

Donegal Education & Training Board (ETB)

Instructional Leadership Programme Developments in Donegal Education & Training Board (ETB) – Our Story



Anne Mc Hugh, Chief Executive (CE), in Donegal ETB

Three Donegal ETB schools participated in Cohort 1 of the Instructional Leadership Programme which started in 2008. In the ensuing years a further five schools completed the programme. May Ann Kane our former Education Officer (EO) and Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) had been an enthusiastic supporter of the programme and following her untimely and sad passing in 2012 I was very anxious to continue with the work she had started. As Acting EO I wanted to 'spread the word' about the programme and encourage more schools to participate but in speaking with individual Principals it was clear that the distance from Donegal to Carlow was a factor preventing this.

We were very fortunate that four members of staff from Cohort 1 completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Leading Learning in partnership with the Education Department of NUIG. This group provided Donegal ETB with a rich source of expertise in and facilitation of Instructional Leadership seminars.

In early September 2013 we launched the Donegal ETB Instructional Leadership Network. Principals, Deputy Principals and teachers from all Cohorts were present. Cascading the learning was a key topic of conversation. The size of County Donegal was another topic of discussion as we tried to find ways to make the cascading easier to manage.

Shaun Purcell, our CE founded The Donegal ETB Teaching & Learning Council in September 2014 and this seemed liked the perfect vehicle to move the IL project forward. Following discussions at the Council and a sub group meeting of a small group of Principals, it was decided to run a series of IL workshop days around the county during October and November 2014.

The schools were closed for instruction and the county was divided into four regions, schools were clustered and staffs attended at one nominated school for a full day of IL workshops. In this way teachers from all fifteen schools were exposed to a full day of Framing Questions, Lesson Design and Graphic Organisers delivered by our NUIG Graduates.

The feedback was extremely positive as the day was interactive and included different groupings at different times. Some sessions involved subject teachers from different schools working together and others facilitated subject departments from the same school to work together.

Following discussion at meetings of Principals during 2014/2015, it was agreed that the workshops would take place for 2015/2016 as part of Croke Park Hours. The sub group met in late August and work began on planning four cluster afternoons. The facilitation team was expanded to include graduates of all Cohorts and those who have not yet completed. Workshops were held in classrooms and facilitated in the main by two IL graduates. Topics taught included Team Games Tournament, Concept Attainment and how IL links with the new Junior Cycle. Principals assisted with preparation time and hosting schools provided much needed refreshments for teachers on arrival. Acting EO, Martin Gormley and I attended all sessions and the feedback was most positive. Thanks are due to Donegal ETB Administrative Offices staff for their support with the organisation of the Workshops and to the members of the organising committee: Charlie Cannon, Liam Galbraith, Jacqui Dillon and Anne Marie Luby. A review of this year's work will take place shortly and plans will be put in place for furthering the IL work in Donegal. We hope that this will include non-ETB schools in the near future. Our schools continue to send teams to Carlow and it is very safe to say that Instructional Leadership is alive and very well in Co Donegal.

