Goatstown
Educate Together
Secondary School

Towards Senior Cycle/ Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Panel Discussion

The purpose of this panel discussion is to consider a range of issues pertinent to our school as it grows from focussing on Junior Cycle to a school which offers Transition Year and Senior Cycle. Families may be unclear about the purpose of Transition Year and disconnected from the national debate about the form and function of the Leaving Certificate in Ireland.

Four panellists have been invited to discuss these and other questions. We are inviting questions under four broad themes (see below) by using our question form here. We will collate these into a small number of questions for the panellists to discuss at the event. There will also be some opportunity for audience participation.

We invite questions as follows:

1. Broad questions about Transition Year.
2. Broad questions about the traditional Leaving Certificate and reforms currently being discussed.
3. Broad questions about alternatives to the Leaving Certificate.
4. What challenges do new schools face in introducing a Leaving Certificate programme and what advantages do new schools have?

The Panel:

Ben Murray: Chairperson of Goatstown ETSS Board of Management and Post-Primary Director with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), Dublin, Ireland.

Ben has 25 years teaching experience in both the primary and the post-primary sectors in Ireland; as a Music, a Classics and an ICT teacher. Over the course of those 25 years, Ben has coordinated a thriving music department, enjoyed a few years as a Deputy Principal, acted as mentor and adviser for ITE students and has been involved in the design and deployment of teacher professional learning.

Ben is currently a Post-Primary Director with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), with responsibility for curriculum and assessment design at junior cycle and senior cycle levels.

Ben is particularly interested in researching the embedding of key competencies in teaching, learning and assessment; in the role that technology plays in allowing collaborative cultures to thrive in classrooms and how these collaborative environments support the development and assessment of current and emerging key competencies.

Dr Gerry Jeffers is an education consultant, lecturer and writer. He is a former lecturer (Innovation and Development in Schools) in the Education Department, NUI Maynooth (now Maynooth University).

His experience includes working in second-level schools as a teacher and guidance counsellor in Ireland and in Kenya, deputy-principal in Firhouse Community College, Dublin and national co-ordinator of the Transition Year Curriculum Support Service. Recent publications include 'Learning Through Work Experience', and 'Transition Year in Action'. Gerry led the Development Options team that published 'FairViews', a development education 'photopack'. Gerry was also chairperson of the Ubuntu Network (www.ubuntu.ie) from 2013 to 2019.

Karen Maye is the School Placement Lead and Head of PME Outreach initiatives in the School of Education of UCD and is the project manager of the design and implementation of the Short Course in Cyber Security for Junior Cycle Initiative.

Karen is passionate about education and its ability to transform the lives of students. Informed by her belief in the principles of social justice and equity, this passion has been her motivation in her role as a classroom teacher, a leader of professional development nationally with the *National Induction Programme for Teachers*, and in her roles as a tutor, supervisor, and lecturer in ITE in UCD and the Professional Diploma in School Leadership in UL. Karen's research interests include mentoring and coaching, gender in STEM, and teacher learning.

Sandra Irwin-Gowran is head of Education and Development with Educate Together. She is a second-level teacher by background having taught in rural Zimbabwe and Dublin's inner city. As well as teaching Sandra has been coordinator of curriculum development projects ranging from poverty and social justice and human rights to citizenship and Ethical Education. Prior to coming to Educate Together Sandra successfully worked to influence national policy and practice in LGBT equality in education and society more generally. In her role in Educate Together Sandra has led the development of the organisations ethos quality framework and continues to find ways of helping Educate Together schools to be equality-based, learner centred and democratically run.