

Editorial

The recently published *Programme for Government between Fine Gael and Independents* (2016) promises additional investment in speech and language therapy and in psychological services for schools. Of particular note is the commitment to a “new model of in-school Speech and Language Therapy (p. 5). While this initiative is certainly to be welcomed, it is to be hoped that due consideration will be given to supporting the inter-disciplinary collaboration on which such a model is founded. In this regard, readers are likely to find very informative, the article on teacher knowledge and practice of and in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process (Ní Bhroin, King and Prunty). It also remains to be seen if the ‘first one hundred days’ will see action taken on the new government’s commitment to consultation with stakeholders regarding progressing sections of the EPSEN Act.

In the context of the significant growth over recent years in outreach classes for learners with autism, it is regrettable that *Policy Advice Regarding Educational Provision for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders* commissioned from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and due to be submitted to the Minister in 2015 is still awaited. The terms of reference for this policy advice include the review of the effectiveness of educational interventions for this group of learners. At a time when teachers are being exhorted to adopt evidence-based and evidence-informed practice, the review of evidence by Deacy, Jennings and O’Halloran regarding the use of the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM) as an intervention for learners with autism, is both timely and informative. Equally opportune in the context of growing educator awareness of and concern for child and adolescent mental health and wellbeing is the article by Lohan and King which readers will find particularly informative as regards the definition, measurement and promotion of learner self-esteem outcomes.

In the context of the roll out of the *Primary Language Curriculum*, McGough offers key insights relating to communication and language development, drawing on theory, research and classroom practice. Related to language learning, the topic of exemptions to the study of Irish granted to learners with special educational needs has also been the subject of debate in recent months. Drawing on data from the *Growing Up in Ireland* study, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI, 2016), reports a consistent increase over the past decade in the number of exemptions granted to post primary students on the grounds of learning disability. The area of communication and language is a key curricular concern for teachers and other professionals working with learners with special educational needs across the education continuum. Recognising this, in the coming year, the Editorial Board hopes to publish a

special issue on this topic. Readers with an interest in the teaching and learning of communication and language and those who have carried out research in this area may be particularly interested in submitting an article for peer review.

It is with sadness that I write of the passing of Barbara O'Neill and of Catherine Bennett. Barbara was a founding member of IATSE and remained active in the organisation until very recently. Readers will get a strong sense of Barbara's very significant contribution to special education in Ireland from the tribute that follows (Jackson).

Catherine Bennett was a member of the REACH Editorial Board from 1990 to 2007 during which time she served as Sales and Subscription Manager. As a member of the Board for the latter part of that time, I remember Catherine as a very diligent, hard-working and quietly efficient person. In addition to attending meetings, Catherine would quietly appear in the special education department in St. Patrick's College, taking responsibility for the management, storage, and sale of journals and indeed advertising space. For many years Catherine was a visible presence at the annual IATSE conference managing the REACH desk at the conference with Silvija Jones and the late Anita Craig. I hope that a tribute to Catherine will appear in the next issue of the Journal. On behalf of IATSE and the REACH Editorial Board, I extend sympathy to the family and friends of both Barbara and Catherine. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a nanamnacha.

Readers will also be sorry to hear of the recent resignation of Mary Carrig from the REACH Board. Mary first joined the Board in 1994 and served as Business Manager from then until 2008 when she was appointed Editor, following in the footsteps of Pat Lynch and the founding editor, the late Sean Griffin. Mary spearheaded a major review of the development of the Journal leading to online publication in *Education Research Complete* on the EBSCOhost online research databases. On behalf of the Editorial Board I want to express sincere thanks to Mary for her unstinting stewardship of, and exemplary service to the journal over that time and to wish her well. The current board looks forward to the challenge of maintaining the rigorous standards set by the previous editors.

In her first editorial for REACH 21(2) Mary Carrig reminded readers of the value of disseminating professional expertise and knowledge, urging "not only teachers, but also all professionals working in the field of special education, to continue to share your knowledge with a wider audience." On behalf of the Reach Editorial Board I would like to reiterate this call and encourage readers to consider submitting articles for review and possible publication. Detailed information for contributors and a call for submissions for the special issue can be found in this issue.

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Editor

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