

# Primary School

## What's happening?

You may recall receiving the *Primary Curriculum Review, Phase 2* leaflet in the post after the mid-term break. This leaflet highlighted the main findings of the recent review of the *Primary School Curriculum*.

The subtitle of the leaflet – *What you told us and where to next* – explains why we put it together and why we sent it out to schools. During the years 2006/07 we received valuable feedback on important aspects of the curriculum from almost 1,400 teachers, from 8 schools through the detailed case studies, and from teachers and children in the special study on science in the curriculum. We felt that it was important to share the key messages from this review and to tell you what we are doing in responding to the findings.

This article is about the ways in which the Primary School Network has begun that response.

### The Primary School Network

The NCCA has set up a school network to focus on the challenges arising

from the review. As you'll see from the leaflet, the review highlighted a number of key successes and challenges. The challenges related to time and curriculum overload, specific teaching approaches, assessment and *Curaclam na Gaeilge*.

The network will provide great scope for working directly with schools, in order to shape responses to these challenges in a way that reflects the reality of the primary classroom. You will be glad to hear that multi-grade classrooms are a big feature of the network, so that all of the work can be informed by the particular challenges of these complex settings.

Three areas of work are planned:

- Assessment
- Language
- Methods of Teaching and Learning.

However, the longer term plan is for interaction between all areas of the network and between all participating schools. This is important because the feedback that teachers gave us – on what was working well and what they perceived as challenging – did not reflect clear lines of demarcation across the curriculum. Concerns about assessment cannot be separated from concerns about language, and vice versa. The views of teachers on teaching and learning cannot be labelled as relating only to particular curriculum areas.

### Work currently underway

So, the work of the Primary Network is underway in some areas and is currently being planned in others. The general outline that follows aims to give you a flavour of what is happening by taking a look at work that has already started in responding to the reported challenges in assessment and language (*Curaclam na Gaeilge*).

### Assessment

- There are 17 schools involved in this work (9 in a region across Dublin, Wicklow and Louth, and 8 in Mayo).
- With its focus on assessment for learning (AfL), this area of the network is building on the assessment methods used by teachers and outlined in *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools*.
- The network is developing materials that can be used to provide support for teachers in making judgements about



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children's progress in learning and in giving feedback to children about their learning. To this end a collection of samples of pupils' work with commentary from their teachers will be housed on the ACTION website.

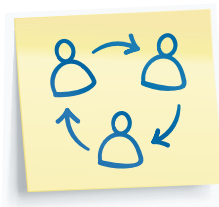
Although it is not a direct output from the Assessment Network, you can now visit the ACTION website to see some sample videos of Irish primary teachers putting aspects of assessment for learning (AfL) into practice in their classrooms. These video moments are part of the outcomes of the GOALL (Guiding Our Assessment for Literacy Learning) research initiative undertaken by St. Patrick's College during which a group of teachers of second class used AfL techniques to support children's literacy development.

## Language

- A number of schools of differing types and sizes, including those with different languages of instruction, are involved in the work on Gaeilge.
- Teachers are first trying out tools to help them to analyse children's stages of language development. This is as a preparation for investigation into teaching and learning approaches. The goal of all this work is progression in language learning.
- The NCCA is developing materials on re-presentation of the language curriculum, and further materials on language planning and teaching in support of this work.

You can find out more about the network by logging on to [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie), by checking the articles and updates in [info@ncca](mailto:info@ncca) or by visiting the [ACTION](http://ACTION) website which hosts outputs from this work as they are developed.

And remember...if you or your school are interested in being part of the Primary School Network looking at any of the areas mentioned in this article, we would love to hear from you at [newsletter@ncca.ie](mailto:newsletter@ncca.ie).



## Next steps for the Network

The work of the Primary School Network continues to develop in response to the findings of the curriculum review. More projects in this area are planned.



# Want to read more?

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