

**Address by outgoing Chairperson Kathleen O'Connor
to
AGM of Laois Education Centre February 2011**



AGMs seem to fly around with ever increasing speed and the past year despite its many challenges has flown by. The centre as ever maintains its position as an important base for the provision of continuing professional development for teachers in the Laois/ Offaly area and through its director an integral part of the association of education centres.

On behalf of the management committee I would like to congratulate Jim on all the work he undertakes as part of ATECI, work which ensures that this centre remains at the heart of a vital national network. I would like to commend him on the way he conducts the business of the centre as a whole and on the professional manner in which he works with the management committee to ensure the smooth operation of this centre and the delivery of a wide and varied programme of professional development to teachers.

This has been a very challenging fiscal year for management and staff. On behalf of the management I wish to take the opportunity to thank Aine, Yvonne, Catherine and Margaret Mary firstly for their continuing commitment and hard work and secondly their personal investment in ensuring that this years accounts reflect major financial savings, The director, treasurer and staff have explored and pursued all avenues open to them to cut cost while maintain the standards that this centre is noted for. I would like to express the gratitude of the management committee to all concerned.

As the requirements for teachers to engage in ongoing professional development becomes a condition of registration renewal with the Teaching Council the place of

the local education centre responding to local as well as national needs remains as important as ever it was. We the teachers associated with these centres have a deeper understanding of our own requirements and those of schools. Our local education centre can assist us by providing this support rather than having the area of CPD driven by ideologists with no practical let alone in depth knowledge of the needs of the education system or by profit making online organizations.

Who better that the local education centres to lead the roll out of pilot initiatives in conjunction with the DES, teacher training colleges and universities. Teachers know what goes on in schools and that much of the activities engaged in by both teachers and pupils don't lend themselves to pithy sound bites. Our education centres need to support schools at both primary and post primary level to ensure that a wide curriculum offering a broad variety of educational experiences to all children is maintained. As we note directives from the DES to narrow the range of courses available to teachers this year I urge the incoming management committee to work with the director in ensuring the teachers are also offered the opportunity to have their skills in the artistic, physical, scientific, social and personal areas of the curriculum enhanced. So while the education centre should support and provide targeted in-service, as it has for the past decade, it should also be an advocated for the provision of the widest possible educational experiences to all our students and a conduit through which new ideas and developments are disseminated to their teachers and schools.

Through its support and development of a wide variety of educational projects this centre has ensured that hundreds of children in this area had a richer experience that might otherwise have been afforded them. These projects have opened their eyes to a myriad of further educational and career opportunities, choices that they might never have considered open to them. They have been given the opportunity to develop the real life skills of co-operative working and learning, presentation, research and team work. They have had their work valued locally, nationally and internationally. This centre has enabled their teachers to provide these children with a platform from which they could develop their self-worth by encouraging them to share their work and allowing children to affirm the work of their peers and to have their own efforts affirmed.

I urge the next and future management committee to continue to work with local government organizations in the development of these projects to provide support for the mission statement of all schools pursuing a holistic approach to the education of their pupils.

Our education centres in conjunction with our teachers representative bodies must become a lobby with the NCCA for the provision of a 21st century education for all children in this

country. To this end this centre must become a conduit for 21st Century Professional Development for teachers.