

iatse Update

SUMMER UPDATE

SUMMER 07

ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

This annual event will be held in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin from 7 – 9 June 2007. The title this year is FOCUS on the STUDENT In the Midst of Policy & Paper.

The conference will be opened on Thursday night by Emily Logan, Ombudsman for Children. The keynote address will be delivered by Professor Roy McConkey from University of Ulster. There will be a reception hosted by St Patrick's College in the Dining Room after the formalities.

As in previous years there will be a series of concurrent paper presentations all day on Friday and on Saturday morning. On Friday from 11am there will be a poster presentation display in the College Auditorium.

iatse
Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education

19TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2007

**FOCUS ON
THE STUDENT**

**In the Midst of
Policy and Paper**

**7th, 8th & 9th June, 2007.
St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.**

Postal Queries to IATSE Conference Director, Drumcondra Education Centre, Dublin 9
Enquiries: conference@iatse.ie • ajackson@crc.ie • 087 9196986

www.iatse.ie

The titles of the poster presentations are in the programme and an abstract of each presentation will be in the conference folders.

The publishers display will be in Room B103 which is just off the main entrance area and behind the reception desk.

We look forward to seeing many of you at the conference. It is an opportunity to hear about research, educational innovation and examples of good practice, to find out what is happening in other countries and to meet colleagues and friends.

Programme, Registration Form and relevant details can be obtained on the IATSE website: www.iatse.ie. For urgent queries contact conference@iatse.ie or 087 919 6986.

Ann Jackson

Conference Director



CYBERCORNER

WRITING & TECHNOLOGY

Many students have difficulties with writing in school. This may be a result of physical, cognitive or emotional issues. They may have an inability to write at all or just to write legibly. They may have spelling, syntax and grammar deficits. They may have language disorders. They may have a reluctance to write due to low self-esteem or consistent failure.

In many cases it is now recommended that these students would benefit from using a computer or a dedicated word processor. The use of technology can be very beneficial for many students especially those that have a physical problem with written work. However it must be remembered that for many students we are just replacing a pen and blank sheet of paper with a keyboard and a blank screen. Initially we are making the task more complex for many students if they have little or no familiarisation with the keyboard, are using new software and, in the case of younger and less able, students if they are unsure of their letters and have not fully learned the correlation between upper and lower case letters.

Students should be supported in acquiring appropriate keyboard familiarisation or typing skills. There are a range of typing tutor programs available for practicing typing skills and acquiring typing speed and accuracy.

For students who are not ready for typing and still need support with letter and literacy skills concepts a program called *First Keys 2* is very useful. This support keyboard familiarisation while giving literacy support at graded levels. It can be used to aid single letter recognition for some and right up to spelling practice for others.

For those students who are ready to start doing some written work using a standard word processor such as *Microsoft Word* there are some helpful strategies that a teacher, SNA or parent might consider.

The adult might supply or help the student to select one or more of the following supports for the writing process

- A picture such as clip art, digital photo, own computer art work, picture from internet. The picture can stimulate ideas and a focus for the writing instead of looking at a blank screen

- A stimulating title which can be discussed orally with the students or the class to generate ideas and content
- A title plus a starter paragraph
- A title plus a keyword or phrase for each paragraph
- A set of interesting characters – perhaps linked to television or topics of particular interest to the student
- A selection of interesting or funny keywords

For older students it can be useful to give the student a series of short sentences and get them to expand each one. This can be used to extend vocabulary, practice spelling and even as a basis for a grammar lesson. A paragraph of concise text can be given to the student to expand while keeping the overall meaning. Then try the reverse.

Some simple ideas can help the really reluctant writer. Experiment with having a larger font size and type. It may be easier for the student to read back and also less to write to fill a page which can be motivating.

It is important to teach the student all the features of the program that they need or are capable of using. Finally the student should be encouraged to revise and edit their written work before it is printed.

Other ideas to support the development of good writing and language skills might include

- Using the language experience approach where the adult actually writes or types the story as dictated by the student. Thus the emphasis is on the story and the language and not on the physical process
- Reading some examples of writing by others on the same topic
- Recording the story onto tape or the computer
- Making the story into a talking book
- Using *Microsoft Powerpoint* instead of *Word*. This is especially useful for older students for revision and exam topics.
- Writing a newspaper or magazine article about the story
- Setting up a class or group newsletter with different types of articles and styles of writing



While none of these ideas are magic solutions some of these support may give the student sufficient encouragement and confidence to at least try to produce some written work and even to begin to enjoy the process.

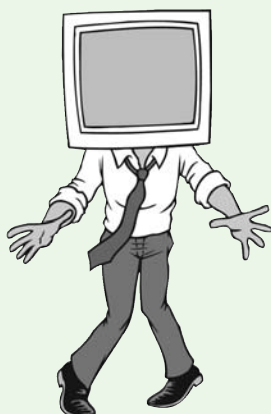
WEBSITES

There is a great deal of information available on the internet for teachers and parents working with students with special needs. There are too many to list here and everyone has their own favourites. Useful general Irish sites include SESS on www.sess.ie and NCSE on www.ncse.ie as well as the websites of all the support services. A complete list of these are available on the SESS website. For technology information look at NCTE in www.ncte.ie and a new site providing information on how technology can support access to education and the workplace for students with disabilities on www.gateway2at.org. Two UK sites that are worth a mention – www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies has a great section on special needs and www.oaasis.co.uk which is the Office for Advice, Assistance, Support and Information on Special Needs.

CONFERENCE

Finally there are several interesting paper presentations on technology for students with special needs at our Annual Conference next month. Topics include Early Interaction Skills for Students with Special Needs, AT in the Inclusive Classroom, Gateway2AT Resources for Teachers and Students, Inclusive Learning with Technology and Using Multimedia Authoring Tools. Full details are available on the website at www.iatse.ie. We hope that we will see many of you at the conference as there is a wide variety of presentations as well as poster presentations and a publishers display.

If you have any queries or comments please contact ajackson@crc.ie



A SAD FAREWELL TO OUR DEAR FRIEND- ANITA CRAIG



It is with the greatest sadness that the CEC learned of the untimely passing of our dear friend and colleague, Anita Craig. Anita, an inspirational teacher, advocate for children with special educational needs and honorary

member of IATSE, lost the battle with her illness on May 3rd. The CEC extends their heartfelt sympathy to Anita's beloved family on their bereavement. A special tribute to Anita will be published in a future edition of Update.

REPRESENTATION & LIAISON

IATSE has been represented at several National and regional events since Christmas, including

- INTO Annual Congress in Cork from 9 – 11 April
- SESS seminar on Autism in Croke Park in January
- Launch of new on-line course in Special and Inclusive Education designed for mainstream teachers, designed and to be delivered by ICEP and St Patrick's College, Drumcondra
- Launch of Draft Guidelines for Developing School Codes of Behaviour by National Educational Welfare Board in April
- Spring Conference of ILSA, the Irish Learning Support Association in Ballincollig, Cork in March

IATSE continues to have a representative on the Steering Committee for the Special Education curricular guidelines being formulated by NCCA and the CECDE (Centre for early childhood development and education).

The association receive many invitations to attend a wide variety of educational events. It endeavours to attend as many as are relevant to its aims and as time permits for committee members who are all in fulltime employment.

ANNUAL IATSE AWARDS 2007

IATSE has in recent years, established an annual award to give recognition to good practice in Irish schools in the area of special education. All practising teachers involved in special education are eligible to apply. This also includes teachers of mainstream classes where pupils with special educational needs are included.

Submission may describe:

- A piece of work carried out with a particular pupil / group / or class
- A programme of staff development established (e.g. school based induction programme for new staff i.e. teachers or SNAs)
- A curricular programme or innovation

A submission may be in the form of a case study / project which would describe the practical application, methodologies and outcomes of the innovation. It may also take the form of a narrative through which the story of the innovation is told. It

should be between 1,000 and 3,000 words in length. Submissions may be made by an individual or a group of teachers.

Up to four prizes of 500 each will be awarded each year. Only one award will be made for each winning submission.

Adjudication

Winning submissions will be selected by a panel of adjudicators comprising members of the Central Executive Committee of IATSE, representatives of REACH committee, and members selected from a panel of readers. The CEC of IATSE will be the final arbiter in relation to the award.

Applicants should note that submissions may be published on the IATSE website.

Submissions should be made to Annual Award, IATSE, c/o Drumcondra Education Centre, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Closing date for submissions is 24th September 2007.

Honorary members of the IATSE are appointed to the Inaugural Special Education Appeals Board

Congratulations to our dear friends and esteemed honorary members Mr. Paid McGee and Mr. Pat O'Keeffe on their appointment by the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, to the inaugural Special Education Appeals Board. The Special Education Appeals Board was established under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSN) to hear and determine appeals under the Act.



*Honorary member
Paid McGee*

The Appeals Board will comprise of a Chairperson and two members, all of whom have a special interest in, or knowledge of, education and in particular the education of persons with special educational needs. Ms Fionnuala Kilfeather, who recently stepped down as Chief Executive of the National Parents Council,

agreed to accept the position of Chairperson to the Board and will join Paid and Pat.



Mr Páid McGee, is a former Director of Special Education in St Patrick's College of Education and former President of the Psychological Society of Ireland. Mr Pat O'Keeffe was formerly the Principal of St Francis' Special School in Portlaoise and is currently a member of the

*Honorary member
Pat O'Keeffe*

Governing Board of St Patrick's College of Education.

According to the Department of Education & Science, the Appeals Board "will be independent in the performance of its functions and is being appointed now to ensure that appropriate structures and processes will be in place once the relevant sections of the EPSN Act, which would allow appeals to be undertaken, are commenced".