

# Press Release

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2011**

## **Education Priorities**

JMB/AMCSS engages with its members and other stakeholders around a wide range of educational developments and initiatives. The following are three of the key areas:

### **Inclusion**

‘Schools are important places and each school, whatever its ethos, is founded on a particular set of values’ says Ferdia Kelly, General Secretary. ‘Schools affiliated to JMB/AMCSS are founded on an ethos of educational excellence for all and Catholic secondary schools have been extraordinarily inclusive of students of other faiths, those experiencing disadvantage and students with special educational needs’.

JMB schools have this year engaged in local and national developments around inclusion:

- Regional workshops and in-school initiatives building on our recent publication: *‘Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths in Catholic Secondary Schools’*
- Whole school approaches to implementing inclusion, retention and school-completion strategies for students experiencing educational disadvantage
- Providing for a wide range of initiatives around helping students with special educational needs reach their potential in an integrated setting, and,
- Helping first, and now, second-generation ‘newcomer’ students and their families integrate into Irish school life while still celebrating the wonderful diversity represented by their cultural richness

### **Literacy & Numeracy**

‘Though our voluntary secondary schools have a long and proud history of including all and educating for excellence, we welcome the challenge of ‘raising the bar’ in terms of enhancing literacy and numeracy outcomes over the months and years ahead’, says Ferdia Kelly, JMB/AMCSS General Secretary. ‘As a principal myself, I am conscious that teaching and learning are not separate elements of school life and that we must integrate all that goes on in a school into what I call ‘teaching *for* learning’.

In a response to the Department's *Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools*, JMB prioritised four key areas for discussion:

- The need for system-wide reform
- Building-on and freeing-up the existing capacity of school leadership
- Incorporating inclusive practices such as SEN and intercultural realities as reflecting the values of our society and not reacting in a knee-jerk fashion to externally determined measures of outcome and
- Recognising the place of ICT in the lives of young people.

## **ICT**

The long-delayed release of funding to implement the Department's *'Laptops and Projectors'* initiative was also welcomed by the General Secretary, Ferdia Kelly: 'Never was it more critical than at this time of economic recession that we provide our young people with the best possible educational experience. ICT is part and parcel of all our lives – it is a tool which helps us to collaborate, share and solve problems. Our schools must be given the opportunity to equip young people to play a full part in the world'.

Resonating with the thinking behind the government's *'Smart Schools – Smart Economy'* development programme, Ferdia Kelly continued: 'Experts tell us that there are three pillars for the successful integration of technology in schools: a) infrastructure and hardware including broadband, b) getting it into the hands of educators immediately while providing professional development, and c) curriculum-aligned content'.

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