

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC ED 2 (11) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

EDUCATION SECTORAL MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

21 SEPTEMBER 2011

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The twelfth NSMC Education meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 21 September 2011. The meeting was attended by John O'Dowd, MLA, Minister for Education, Ruairí Quinn, TD, Minister for Education and Skills and Nelson McCausland, MLA, Minister for Social Development. Minister O'Dowd chaired the meeting.

TEACHERS' QUALIFICATIONS

2. The Council welcomed a presentation by the two Education inspectorates on their cooperation in the professional development of inspectors, including the ongoing contribution of exchanges between the Inspectorates and the publication in December 2010, of a joint Inspectorate report on how best to promote and improve literacy and numeracy in schools.
3. Ministers noted that the ninth Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS) annual conference will take place on 29 – 30 September 2011 in Cavan under the title of 'Promoting Literacy and Numeracy through Teacher Education'.

4. They also noted the recent initiation of a North/South Community of Practice supporting Irish Medium teachers and that an action plan to support Irish medium schools for the 2011/2012 academic year is being considered by both Departments.
5. The Council discussed collaborative work between the Regional Training Unit (RTU) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) on issues of school leadership and noted that a report entitled 'Leadership Matters' is being examined by both Departments with a view to it being published.
6. Ministers also welcomed the ongoing liaison between the two Teaching Councils about issues relating to teacher mobility in both jurisdictions, and progress in the provision of information on pension issues for teachers who wish to transfer to work in the other jurisdiction.

EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT

7. The Council welcomed the publication of literacy and numeracy strategies by the Education Departments and their commitment to tackling underachievement in literacy and numeracy, especially among those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Ministers welcomed the collaborative work being taken forward including:
 - a successful joint conference on 'Promoting Literacy within and beyond Schools' held in February 2011;
 - continued support for Maths Week Ireland, a series of events, taking place from 14th to 22nd October, aimed at promoting awareness, appreciation and understanding of mathematics for all.
 - other possible areas for 2011/12 including further work with Childrens' Book Ireland to develop a programme with a specific focus on re-engaging 10-14 year olds in reading and opportunities for joint working on common priorities set out in the Departments' respective literacy and numeracy strategies;
 - a proposal for a Peer Learning Event on School Attendance, with a focus on post primary pupils;
 - Department of Education commissioned. research into good practice and partnership approaches between school and family in deprived areas in promoting regular school attendance of pupils of compulsory school age and will report in March 2012;
 - the presentation of the report and recommendations of the work of the Taskforce on Traveller Education to the Department of Education. The Department is now working on a draft action plan with a view to carrying out a consultation between January and March 2012.

8. The Council also welcomed collaborative work to develop a Toolkit for Diversity to support the professional development of middle management in schools.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

9. The Council welcomed the continuing progress made by the Middletown Centre for Autism including:
 - the delivery of training to professionals and parents and the development of links with the Special Education Support Services and the Inter-Board Autistic Spectrum Disorder Group.
 - its continuing programme of research including its most recent publication documenting relevant research in the area of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in girls and continuing research in the areas of sensory based provision and working memory for those on the autism spectrum.
 - its work with the Department of Education for Capacity Building for Special Educational Needs.
10. Ministers welcomed progress made by the Centre, and the two Education Departments, on the development of a multi annual plan for the future development of the Centre and looked forward to the continued efforts of all parties in the months ahead. It is expected that a paper will be presented to both Ministers in the autumn.
11. It was also noted that discussions are at an advanced stage between the Centre and both Departments in relation to finalising the overall budget allocation for the 2011-12 financial year recognising the need for the Centre to operate on a sustainable basis.

SCHOOL YOUTH AND TEACHER EXCHANGES

12. The Council noted that Part 1 of a comprehensive study on north south cooperation in the education sector has been agreed and finalised by the two Departments.
13. They also noted that the second year of the pilot enterprise strand of the Dissolving Boundaries programme has been successfully completed and looked forward to receiving a joint report from both inspectorates upon completion of their formal evaluation of the programme.
14. Ministers also discussed a review of the work and remit of the North South Education and Training Standards (NSETS) Committee for Youth Work that is currently being considered by both Departments.
15. They also noted the ongoing discussions on future cooperation on the endorsement of youth work qualifications to ensure and support best practice and facilitate professional mobility and exchange both on a north/south and east/west basis.

16. Ministers welcomed the proposals for the 2011-2011 North South Student Teacher Exchange Project.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS

17. The Council approved the Corporate Plans 2011-2013 and Business Plans 2011 for Intertradelreland and the Special EU Programmes Body.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

18. The Council agreed to hold another Education meeting in November/December 2011.

**Joint Secretariat
21 September 2011**