondary school. Prior to that many students from Donabate attended St Joseph's here in Rush.

For that reason I have the utmost gratitude for how St Joseph's played its part in supporting the families in Donabate and Portrane during that time."

School Principal Patricia Hayden said, "We were glad the Mayor could come to unveil the sculpture for us and I would also like to thank Cllr Tom O'Leary and Minister James Reilly for taking time out of their busy schedule to join us in celebrating our Golden Jubilee. It was a wonderful day which saw hundreds of people visit the school for our open day as well. I also want to thank our Board of Management and Parents' Association for their tremendous effort and support throughout the year which made the day all the more special."

Photos



Pictured above School Principal Patricia Hayden and Mayor Gerry McGuire.



Pictured above left to right, Paul Flynn (Artist), Patricia Hayden (Principal), Minister James Reilly TD, Mayor Gerry McGuire, Cllr Tom O'Leary, Jacinta Owens (Deputy Principal) and Joe Corr.

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News Snippets from Presentation College, Curraheen, Tuam

Wednesday 19th October 2011

Presentation College, Curraheen Student participates in Presidential Debate

Meave Treacy who is a 5th year student in Presentation College, Curraheen, Tuam, Co. Galway participated in the Foróige Presidential Debate in the Royal College of Physicians, Dublin.

The debate brought together young people from across the country and gave them the opportunity to ask Presidential Candidates vital questions on issues facing young people.

Maeve is pictured 2nd from right above amongst the young people from all over the country who were invited to the Presidential debate.

What Makes Me Happy

Pictured above are 5th year and TY students officially launching the school's competition 'What Makes Me Happy'.

The aim of the competition is to promote positive mental health and runs in conjunction with World Mental Health Week.

Students can enter under following categories: Art / Photography, Poetry or an Essay.

A prize giving ceremony will take place on Friday 28th October.

Our School's Got Talent Competition

Three Acts from Presentation College, Tuam progressed to the Galway final of Our School's Got Talent Competition.

Jade Costello, Niamh Mongan and the TY Choir were chosen to appear in the Final which takes place in the Radisson Hotel, Galway on Saturday 19th November.

Pictured above Presentation College TY Choir along with Siofra Mc Hugh (semi-finalist, far left), Niamh Mongan (front row, right) and Jade Costello (back row, far right).

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North Presentation Secondary School Farranree, Cork Sacred Journey to India

Tuesday 18th October 2011

On October 28th next four Leaving Certificate students Niamh Forde, Lisa Corkery, Hayley Leighton and Jessica Eivers will leave Cork to spend their mid-term break in Chennai, India.

While in Chennai, the four students will work with students in our partner Presentation school Sacred Heart Matriculation Higher Secondary.

There are over 2,000 students in this school and in some classes there are over 70 students!

The students will be accompanied on this trip by Ingrid O'Shea the teacher co-ordinating the project and by school Principal Ellen Lyons and retired Principal John Buckley.

This project is funded by Leargas/Irish Aid Worldwise Initiative at the Department of Foreign Affairs and is part of the Presentation GEE project.

This promises to be a life changing experience for our students and we know they will be wonderful ambassadors for our school.

Best wishes to everyone involved and a sincere depth of gratitude to Ingrid O'Shea for all the work she has put in to organising this amazing project.





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Presentation Clonmel celebrate 15th Annual Presentation Awards

Tuesday 25th October 2011

Presentation Secondary School, Clonmel celebrated the 15th Annual Presentation Awards for Excellence in St. Mary's Church Irishtown last Tuesday. The awards acknowledge the tremendous achievements of the girls across the whole spectrum in education in the school. The awards recognize that this pursuit of excellence is not confined to academic achievement but encompasses the whole range of activities that makes for a rounded and balanced education.

The evening is a celebration of the achievements of the students over the past school year. The evening began a beautiful rendition of "One Step Beyond" by the Junior School Choir under the guidance of music teachers, Ms. Siobhan Alley and Ms. Jennifer Williams. The school was delighted to have Ms. Tomoko Matsumoto who is First Secretary to the Japanese Embassy and Kieran Stafford, President of local conference of St. Vincent De Paul as special guests.

Fr. Billy Meehan opened with the ceremony with a prayer and paid tribute to the Presentation community for its continued excellent role in educating young girls in Clonmel.

Mr. Michael O'Loughlin (Principal) welcomed the large attendance which included special guests, Presentation Sisters from the local community and the trustee's representatives, members of the Board of Management, Teachers, Parents, Sponsors and most importantly, the students themselves.

Mr. O'Loughlin said "Awards Day for all of us in Presentation Clonmel is one of the major highlights in the school calendar and I want to congratulate all the students whom you will see here today as they receive their certificates and awards. I say well done to you all, we are really proud of your achievements and wish you continued success in the years ahead both in school and outside of it as well. The range of awards that will be presented reflects all aspects of school life and represents our mission of offering to our students a holistic catholic education in a caring environment".

He added also "despite the economic climate, our school has helped to fundraise for a number of different organisations over recent years. We are delighted as school today to present two donations to two different organisations. Also, I am delighted to welcome Ms. Tomoko Matsumoto who is First Secretary to the Japanese Embassy to the ceremony and will accept the donation on behalf of the Japanese Earthquake relief fund. Last year, one of our fifth international students was from Japan and was with us when the earthquake/tsunami hit Japan. For our Easter prayer service last year, Yui Ishida with help from her fellow fifth years, organised a fundraising event for those affected by the earthquake in Japan. In appreciation of generosity, Yui made a paper origami for the whole school population".

Mr. O'Loughlin also welcomed Kieran Stafford, President of local conference who is representing St. Vincent De Paul to the ceremony. He stated that "St. Vincent de Paul is a local, national and internationally organisation with over 10,000 volunteers. Its aim is to tackle poverty through the provision of practical assistance to those in need. St Vincent De Paul works closely with our school. It is tremendous that as a school today that we can give something back to the organisation"

Certificates of Recognition of Outside Achievement in Extra Curricular Activity

The evening started with a presentation by Ms. Kathriona Murphy to over 115 girls for their involvement in extra-curricular activity. In presenting these certificates, the school recognized the outstanding achievements of the students in their chosen field of activity and is acknowledging the ambassadorial of the students on behalf of the school.

Student of the Year Awards

The Student of the Year Award from the 1st to 6th year groups were presented by the respective Year Head in association with the sponsor of each year group. Nominations from each year were invited on stage and with mounting tension, the Year Head read out the winner.

These awards were followed by the Academic Awards.

Junior Cert Academic Award

Mrs. Anne Dwyer (Deputy-Principal) presented the Junior Certificate Academic Award. He said that "the Presentation ethos will always be to help students to reach their potential and in our school, our girls are very fortunate to be supported by a highly dedicated teaching staff. There is no doubt looking at this years Junior Cert results that everyone reached their potential." Roisin Cleary won the Junior Cert Academic Award, a past student of Rathkeevin NS Primary School who achieved ten As in all honours papers.

Leaving Cert Academic Award

Mr. Michael O'Loughlin (Principal) presented Leaving Cert Academic Awards. Leaving Certificate Award was presented to Lucy Purcell, a past student of the Gaelscoil Cluain Meala who achieved 535 points in her Leaving Certificate. She is currently studying Business and Law in UCD.

Grace Murphy, a past student of the Sisters of Charity, was the winner of the Leaving Cert Applied Academic Award. A variety of assessment methods are used in Leaving Cert Applied and credits are gained for class work and attendance, 7 projects, interviews, oral language exams, work experience placement and final year practical and written exams. Grace worked very hard and consistently since starting their programme in September 2009 and is described by her teachers as an excellent student who showed great care for others as well

Special Category Awards

Special Category Awards were presented in areas such as Creativity, Enterprise & Initiative, Leadership, Sports Awards, Student Peer Awards, Scientific Endeavour and Master Chef, a new addition to the awards this year. These awards recognized the tremendous work by students outside the academic area and their participation in extra curricular areas in the school community. Mrs. Anne Casey, presented the Social Innovation Award, which was presented to Ms. Tomoko Matsumoto who is First Secretary to the Japanese Embassy to the ceremony. Ms. Matsumoto accepted the award on behalf of Yui Ishida.

After the presentation of the awards, the audience listened to acceptance speeches from Ms. Tomoko Matsumoto and Mr. Kieran Stafford. They, both, thanked the students for their donations and congratulated the school on great awareness of social justice.

Presidents of the Student Council, Vivian Kenneally and Shauna Mulcahy presented a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the students to Sr. Colette, Ms. Tomoko Matsumoto, Mrs. Vera Power and Mrs. Rogers. Mr. O'Loughlin concluded the ceremony by congratulating all the award recipients for their individual achievements and paid tribute to Ms. Jean Rogers for organizing the smooth running of the event.

The Awards ceremony concluded with the Junior Choir singing, "May the road rise with you".

Award Winners

Academic Awards: Junior Cert: Roisin Cleary

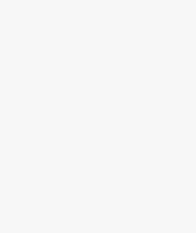
Leaving Certificate: Lucy Purcell Leaving Cert Applied: Grace Murphy

Student of the Year: Chloe Doyle (First Year), Ellie Mackey (Second Year), Ruth O'Dwyer (Third Year), Mary Ann Lambert (Fifth Year) and Becky Nugent (Sixth Year).

Special Category Awards: Niamh Byrne (Creativity), TY class of 2010 (Enterprise and initiative), Aileen Wall (Sports) Chisom Aghamelu, Rebecca Mullins, Aoife Cosgrave, Sarah Kearney, Ciara Power (Scientific Endeavour) Rebecca Whelan (Master Chef), Yui Ishida (Social Awareness Award)

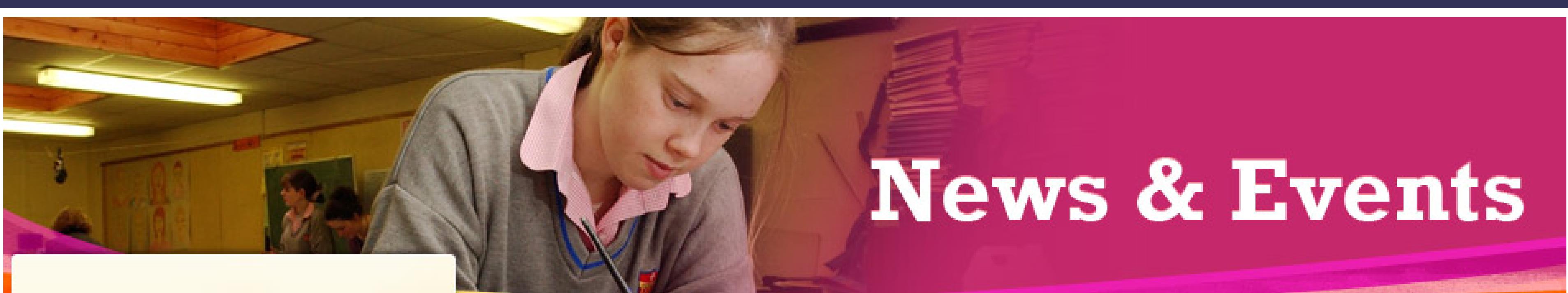
Student Peer Awards: First Year: Aimun Khan and Chloe O'Brien Second Year: Ellie Mackey Third Year: Tanya Crotty Fifth Year: Mary-Anne Lambert Sixth Year: Miriam Ryan

Photos from the Award Ceremony



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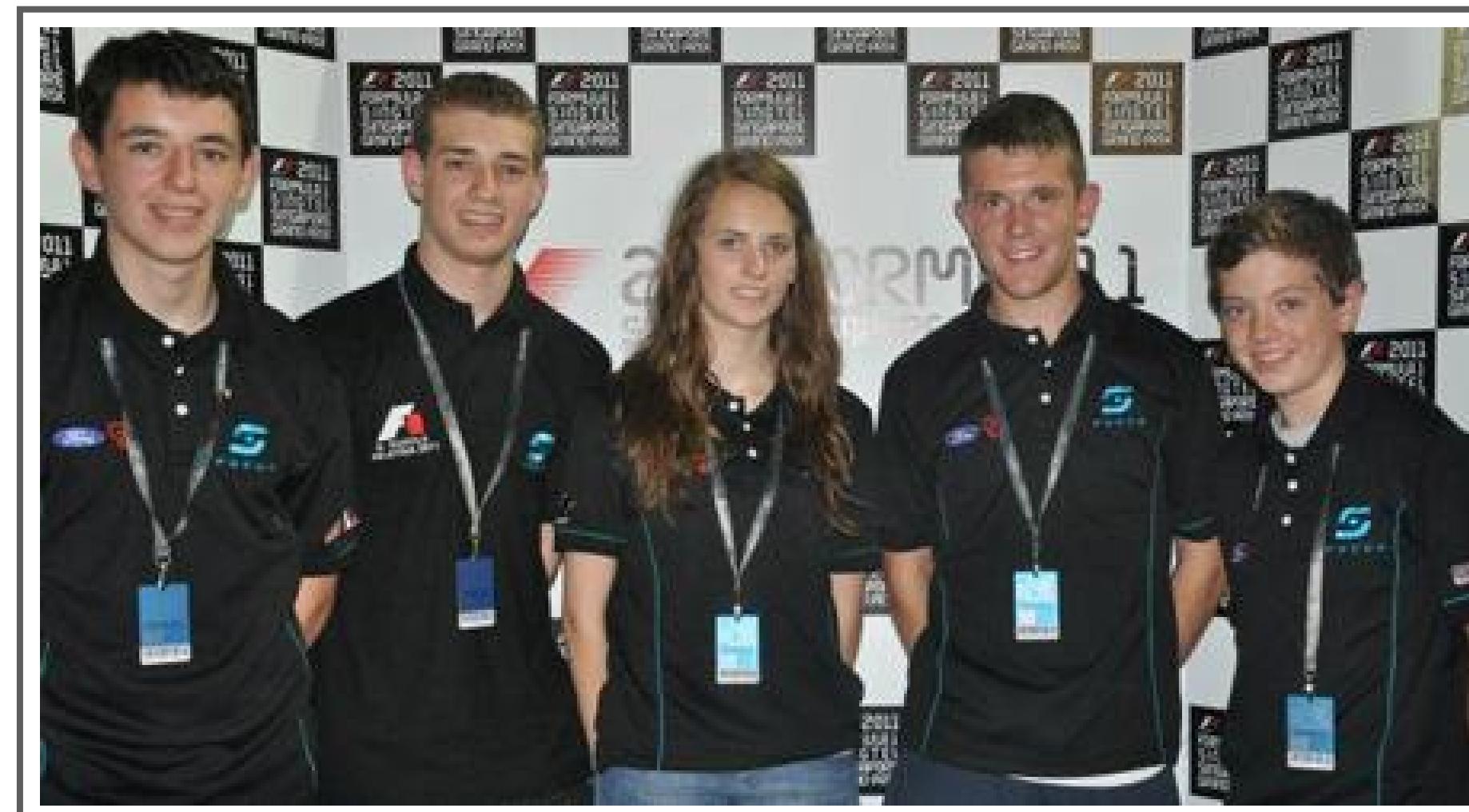
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Great showing by Presentation College Carlow F1 team in Malaysia

Friday 21st October 2011

A TEAM of students from Presentation College Carlow narrowly missed out on a world title at the F1 in Schools competition in Malaysia recently.



Pictured above Team Focus in front of the Grand Prix Board.

Fifth year students Oisin McHugh, Brian Rowan, Grace Byrne, Graham Power and Richard Mynhardt travelled across the globe to compete in the international contest, where they were crowned runners-up in the New Teams category.

The team, who were accompanied by their teachers Claire McHugh, Mike Ryan and School Principal Ray Murray, were also placed 11th overall in the world finals.

The sixteen-year-olds came up against stiff competition from 22 other teams from across the world.



Team Focus pictured above enjoying the Sepang International Circuit.

After three days of competition, the overall results were announced on Wednesday 21 September and the disappointed Carlow team were gracious in defeat.

"The standard was absolutely unbelievable. It was a lot tougher than we expected," said team member Oisin. "But it was a fantastic experience and we really had a lot of fun."



Team Focus pictured above at their official photoshoot.

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Our Lady of Mercy College Beaumont Students Participate in Common Purpose Leadership Course

Tuesday 18th October 2011

Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont, Dublin students Aishling Harnett, Leanne O'Brien, Yasmeen Harati and Michelle Ward all took part in a Common Purpose Leadership Course, May 2011 as part of their Transition Year Programme.

Common Purpose is a not-for-profit organisation that brings together people from a wide range of backgrounds to help them become more effective leaders in society.

They run a range of leadership development programmes that offer participants the inspiration, knowledge and connections to help them become more active and engaged in society.

In October the students met with President McAleese in the DIT campus at the recent launch of the programme for 3rd level.



Pictured above are the four TY students from Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont who took part in the Common Purpose Leadership Course.

Leadership Course.