

Scoil Shinsireach Naomh Athracht, Cluain Ghlaise, Áth Cliath 16
Guidelines on Professional Development
St. Attracta's Senior National School, Meadowbrook, Dublin 16.

INTRODUCTION

In all walks of life it is realised that initial professional training, no matter how good, is insufficient for high-level career long performance.

- J. Coolahan, 1991

So it is with the teaching profession. It is no longer adequate to consider that a period of initial education is sufficient to equip teachers with the solutions to problems which they will encounter throughout their teaching careers. The changes in schools today respond to more pressures and social issues than those experienced by any previous generation.

It is therefore the policy of the Board of Management of St. Attracta's Senior National School to actively encourage all staff members to avail of opportunities for professional development, both during and outside of school hours, and that members of staff respond to these opportunities.

It is acknowledged that there is a need for continuous professional development to support specific curriculum and educational changes. It is recognised that individuals have responsibility for their own professional development and that the school has a responsibility to promote and facilitate the professional development of those who are employed by them.

The Board of Management of St. Attracta's Senior National School recognises its responsibility under the Education Act, 1998 Section 9 (j) and commits itself to the on-going professional development of its staff, thus providing

- continued professional development opportunities for teachers and support staff
- on-going enrichment and motivation of teachers
- a multiplied beneficial effect to the school's "end learners", i.e. the children.

The Board of Management encourages professional development based on the following criteria:

- the course/seminar taken will enhance teaching and learning in the school.
- professional development courses/seminars selected correspond with areas of need identified by the Principal in consultation with the staff in the current year.
- a staff member undertaking a course agrees to make presentations to colleagues at staff meetings, disseminate notes, and actively share knowledge, practice and skills gained at the said course/seminar.

At the beginning of each school year, the principal in consultation with the teaching staff, will identify the key professional development areas which will be of most benefit to the school as a whole. Through the course of the year, suitable courses/seminars in these areas will be identified. Depending on demand and budget available, the course fees and related expenses, travel etc, will be paid for by the Board of Management.

GRADUATE & POST GRADUATE COURSES

At present the successful completion of graduate and post-graduate courses such as those listed below merit the payment of an additional salary allowance.

- *Master's Degree*
- *Doctorate*
- *Higher Diploma in Education*
- *Ard Teastas Gaeilge*
- *Diploma for Teachers of the Deaf, Blind, Mentally and Physically Handicapped Children.*

Teachers working in the school may be released from teaching duties under Rule 116 of the Rules for National Schools to pursue full-time study and the Board of Management facilitates participation in such professional development. This is normally limited to one teacher per year. The BOM also facilitates career breaks in accordance with Circular 17/03 and school policy on Career Breaks,

The Diploma in Special Educational Needs is available to full-time learning support teachers in the school. It can be pursued in either St. Patrick's College of Education (one day per week) or Church of Ireland College of Education (block release). Learning support and resource teachers are strongly encouraged to apply for either of above, with the provision that they are willing to commit themselves to the role of Learning Support/Resource Teacher, if so required, for at least five years.

PART-TIME COURSES DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

General:

Workshops, conferences and seminars are available to teachers throughout the school year. All members of staff are strongly encouraged to put themselves forward to attend these, particularly if they are relevant to children in their class or if they have a specific interest in any relevant aspect of education. Informal networks are open to all staff and in particular, those with responsibility for any aspect of special needs or learning support are urged to participate in these.

Local Teachers' Centres provide a variety of courses for teachers during the school year, normally outside of teaching hours. Information and application forms for these courses come to the school and are promptly brought to the attention of the teaching staff. Some of these courses are affiliated to the Universities and the fees can be quite substantial.

Management Courses

Teachers who hold the posts of principal, deputy principal, assistant principal as well as special duties teachers and others are actively encouraged by the Board of Management to pursue in-career development in the area of management, by attending professional conferences and courses. The principal will forward information pertaining to specific posts to the relevant personnel on the staff.

In-Service Education for Teachers During School Hours

In line with the introduction of the revised curriculum (1999) all teachers received in-service in curriculum subjects. The School Development Planning Initiative also facilitated in-service in the area of school planning and development. In-service in other educational areas is also available from time to time during school hours. Teachers are given opportunities to attend these courses provided adequate cover for classes can be provided. Teachers are further encouraged to participate in non-curricular educational courses and activities.

Summer Courses

Primary teachers who attend courses recognised by the Department of Education and Science during the summer vacation period are entitled to 3-5 days personal leave during the school year, depending on the duration of the course. As there is no provision within the Rules for National Schools to enable management authorities to appoint substitute teachers to replace teachers who are absent on extra personal vacation days, *the good will of colleagues who provide cover for their class in their absence is recognised and appreciated.*

TEAM PLANNING and MENTORING PROGRAMME

Team planning and mentoring are viewed as supports to professional development. Team planning is an integral part of our plan scoile and all members of staff are involved. Teachers in each standard meet for 30 minutes once a week to share ideas and to plan schemes of work for their classes. This also gives teachers the opportunity to discuss extra-curricular events, non-core subjects and standardised testing. The principal avails of this opportunity to communicate with staff.

Mentoring is borne in mind by the principal when allocating classes for a new year. The Board of Management fully endorses this programme. The object of this is to provide a support network for new teachers, to familiarise them with the general housekeeping and routines of the school and to involve them in teamwork. The following structures are in place to ensure the efficient working of this system.

- Ideally, the new teacher and his/her mentor should be teaching the same standard.
- Both teachers should have classrooms near one another, i.e. opposite or next-door.
- Time is set aside at the beginning of the year to enable teachers uninterrupted time to work, this to be facilitated by the principal and other teachers.
- Both teachers meet at team planning time ensuring continuity of the programme.

FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Visiting lecturers and educationalists are invited to speak to the staff during the school year. These visits may take place as part of a staff meeting or outside school hours.

Websites, chat-rooms and networks facilitate the passing on of information and advice on educational matters. These are available via the DES, INTO, SDP, IPPN, Scoilnet, teachers' centres and other educational establishments. Staff are encouraged to make use of these facilities in furthering their professional development.

Opportunities for exchanging good practice are provided and individual teachers may opt to share expertise and knowledge by talent-sharing and by individual teachers reporting to the whole staff on aspects of courses, conferences, etc. they have attended.

Teachers should also broaden their skills through the experience of representing staff on the Board of Management, I.N.T.O., Parents' Association, and through participation in school and community activities.

A comprehensive teachers' resource library is available to staff to update them on various aspects of education and special needs. All members of staff are *encouraged to identify/purchase material to add to this library and the costs of such materials will be met by the school depending on demand and budget available*. The school is affiliated to a number of educational associations (below) and staff are notified of relevant courses as they arrive in the school.

RAI	Reading Association of Ireland
ILSA	Irish Learning Support Association
CBI	Children's Books Ireland
CESI	Computer Education Society of Ireland
ISTA	Irish Science Teachers' Association
IPPEA	Irish Primary PE Association,
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals' Network

PLEAN SCOILE

The school Plan has an important part in the promotion of staff development. In this regard the School Plan will usually include initiatives and steps that can be taken to promote the professional development of the staff. In order to achieve this, it is necessary in the first place to identify the professional needs of the teachers. This can be achieved in a number of ways, but chiefly through a school self-review system, dialogue at school level or school report furnished by an external evaluator, e.g. WSE.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Members of the teaching staff along with the Board of Management have been involved in the preparation of this policy. This document is subject to review when deemed necessary.