

**10<sup>th</sup> October 2008.**

**Press Release**

### **Minister launches *Project Maths***

On Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2008 the Minister for Education and Science, Batt O’Keeffe, T.D. officially launched *Project Maths* in Scoil Mhuire, Kanturk – one of the 24 schools piloting the new approaches to teaching maths.

Speaking at the launch, the Minister described the 24 pilot schools as being ‘at the cutting edge of maths reform in the years ahead’. The Minister also noted that the ‘mainstream phasing will begin in September 2010, prefaced by a national programme of professional training for teachers starting the previous year’. Minister O’Keeffe congratulated all the partners involved in the project, which is being led by the NCCA in an ‘innovative approach to curriculum reform and professional development’.

Anne Looney, Chief Executive of the NCCA, noting that the launch was taking place in a school and not in the offices of the Department or the NCCA, said that it ‘signals one of the most innovative aspects of Project Maths – that it is school-led curriculum change’.

Students from Scoil Mhuire involved invited guests in an investigative activity in which data was collected from them: height, arm span, length of forearm, month and date of birth. The length measurements were used to generate individual body proportions and to compare these to expected or ‘normal’ values. The birthday details were used to find whether a ‘birthday match’ would occur among those attending the launch.

Anthony Leahy, one of the pupils involved in the activity, presented the results of the students’ work. A graphical illustration showed that individual data on arm span was generally closely related to height. While the ratio of arm span to height for the group yielded an average of 1.01 (close to a normal of 1.0), the ratio of forearm to height for the group averaged 0.27, a little above the expected value of 0.25. It was noted that having a longer than usual reach was seen as one of the factors in the 8 gold medal haul of swimmer Michael Phelps at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing.

Out of 48 participants in the 'birthday match' exercise, four matches were found – including Minister O'Keeffe! Finding a match was not unexpected, since there is greater than a 95% probability of a successful match with a group of this size.

All in all, an interesting and historic day for maths education, coinciding with the start of Maths Week 2008 in which a variety of maths-related events will take place around the country from October 11<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>.

Further information on Project Maths can be accessed at [www.ncca.ie/projectmaths](http://www.ncca.ie/projectmaths)