

Editorial

In late December 2017, we were deeply saddened to hear of the untimely death of our friend Rosemary Fahey, Principal of St. Ultan's Special School, Navan and a leading member of the Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education (IATSE) for more than two decades. I came to know Rosemary well from January 2009, when she joined the Editorial Board of *REACH* Journal serving first at the IATSE representative and subsequently in her capacity as a special school principal. All of us who were fortunate to serve with Rosemary on the Editorial Board can attest to her huge knowledge, wisdom, insight, tenacity and commitment. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam. We extend our sympathies to her family and wide circle of friends and we are very pleased to publish in this issue a warm and fitting tribute to Rosemary written by her friend and former Reach Editorial Board member Lisa White.

In May the National Council for Special Education published the much anticipated *Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme*. Arising from this wide-ranging research, analysis and consultation with stakeholders, the NCSE Working Group presented policy advice to the Minister in the form of *Delivering for Students with Additional Care Needs*. There is much to be welcomed in the findings of the review and the policy advice emanating from this. For example, mirroring the new model of allocation of teaching supports rolled out in September 2017, NCSE recommends that access to care support should no longer be dependent on a diagnosis of disability, but provided to each school based primarily on the SET allocation and that a wider range of educational, therapeutic and behavioural supports should be available to schools, delivered through a network of regional support teams. The recommendations for ring-fenced staffing (including nurse-led services where required for students with complex medical needs) and funding packages for special schools and classes is also to be welcomed, and for additional training for *all* members of the school community as is the suggested replacement of the title *special needs assistant* with *inclusion support assistant*.

While the Minister has welcomed the review, at the time of writing, no commitment has been made to the funding which will be required for implementation. While the much awaited launch of the pilot model exploring the provision of speech and language and occupational therapy support in 150 preschools, primary, post primary and special schools, first promised in the 2016 budget, is very welcome, investment in other important initiatives arising from the review need to follow without delay. Together, these policy initiatives, if supported with the appropriate funding, could arguably enable the achievement of the NCSE stated aim of delivering '*The Right Support at the Right Time in Schools*' (NCSE, 2018).

In May, at Croke Park, the launch by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment of the Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LP) Guidelines and the associated short courses for post-primary aged students with moderate to severe/profound general learning disabilities marked a very important milestone in the development of inclusive curriculum for Irish schools. Those who were in attendance were privileged to learn about and share in celebrating the achievements of students in the piloting schools.

The academic year 2018/2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the National Association of Teachers in Special Education (later renamed IATSE) by a group of teachers completing the postgraduate diploma in SEN at the former St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. Fifty years on, in the spirit of those enlightened founding members, teachers working in inclusive and special education continue to share their research and practice. In this regard, the Editorial Board of *REACH*, the official journal of IATSE, is delighted that each article published in this issue is authored or co-authored by a practising teacher. One year on from the implementation of the new model of teacher allocation, the articles in this issue will be of interest to teachers reflecting on and developing practice in their schools. Two studies are likely to be of particular interest to the many teachers working in small, rural schools many of which have multigrade classes. Casserly and Padden explore teachers' perspectives of co-teaching in multigrade teaching contexts, while Cull and Travers report the findings of their study of early intervention in maths using co-teaching with a mixed first and second class.

The new model of allocation promises a more responsive model of support affording schools greater autonomy and flexibility in the deployment of teaching resources to best address profiled needs and improve outcomes for all learners. Mannion and Griffin provide a critical analysis of formative assessment using Precision Teaching for pupils with autism as part of a balanced approach to teaching and learning. In the context of the recent launch of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023* (DES, 2018), O'Brien's article offers the reader a very timely analysis of self-determination theory and strategies for the development of pupil self-determination and autonomy.

REACH continues to act as a resource for teachers of pupils with special needs and for other professionals and to provide an opportunity for those involved and interested in special and inclusive education to publish articles based on their research, practice and experience. The Editorial Board welcomes submissions relating to any aspect of inclusive and special education to reach.editor.iatse@gmail.com. Submission guidelines and journal style template available here (<https://goo.gl/rELofL>).

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