

11th October 2007

Press Release

North and South collaboration is good news for exceptionally able students.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) today launched a new resource that will support the teaching and learning of exceptionally able students in both jurisdictions. This is the first co-production from the two organisations, although they regularly share experiences in the development of curriculum and assessment both North and South. The launch took place at the joint NCCA /CCEA conference in Fermanagh.

While the resource has been jointly developed, it has been customised to fit with the education system in each jurisdiction. *Exceptionally Able Students: Draft Guidelines for Teachers* is consistent with the aims and objectives of the curriculum in the South and the NCCA will disseminate a questionnaire along with the guidelines, for ongoing feedback and suggestions for further support. *Gifted and Talented Pupils: Guidance for Teachers* fits across all areas of the revised curriculum in the North.

Speaking at the launch Prof. Tom Collins, Chairperson of the NCCA, welcomed the all-island approach to an educational need which somehow did not sit as easily with us as the needs of those with learning or physical disabilities. “Perhaps it’s part of our Irish-ness” he suggested, “but being exceptional, or particularly talented was not seen as needing additional support. Rather, it was seen as a challenge to the rest of us to ensure that we did not get ideas about ourselves! We have always accepted and admired exceptional sporting or artistic ability; we have been less aware of, and less comfortable with, exceptional academic ability. Ironically, this discomfort has sometimes extended to schools, where the challenge of meeting the needs of the many can take its toll on meeting the needs of each one.”

David McKee, Chairperson of CCEA, stated, “It is our hope that the *Gifted and Talented Pupils: Guidance for Teachers* will create an awareness of the very real needs of this small, but significant group of young people. We developed this resource to help teachers in Northern Ireland to get the best from their learners, to enable them to achieve their true potential. This guidance compliments the development of the entitlement curriculum as being for all children. It encourages good practice and reflects that which already exists in many schools.

Working with NCCA was a very valuable experience and one that we hope to repeat in the future.”

CCEA’s Officer in charge of Special Education Needs, Helen Miskelly, agreed. “Working with our colleagues at NCCA has been very beneficial in producing this resource and we hope to continue this relationship long into the future.”

Susan Dennison, the NCCA’s Education Officer stated that, “Working in collaboration with CCEA was a great opportunity to share experiences and expertise in this common area of interest.”

The NCCA will distribute two copies of *Exceptionally Able Students: Draft Guidelines for Teachers* to every school. An electronic copy will be available to download from www.ncca.ie.