

SARG

Minutes

Date: Saturday, 26 January 2013

Apologies: See Attendance Sheet

Attending: See attendance Sheet

Introduction

- Anne-Marie greeted all attendants
- Apologies were to be passed on to Don Morgan.
- The Minutes were read through and adopted.
- (*Minutes Proposed: Cathal Loftus (GTAI); Seconded: Kay Mahon (ATS)*)
- Micheál Martin urged attendees to fill out expenses forms. Claims can only turn down claims, and not applying means some, who are entitled, may not get monies.

Discussion of the Junior Cert Reforms

- Feedback was sought from all present Subject Associations on the issue of the new Junior Certificate. A range of views were expressed on different stages of discussion in individual Subject Associations:
- Concern has been raised at the lack of consultation by NCCA with subject associations, who have to date representation on existing NCCA committees. Several Subject Associations report that many of these committees have not met to discuss the format for new syllabi.
- The view was also expressed that forthcoming changes are to be a *fait accompli*, as opposed to the result of discussion and consultation.
- Concern expressed at autonomy of school management in the new JC context. There is for instance, a worry about the low take up of PE among girls.
- Geography was described as being at a disadvantage, given multidisciplinary approach of subject area.
- Questions were raised about who is involved in the pilot programme for the new Junior Certificate.
- Similarly, the vastness of preparation of new short courses was discussed.
- INOTE said they were watching the lie of the land, however, they have not heard much at all from DES. No one has been directly contacted and no groundwork has been made. Frustration was expressed at this.
- Anne Marie suggested SARG being acting as a conduit between different agencies on this.
- The view was also expressed by Micheál that management could be biased based on the training of a specific manager. Some managers are seen to like to take apart what works fine. On BOMs, other forces may interfere in running of schools, where teachers will suffer.
- Several issues were raised on the topic school-based assessment. There is concern that one school's awards be seen as better than another. This was characterised as the negative power of perception, from which central state exams, which are perceived to have authenticity, are immune.
- School based assessment was also described as an attempt to bring in assessment in on the cheap. In the context of locally assessed exams, the risk of corruption was also described as being a possible outcome.
- Cathal Loftus also described absurdity of the current setup. Issues around some of the provisions for students in the context of the JCSP, demonstrate a negative pathway for education. The example he cited was of 28 students who each had a scribe.
- Micheál expressed the view that teachers caught between management and parents. Drop in hours, Drop in Higher and Ordinary Levels in certain subjects. Because we're in recession, we risk destroying what works in education.
- It was asked how many groups have sent in their observations in writing to DES/NCCA.
- There is a feeling that the new JC is a done deal. Micheál reminded all to lobby. He recommended that SARG and all associations should put all their concerns in writing. Send it to IVA, ACCS, JMB, Unions, DES. With 'cc's, people get worried.
- Ultimately every subject should be treated fairly by management.
- Issues around assessment, communication (show initiative) over next two months, we all send in letters to NCCA, cc to Minister.

- Have draft ready to go by next meeting and have sanctioned. Provided you can stick to factual data.
- Issue to be discussed further at next meeting

PDST Partnership

- Anne Marie told those present that the TPN encourage Subject Associations to develop their relationships with Education Centres, but also with PDST.
- IT was also asked if other SAs liaise with PDST. Examples of cooperation with PDST were cited:
- Music Teachers working with PDST: There was a smooth transition, with workshops take place in the evening and Saturdays.
- INOTE: various branches working with Ed Centres. Confusion as to who was supposed to advertise workshops.
- TY Coordinators report that PDST contribute to the running of their conferences.
- Education Centres want this relationship to develop.
- Problem was expressed with advertisement of PDST events. One complaint was that teachers are perceived to be always online. This is clearly not the case.
- How best to publicize events. Websites, Teaching Council Newsletters was also proposed, texting.

SARG Membership Renewal

- Paddy Daly reported that as of 26th January, SARG had 12 paid up members.
- Anne Marie reminded people to send €25 subs to Paddy Daly ASAP

Member Database

- Niamh thanked all who returned forms to her. She would follow up in the coming weeks to further update the database.

ICT and TPN Admin

- It was proposed to do meeting on how to become ICT attuned – databases, websites of SAs.
- Examples of how best to (not) do TPN Applications: Examples of good practice on application forms.
- Micheál suggested to discuss how best to fill out forms etc.
- Bring last year's template for next year's submissions.

Proposed June deadline for claims

- Anne Marie and Micheál meeting with Steering Committee and intend to discuss the issue.
- Justification is down to:
 - When SA conferences are run later in year, without those funds sanctioned – allocations need to be in place beforehand.
 - No work required during summer. Is the **30th June** ok?
- Discussed raised issues of branches not being ready with workshops.
- Could a generic topic structure be agreed in order to clear the deadline?
- Suggested by Niamh Nestor that deadline for claims be reciprocated with a deadline to send out cheques from Education Centres.
- The question was raised if there is there room for appeal on rejected claims?
- Maths Teachers observed you can claim back expense of signing up to SARG.
- Question from INOTE re 10% reduction: Solution is to contact Education Centre?
- It was reiterated that SAs are volunteer organisations.
- The question was raised regarding dealing with hotels. The rising cost of hotels was expressed.

SARG Key Dates

- **20th April** – Next Meeting (on ICT, in Collins Barracks)
- Gerry Burke of the HTAI requested that the June deadline be communicated if going ahead.
- Consider something to be put in writing for each SA for next meeting.
- Meeting was adjourned.