



Greetings from the CEO's desk

As our schools wind down towards Easter break, it is good to reflect back on the activities of the last few months and celebrate the milestones achieved along the way. Many of our schools participated in the BT Young Scientist Exhibition as we began the New Year; students in many more schools fine-tuned their entrepreneurial talents as they prepared for Mini-Company trade fairs at local, regional and national level; still more students managed to survive the traumas of the "mocks". And I could go on.

Throughout these and the myriad of other activities in our schools, there is one constant, that of the vigilance of our teachers who through their action are committed to excellence in teaching and learning. There is no way we can measure the help each of you gives to our students, or the difference an empathetic educator can have on the lives of the young and impressionable. But know that you are a reassuring humanity for our youth and are our schools' best resources.

The combined challenges of a surprisingly harsh winter and continuing economic downturn have tested most – if not all – of our Principals' patience, stamina, resourcefulness and creativity. Grappling with the after-effects of the big-freeze, or refused funding, could have utterly consumed energies, but yet again, your resolute leadership in the face of adversity has shone through. Filled with humour, insight and a spirit of openness, you nurture the faith life of your school community, in the face of adversity. In the brittle and derisive climate that now characterises so much of contemporary Ireland, we take heart from your unwavering commitment to ensuring the CEIST schools endeavour to understand and live up to the values of the CEIST Charter.

Living up to The Charter is a challenge for us also at CEIST. We continue to make every effort to comprehend the nature and extent of the challenge that is placed before us in the Charter. Perhaps this is what energises us as we continue to "sharpen the saw" and see us produce our first publication, "Prayers for Chairs". This beautiful compilation reflects the combined thoughts and prayers of all at CEIST and is our gift to you, whether you are a Chairperson of a Board of Management or otherwise.

Our efforts to respond to so many of you seeking opportunities for Continuing Professional Development, have led to the establishment of the Masters Degree in Christian Leadership in Education, as a direct creation of the combined events of CEIST personnel and the R.E.

Faculty of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, with accreditation from the University of Limerick. This programme of study and research will be a beacon for all those who intend working in and leading a Catholic School into the future. May I encourage as many of you as possible, to embark on this journey of reflection and personal and professional growth and know that by so doing, you will enrich and be enriched.

My final words must be to congratulate Michael Lane, on securing the position as Director of the School Support Services Department (Acting), replacing Margaret O'Brien. Michael will retain ten of his twenty-eight schools and the remainder will be re-distributed amongst the three School Relationship Co-ordinators. Already, Michael has made an impact on the collaborative work of both the School Support Services and Faith Development Departments and I know you will join me in welcoming Michael when he visits your school and wishing him every blessing in this new position.

I wish you a peaceful and restful Easter.
Anne Kelleher, CEO

MA in Christian Leadership in Education

Applications are currently invited for an exciting new professional qualification programme which will combine practice, policy and theory of education and education leadership with a strong theology component. This programme is ideally suited for those working, or intending to work, in leadership roles in the education sector. Successful applicants will be eligible for grant aid.

Application Deadline: April 23rd 2010.
Course commences June 2010.

Further Information:

Further information available from Course Co-ordinator:
Dr. Eugene Duffy T: 061 204968 E: Eugene.Duffy@mic.ul.ie

Application forms available from
Admissions Office, Mary Immaculate College,
South Circular Road, Limerick
T: + 353 61 204929/204348
E: admissions@mic.ul.ie W: www.mic.ul.ie

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INVITATION TO CHAIRPERSONS

Board of Management, CEIST Schools.

Date: Saturday April 17th 9.30am - 2pm

Venue: Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

In appreciation of the work of our Chairpersons and our commitment to you, we are hosting the above with a view to sharing the evolving perspectives of the Trust across the range of our mutual concerns.

School Support Services



It is with a great sense of humility and hope that I take on the mantle of Acting Director of School Support Services. I wish to pay tribute and thank Margaret O'Brien for her excellent management of the School Support Services in CEISC and for putting in place systems and procedures that facilitate good communications. I am glad to report that Margaret is enjoying and has settled into her new role as Principal of St. Joseph's in Tulla, Co. Clare. Now is a very challenging and difficult time for all the leaders in our schools. Great credit is due to you for coping with cutbacks, changes in the pupil teacher ratio, lack of co-operation with inspections and the impact of the ban on filling posts. My colleagues Tom, Damien, Tony and everyone in CEISC are very appreciative of the positive learning communities that you have fostered and nurtured. Working with our Faith Development team, we will endeavour to support your noble work of promoting Catholic Education.

Le Gach Dea Ghúí,

Michael Lane, Acting Director of School Support Services Email: mlane@ceist.ie Tel: 016510426 Mob: 086 1704739

CEISC and Whole School Evaluation

As you know, Whole School Evaluation is a collaborative process involving members of the teaching staff, the management of the school, students and parents. At various stages during the W.S.E. process, members of the school community and the Trustees have the opportunity to interact with the evaluation team to discuss their work, their role and their vision for the school. Recently the Trustees have met with the inspection teams in St. Joseph's Navan, Presentation Listowel and St. Joseph's in Rush, Co. Dublin. This was a very positive experience for the Trustees.

The inspection team appreciated that supplying the Trustees with the school statistics, annual report, minutes of Board meetings, various policies, school accounts and individual subject inspection reports gave us an excellent knowledge of the school and allowed us to articulate the school's strengths and mission. Thanks to our C.E.O. Anne for exercising this invitation, the schools that welcomed us and the inspectors who listened. All agreed that this was a worthwhile exercise that gave another dimension to a process that celebrated the good work that was going on in the schools.



Pictured above, the Presentation College, Currylea, Tuam who won the ladies Senior A Connaught Final recently in Tuam stadium against St. Attracta'a, Tubbercurry.

Embracing Diversity in Catholic Secondary Schools

It was great to meet so many of our CEISC colleagues in the Lantern Centre on the 8th March. This was a wonderful opportunity to share experiences and discuss issues concerning this important topic. Aiveen Mullally, Co-ordinator Schools Ethos Project, Marino spoke about the challenges for our schools and gave an extensive pre-view of the new "Guide-lines document". Ms Breda Naughton gave an overview of the National Strategy towards diversity. This was a great opportunity to engage with people involved in many initiatives and to share in best practice in embracing diversity. The Department said that it owed a huge debt to our schools for the manner that international students were integrated and facilitated, with the most meagre of resources. Well deserved praise indeed for another great undertaking by teachers and Management in our schools.

Board of Management Minutes

It is most heartening to read your school minutes and get a glimpse of the wonderful work that is going on in the schools. All the School Co-ordinators and I salute the fantastic array of activities that are undertaken and are enumerated in "The Principal's Report". My colleagues and I marvel at the academic achievements, extra-curricular activities, special awards, the Young Scientist successes and many other initiatives that promote good learning. You show that there is a great degree of social awareness and social justice in the manner that your students have undertaken fundraising for Haiti and other charities such as the homeless projects.



Pictured above Sr. Coirle McCarthy, Congregational Leader of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy accepting a cheque on behalf of the Mercy UN Haiti Appeal from Mercy College Sligo. Pictured behind Sr. Coirle is Sr. Kathy Higgins.

Well done to everyone who engages in sport. The basketball, camogie, football, hockey and soccer games make our schools special, build character and encourage teamwork. We have had the pleasure of attending musicals, concerts and drama performances that would grace any professional stage. Choirs from our schools have won awards and are deserving of many accolades. Debators and public speakers have also given great entertainment. There is great credit due to everyone involved in the thousands of projects in our schools. Without your leadership and the support of management and the board, our schools would be deprived of this great "esprit-de-corp". Well done! Don't forget to keep sending the details of your extra curricular activities to us (info@ceist.ie)-all good news needs to be celebrated.

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FAITH DEVELOPMENT



It has been a difficult time for Church and State since our last newsletter, a veritable winter season in every way. It can be a challenging time to be a teacher of the young, a bearer of light and hope, when even people of faith are wondering how we can believe in anything anymore. And yet to be a believer is so central to what we are as teachers. Whether it is belief in love, or in another person, or in goodness, truth and beauty, or in Jesus Christ and his Gospel, or indeed in the values of the CEIST Charter, believing is so much part of what our lives are about.

One of the hardest things to cope with at present is the degree of overstatement in much of current discourse. Saying that the Church is evil, or that most priests are paedophiles or that the Church should be kicked out of education are cases in point. It can be hard to say: 'hold on a minute, the Church is not evil just because it has been betrayed by abusers or by aspects of its leadership'. It can be hard to say 'hold on a minute the vast majority of priests are the salt of the earth'. It can be hard to say: 'have you any idea of the contribution Catholic schools have made and are making to education in Ireland today?' 'Have you any idea of the life-giving that takes place every day in our CEIST schools?' It takes wisdom, courage and skill to achieve balance in the search for truth. It takes real nerve to suggest, as Garry O'Sullivan did recently in *The Irish Catholic*, that if the terrible crime of child abuse is such an unfortunate aspect of family and society, why don't people who call for the wipe out of Church call for the wipe out of family and society as well!

There can be no doubt that there is much to be ashamed of in the Church's handling of child abuse. There is much to atone for and make amends for and much to put right. As President McAleese has said, we are lucky to live in a time when the truth is out and we can do something about it. Putting things right is the call of our time across a whole range of our nation's institutions, from banking to hospitals to churches. How we set about this task will be the measure by which we ourselves are judged. Judgement will not be kind if we allow half truths to prevail in the minds of young people, or spend our time fulminating about the abuses of the past while the abuses of the present pass under our noses. Neither will it be kind if we fail to find our voices and put the ounces of our weight on the line for the truths we hold sacred, for the values we stand for and for the goodness, truth and beauty we intuit every day we set off down the road to school.

For a fuller reflection in the aftermath of the Murphy Report see Ned Prendergast's article "In Brokenness We Awaken" in the April edition of *The Furrow*. It will appear on www.ceist.ie when published.

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Our Website

We sometimes wonder if there are teachers out there who have not yet visited www.ceist.ie and viewed its collection of treasures. We would particularly recommend the Faith Development section with its liturgical and other resources and hope that each visitor finds something there to raise spirits, resource teaching and give the sense of a developing network of schools. A new feature coming on stream shortly will make it possible for teachers to form interest groups around chosen areas and to exchange views in a member's area.

Retreats

Glendalough turned out to be the most popular retreat destination for Holy Week and on Sunday evening March 28th CEIST teachers from around the country will be joining Fr. Michael Rogers, Sr. Breda Ahearn and members of CEIST office team at Tearmann Spirituality Centre for an annual retreat that we hope will become an annual feature of our Trust. If you can't be with us in reality you might visit www.tearmann.ie and join us in spirit.

Charter Awareness Programme

We have taken delivery of a set of five posters illustrating CEIST charter values which will be delivered to each school as part of a 'Charter Awareness Programme' to be launched in September.

Masters in Christian Leadership

You will note this exciting initiative from the front page of the newsletter. We are proud of our role in bringing this course to fruition and hope that many of our staff will avail of a wonderful opportunity to deepen understandings and capacity with a view to leadership in our schools.

Clusters and Seminars

In answer to requests from schools, Faith Development Co-ordinators Tonya Hanly, Lloyd Bracken and Margaret Farrell have been facilitating cluster meetings of R.E. and RSE teachers in various locations over the past month. RE clusters have taken place at Galway, Ballina, Maynooth and Longford while a cluster entitled 'RSE in the Catholic School, Balancing Idealism and Realism' was held at the Education Centre, Kilkenny on March 10th.

Joining the Dots

One of the highlights of this academic year has been the arrival in our schools of this programme which explores how one's faith and work speak to each other in the life of a teacher. Following a very successful inaugural outing at Mounthawk, Tralee, where it was facilitated by Amalee Meehan and John O'Roarke, this programme has now moved to Mallow where Amalee is being assisted by Margaret Farrell. Other schools interested should contact ameehan@ceist.ie

Prayers for Chairs

Beginning Board Meetings with a Prayer



"Where two or three are gathered in my name I am there in the midst of you." Mt 18:20

CEIST

Prayers for Chairs

This book of prayers to begin Board meetings which you will find at www.ceist.ie is now in hard copy and copies will be presented to chairpersons and principals over the coming weeks.

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CEIST Information and Communication Systems



Welcome to the Information and Communications section of our newsletter.

We are continuously striving to improve communications between the Education Office and our CEIST community through our various mediums such as Website, E-News, Members Area, Internal Systems, etc, and we very much welcome your input and feedback.

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CEIST Schools Statistics

We have received 95 school statistics returns to date, this leaves 17 School Statistical forms outstanding.

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

Educena is establishing a property database which will in due course provide schools with details on their school property. It is envisaged that this database will take a number of months to establish.

Members Area

The final touches are being applied to our private site and we will shortly be giving out access details to our School Principals/Deputy Principals, CEIST Board and Members of CEIST.

We plan to setup access in due course for Teachers, Students, Congregational members and other groups within the CEIST community with access being introduced on a phased basis.



ICT Workshop – CEIST Conference

We are at present in the process of organising relevant ICT workshop(s) for our upcoming conference in late September.

If there is a particular Information Technology workshop you would like presented at the conference we would be very interested in hearing from you.

CEIST E-Newsletter

Our E-News is published on the last working day of each month.

We are greatly encouraged both by the ever increasing number of subscribers and the news items submitted to the office for sharing on our E-Newsletter.

To help improve our E-Newsletter we welcome from you any images, news articles, events, ideas, etc, to info@ceist.ie.



FINANCE MATTERS!



Greetings from the Finance Team here in CEIST!

We have been in correspondence with all our schools in the recent months specifically in relation to school annual accounts and forward budgets.

We are very grateful to all our Boards, School Secretaries and Finance Sub-committees for the continuous, diligent work that is carried out in preparing annual account and budgets for each of our schools.

We have also had the opportunity to meet with some of our school representative during the Phase 2 rollout of Board of Management training in early March this year.

As always we are delighted to receive feedback, good or constructive, and we look forward to hearing from you throughout the year.

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School Budgets

"When I was young I thought that money was the most important thing in life; now that I am old I know that it is." – Oscar Wilde

School budgeting time seems to come around so quickly each year and while it may not be the most pleasurable task to be completed, nevertheless, it is a critical tool in managing school finances, particularly in the current economic climate. The Articles of Management for Voluntary Secondary Schools (Article 15(c)) states that the Board of Management must submit an annual budget to the Trustees. Apart from meeting this requirement budgeting is an important process in all walks of life. So, why should I prepare a budget?

- To control the school financial resources.
- To maximize the use of available resources.
- To eliminate ad hoc decision-making.
- To develop systems for the efficient running of the school.
- To highlight deficiencies in resources to run the school.
- A budget helps you control resources rather than resources controlling you.
- Helps you to meet the goals of the school and guide you in the right direction.

Need help? The CEIST Finance Team can provide you with in depth analysis of your school's income and expenditure for the previous four years in most cases. We can also compile a comparison of your school's financial data with similar sized schools that should help to assure the Board of Management that the school's budget is appropriate for its size.

Thank you to all those schools who have submitted their 2010-2011 budgets and we look forward to receiving the remaining school budgets by 31st March 2010.

School Annual Accounts

Thank you to all our schools who have submitted the annual accounts for academic year 2008-2009. There are still a few outstanding and we would urge you to ensure that they are submitted immediately so that the Board of Management will be in a position to discharge its financial responsibility.

Insurance Renewal

As you know the insurance renewal date is 1st April 2010. The first moiety (50%) will be due then along with the full premium for buses, tractors, ride-on mowers and lifts. Please ensure that you pay the premier immediately upon receipt of notification from Allianz so that your school remains fully insured at all times.