

ACTIVATE

No. 56 March 2014

The Newsletter of the Association of CSPE Teachers (ACT)

Supporting Citizenship Education in Ireland

act@esatclear.ie

www.cspeteachers.ie



Blendspace – useful application for CSPE and more.
See article page 3

Junior Cycle Developments

Since our last newsletter there have been significant developments in relation to CSPE in the new Junior Cycle reform. Schools are now able to continue with CSPE in its current format for one more year – so that there will be a CSPE exam as usual in June 2017 (see Dept. Circular 0020/2014).

The new CSPE ‘specification’ went out to consultation in the Autumn and is now almost complete and ready to launch. We have continued to lobby for the retention of CSPE as a core subject with external assessment, and we are not the only ones. The “Just Forests” group has launched an online petition to Minister Quinn on the matter – at <http://www.justforests.org/new-junior-cycle-2014>

We’d be interested in hearing from members as to how things are shaping up for the future of CSPE in schools – are schools determined to adopt the new course, keep the old course a year longer, or dropping it as a discreet subject on the timetable?

Inservice

We have been flagging recent inservice through our email list, Facebook group and website. We have run our own inservice on Action Projects – the most recent being a hands-on course about Action Projects and IT, which took place on Tues 18th March in Blackrock Education Centre.

PDST inservice continues also, on Action Projects and Assessments. Remaining dates as follows: Mon, 24th March - Co. Wexford Ed Centre (Enniscorthy); Tues, 25th March - Sligo Ed Centre; Wed, 26th March - Galway Ed Centre. Details and booking here:

<http://www.pdst.ie/node/403>

Politics and Society

Answering a recent Dáil question Minister Quinn said he would be introducing the new *Politics and Society* course at Leaving Cert level. We have engaged for many years in the development of this syllabus and welcome the renewed commitment. The syllabus can be downloaded here:

http://www.ncca.ie/en/file/post_primary/Politics-and-Society-Syllabus.pdf

Membership Matters

Memberships for 2013/2014 are now overdue. The subscription is still 20 Euro. If our records show that you are not paid up to date you will receive a renewal form with this mailing. Also, check your address label for membership status.

News

Essay Competition

Dublin City Libraries are running an Essay Competition for teenagers (closing date Saturday 12th April). The theme is 'Challenges and Change: 40 Years of EU Membership' – the challenge is to 2nd level students in Dublin City to impress with their writing style and their research skills. The competition will be judged by author and academic Conor Kostick and the winners in two age categories will each receive an iPad mini. Interactive entry forms and a downloadable entry form along with a copy of the competition rules are available – email act@esatclear.ie or find these downloads on our news page – www.cspeteachers.ie/news.html .(note: the original closing date for this competition was 14th March - but this is now extended to 12th April). More info: Anne Gannon, Development Office, Dublin City Public Libraries, 01 6744851.

New PDST Website

The PDST website has been re-designed and the CSPE area is developing at <http://www.pdst.ie/node/152>. Here you can find details of upcoming courses, news of developments in CSPE, a resources section, official documents, information on assessment, literacy, numeracy, ICT and more.

Facebook Group

We have set up a Facebook group called 'CSPE Teachers' for the members of the Association,. Hopefully this will help communication and get news to everybody even faster. The email updates will continue as well. To join the group, please send an email request to act@esatclear.ie.

Oxfam Campaign

Oxfam Heroes is a new campaign which is about promoting gender equality and celebrating inspirational women. Oxfam has developed a resource pack for schools as part of awareness raising around women's rights and the Heroes campaign. The resource pack covers four topics; How NGO's Work, Land Rights for Women, Girls and Education, and Sustainable Livelihoods. These topics complement and fall within the remit of the concepts of Human Dignity, Rights and Responsibilities and Development as outlined in the CSPE syllabus. For more information contact Oxfam at: Heroes Team, Oxfam Ireland, 2nd Floor, Portview House, Thorncastle Street, Ringsend, Dublin 4, Ph: (01) 6350 418.

EU and Schools

The EU in Ireland organises events and provides resources for schools. On Tuesday 4 March 2014, secondary schools from across the country took part in the annual Model Council of the European Union debate in Dublin Castle. Teams of students from 30 schools debated a mock proposal for a directive on minimum principles for the exploration and production of hydrocarbons (such as shale gas) using high volume hydraulic fracturing in the 28 Member States of the European Union. Each year, the European Commission invites schools across Ireland to host a visit from a past pupil who works for the EU institutions in Brussels. The visits allow students to learn about the work of Irish people in the EU institutions and about the European Union in general. The exercise is mainly geared towards senior cycle secondary school students. For more information on the activities and resources provided: http://ec.europa.eu/ireland/education/index_en.htm

Action Projects and IT

Blendspace

There is a variety of ways for IT resources and skills to be used for Action Projects. One new lesson building website is *Blendspace*, an online presentation or lesson-making tool, where you can gather in one place online a variety of resources, including documents and videos, from websites, online cloud storage (e.g. Dropbox, Google Drive/GDrive, Skydrive/OneDrive) or from your own files on your computer, memory stick or portable hard drive. You can add videos, documents, images, web pages quizzes and more onto an interface made up of tiles in rows, and then present/play them back in class or share with students. Your presentation/lesson is stored online so a live internet connection is needed. Go to www.blendspace.com and sign up for a free account. By default your lessons are public – can be viewed by all, may be found by those who search your topic. If you wish to keep it private click the ‘share’ icon (blue rectangle on top) and under ‘privacy’ tab choose ‘only me’. This can be changed later. You can use the ‘Gallery’ feature to see what other teachers have created. This can be used in preparation for a project, to assemble information learned during a project, or to revise a project, perhaps just before the writing up of a project. Of course it can also be used for regular class teaching, is intuitive and quite easy to learn.

Photostory

Photostory is a simple and free software application from Microsoft. It’s free and works with Windows XP, 7 and 8. Using a creation wizard it will turn your still pictures into a mini-movie and you can add text, narration and music as required. For example if you were doing the upcoming elections as an Action Project you (or your students) could create a Photostory featuring images of the election candidates. If you were doing a project on the prison service you could create an image montage of the various Irish prisons. You can download Photostory from here:

<http://www.microsoft.com/en-IE/download/details.aspx?id=11132>

Be conscious of internet safety issues if tasking your students with the gathering of resources.

Other Uses of IT in Action Projects:

- Use photos and/or videos to keep a record of activities undertaken as part of the Action Project – students tend to forget with the passing of time. These can be posted on classroom walls and/or included in a Photostory or Powerpoint presentation.
- Use Powerpoint or equivalent to present (or for students to present) information learned during the Action Project.
- If the Action Project involves a survey you could sign up for a free account at [surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and design a digital survey (note limitations on free version). This could be administered through email, or School Moodle/Edmodo.
- Students can create short videos as part of their Action Project and edit them simply in free programmes like Windows Movie Maker – e.g. each class group makes a short video to illustrate one of the human rights in the Universal Declaration.
- If an awareness campaign is involved students can create posters digitally, e.g. using Word/Publisher or equivalent.

Note: future assessment models will very likely feature digital portfolios. More info and sample portfolio here:

http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Inclusion/Special_Educational_Needs/Level_2_Toolkit/Sample_eportfolio/

May Elections as Action Project



The upcoming local and European elections (23rd May) could make an ideal Action Project – e.g. a second year class could track the lead in to either election in their area or constituency and follow up the results immediately or even in early September.

One approach would be to divide the class into groups, with each group tracking a particular candidate or party

through their website, social media and local print and broadcast media. Each student in the group could be assigned one of these outlets for tracking. In the case of local elections it should be quite feasible to invite candidates into the classroom for an open forum. At various intervals each group could report back to the full class on how their candidate is doing – e.g. using Powerpoint slides or equivalent. A mock election that mirrors the real one is another popular option.

This would be an ideal way of stirring interest in the election among the students and of raising awareness about area and constituency boundaries. This is especially needed as the European constituencies have been re-drawn and as local elections have changed with the scrapping of some local councils.

Useful information can be found by simple web search and there is some detailed information here: <http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/Voting/EuropeanElections/>

The websites of the political parties have details on their European and local candidates and recently a new website for independent candidates has been launched:

<http://www.independentsnetwork.org/>

There are several useful videos on YouTube dealing with the European elections, but care is needed as some of these are from interest groups plugging their own agenda rather than just being informative. The official party and candidate broadcasts on radio and TV as the election nears should also be accessible and effective. If house exams (which could include questions on the European Parliament and elections) preclude coverage of the election results in late May this can be done early in September –students could be given the responsibility of compiling and keeping a copy of the voting results until then, though it would be wise for teachers to keep a copy as well, just in case!

Following this pattern the first draft of the RAP or CWAB could be written up for mid-term and completed for the Christmas exams, giving a more relaxed spring! Even if this were not undertaken as the main Action Project it would be rewarding to pursue some of the above activities anyway as a learning experiences, even if only because, being topical at the time, the elections may surface in some form on the written exam paper in June.

Activate is published once per school term by the Association of CSPE Teachers—supporting citizenship education in Ireland. Articles and letters for publication should be sent to the editor, Brendan O'Regan, Ticknock Lane, Arklow, Co. Wicklow, or emailed to act@esatclear.ie