



News Bulletin

School Development Planning Initiative

March 2006

www.sdpi.ie

Programme for 2006 – Key Features

SDP Grant Scheme 2006

Last year, 430 schools received grants from the SDPI Office. The average grant was €1000. We are happy to announce that SDP grants will be available again in 2006.

Key points:

- A single application form covers different types of SDP cost.
- The amount per grant will depend partly on the total number of applications. There will be an initial payment of up to **€500** (depending on the details of the claim) as soon as the grant application is approved. A further payment may come later if resources allow when all applications are in.
- An application can be made in advance of the SDP activity to which it refers. It is not necessary to submit invoices with the form. The SDPI Office will apply standard rates approved by the Department of Education and Science to the costs claimed for. **Please note: We cannot exceed the standard rates.** In 2005, several claims for catering costs and facilitation fees could not be met in full because the rates were too high.
- Applications for January-June 2006 should be submitted **as soon as possible, but no later than 15 May 2006.**
- The deadline for applications for the Autumn term is **1 December 2006**, but we would appreciate the earlier submission of claims.
- Schools may make more than one application in a year. Additional claims will be considered only if funds remain when all initial applications have been processed.

A Grant Application Form and detailed Information Sheet accompany this *News Bulletin*. They are also available from the SDPI Office, from Regional Coordinators, and on the SDPI website – www.sdpi.ie.

SDP Summer School, August 2006

A summer school that is open to all post-primary teachers will take place in Dublin City University, 22–23 August. Applications should be submitted before **5 May**. See **page 2** for further details.

SDPI-NUI Galway Higher Diploma in School Planning

SDPI offers a one-year diploma programme in partnership with NUI, Galway. The 2005/06 Diploma course will conclude with a summer school in Galway, 19–22 June. Applications are now invited for the 2006/07 Diploma course. For further information, see **page 5**.

Teacher Professional Network for SDP

The Department of Education and Science has launched a scheme to provide supplementary funding to Teacher Professional Networks. A Teacher Professional Network (TPN) is “a group of teachers/education professionals, with a shared background of professional responsibility, who work collaboratively to provide peer and professional development support.” A TPN can focus on a subject or a programme or an area of professional responsibility, such as School Development Planning. All existing Subject Associations were invited to register as TPNs.

Many involved in school planning have expressed an interest in the establishment of a TPN for SDP. Accordingly, a presentation on TPNs has been arranged for 1 April. It is hoped that the first steps will then be taken towards setting up a TPN for SDP.

If you are interested in joining a TPN for SDP, please contact your Regional Coordinator. General information on the TPN Scheme is available from the TPN Administrator, Blackrock Education Centre, Kill Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. Email tpn@blackrockec.ie

Services to Individual Schools

Your Regional Coordinator can provide information, advice and guidance on SDP and school self-evaluation and can facilitate staff planning sessions. Book now for Autumn 2006.

Regional Seminars

Regional Seminar materials from 2003, 2004 and 2005 are available on the SDPI website. A new programme of seminars will be offered in the Autumn. Invitations will be sent to schools, and details will be published in the Support Services brochure and on our website.

Cluster Groups

Following the success of the pilot programme, SDP Cluster Groups have now been established throughout the country. See **page 3** for details. The opportunity to share experiences has been much appreciated by school SDP coordinators in particular. For a report on activities, see *News from the Clusters*.

SDPI Website – www.sdpi.ie



At the suggestion of a school SDP Coordinator (see *Top Ten Tips*), we now provide a Search Engine on the website, and a better index is on the way. See **Page 2** for *Website News*.

Thanks

Our thanks to all who have shared their SDP experiences and materials with us. Special thanks to those who contributed to *News from the Clusters*!

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Patricia hands over to Rosemary



Patricia O'Connor

January 2006 saw the departure from the SDPI Office of Patricia O'Connor, after four and a half years as our Administrative Assistant. For many principals and teachers, Patricia was the friendly voice of SDPI, responding to queries about matters such as SDP grants and workshops, or the friendly face of SDPI, welcoming participants to our summer schools and seminars. Patricia has joined the staff of the Irish Haemophilia Association. We wish her all the best in her new position. She will always be on the SDPI Guest List.

We are delighted to welcome Rosemary Cadwell as our new Administrative Assistant. Rosemary was previously with Meitheal, a community development support and training organisation. She has extensive experience of administration, both in the community and voluntary sector and in the business world. She has provided administrative support to Sticks and Stones Theatre Company and has appeared as a background actor in Fair City. She joined us in February, but already she feels like part of the SDPI family. We hope that she will enjoy her work with us.



Rosemary Cadwell

SDPI Summer School August 2006

An SDPI Summer School is an enjoyable means of sharing information, developing skills, and exploring good practice in relation to school planning.

The 12th SDPI Summer School will take place in **Dublin City University, 22–23 August 2006**. The programme will focus on major issues in school planning at second level. It will take account of the range of experience among participants as well as developments at national level. There will be a choice of workshops. Participants will have ample opportunity for informal discussion and networking and will come away with a 'goody bag' of materials and resources. Accommodation and meals will be provided on campus, and travel expenses will be paid in accordance with rates approved by the Department of Education and Science.

How to apply

If you would like to attend, please complete the enclosed application form (which can also be downloaded from the website – www.sdpi.ie) and return it to the SDPI Office **as soon as possible**, but no later than **5 May 2006**. If you have any queries, Jacqueline or Rosemary in the SDPI Office will be happy to assist you.

Criteria

Any teacher with an interest in school planning is eligible to apply. If the number of applications exceeds the number of available places, **preference will be given to those who are currently leading or coordinating the SDP process in their own schools or who are about to take up such a role, and to active SDP facilitators**. Thereafter, places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis, so early application is advisable.

Waiting list

If the summer school is over-subscribed, a waiting list will be maintained from which any vacancies that arise will be filled. Disappointed applicants can also choose to go on a standby list in case there are any last-minute cancellations in August.

2006: Key Points

- ◆ **What?** 12th SDPI Summer School
- ◆ **When?** 22–23 August
- ◆ **Where?** Dublin City University
- ◆ **How?** Apply before 5 May

Early application advisable!
(See Criteria)

SDPI Website News – www.sdpi.ie



User-Friendly Navigation

In response to suggestions, we are taking steps to make it easier to see what is available on the website and to find what you are looking for. We now provide a **Search Engine** on the site. The **Search** button is located at the end of the left-hand column on the **Home Page**. We are also designing a better **index**.

Remember, the Highlights Column on the Home Page is a speedy way of finding the most recent additions to the website.

New Resources

SDPI Regional Seminar Materials 2005–2006

Workshop materials on the following topics (including presentations, templates, checklists and prompt questions) can be downloaded:

A. Planning 2005: Focus on Your School

*Looking at planning in your school in the context of trends in SDP nationally, the DES Guide, **Looking at our School**, and **Whole School Evaluation***

B. Subject Department Planning-Moving On

Progressing key aspects such as Assessment ...

C. Evaluating Policy: Are your policies working?

How do you know?

Ábhar Acmhainne Nua i nGailge

Tá acmhainní ceardlainne ar na toipicí seo (léirithe, teimpléid, seicliostaí, spreag-cheisteanna) ar fáil anois:

A. Pleanáil Scoile 2005: Fócas ar an Scoil Agaibhse

*Ag breathnú ar an bpleanáil sa scoil agaibhse i gcomhthéacs treonna náisiúnta sa PFS, treoirleabhar na Roinne, **Ag Breathnú ar an Scoil Againne**, agus téamaí na Meastóireachta Uile-Scoile*

B. Roinnphleanáil d'Ábhair Scoile

Ag díriú ar chur chun cinn roinnt gnéithe tábhachtacha-an Mheasúnacht, ach go háirithe

C. Meastóireacht ar Pholasaithe: An bhfuil polasaithe na scoile ag feidhmiú mar ba chóir? Cá bhfiús duit?

Subject Department Planning

An expanded list of Prompt Questions is available to complement the Subject Plan Template. Topics include grouping of students, class organisation, homework, special needs...and many more

Coming soon

- **Guidance Planning** – additional materials, including **Guidance Planning in 4 Stages**, a key steps guide
- **School Plan Framework** – an aid to compiling and organising the school plan

News from the Clusters

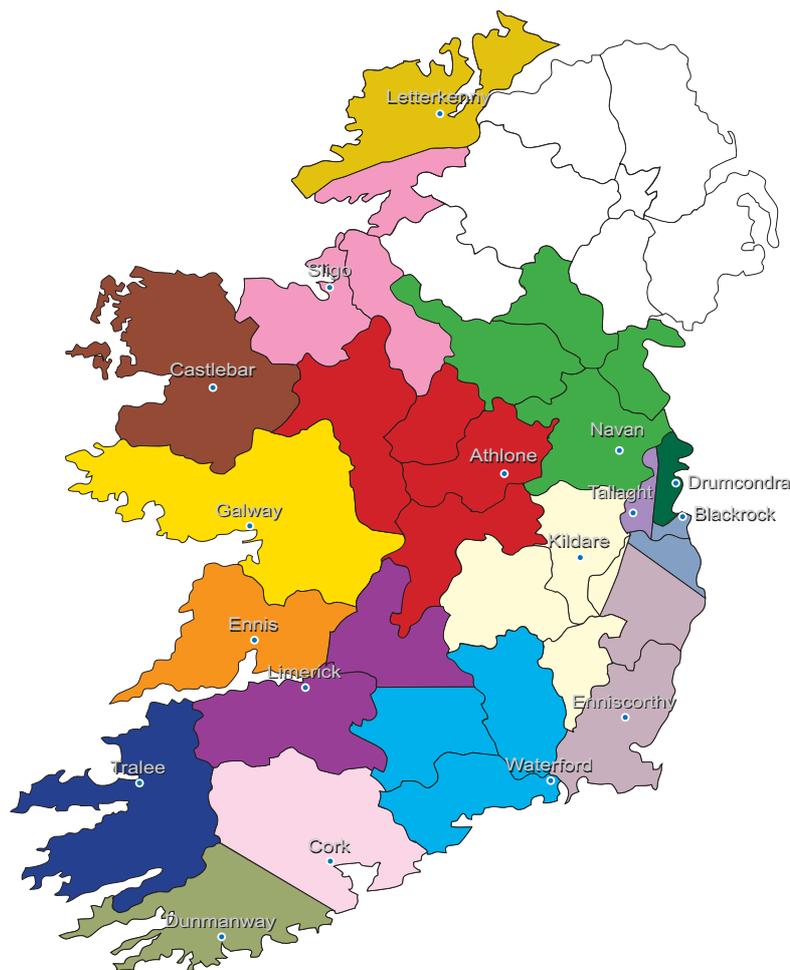
Cluster Groups

Cluster-based support groups aim to enable teachers engaged in SDP to meet, share experiences, and learn of good practice in other schools, and to develop skills and explore approaches relevant to planning in their own schools. The programme for each cluster is determined by the needs of the participants.

Following the success of the pilot clusters in 2004/05, cluster groups have now been set up throughout the country. There are 17 in all. Cluster meetings normally take place in Teachers' Centres or Education Centres. The accompanying map illustrates the current distribution of cluster meeting venues and the area served by each. If a cluster group becomes unduly large, consideration will be given to setting up an additional cluster in that region.

Invitations to cluster group meetings are posted to schools and the schedule is also published in the *Support Services for Post-Primary Education* brochure and on the SDPI website – www.sdpi.ie. If you are interested in participating in a cluster group and would like to know more, please contact your Regional Coordinator or the SDPI Office.

See page 6 for contact details.



Cork-Based Cluster Groups

There are two Cluster Groups of School Coordinators in Cork. One serves schools in West Cork through the West Cork Education Centre and the other serves schools in north and east County Cork and the city schools in the Cork Education Support Centre. Both have been in operation since Spring 2004.

These meetings have proved to be a much appreciated opportunity for sharing examples of good practice in the schools. The coordinators have been provided with updates from SDPI and a forum to discuss the trials and tribulations as well as the joys and rewards of coordinating School Development Planning.

This has worked so well to date that several of the teachers who are acting as SDP coordinators in their own schools have been invited to visit colleague schools to speak to staff or steering groups on particular projects that have worked well.

Topics that have been addressed this year include: the development, application and management of the electronic School Plan Template; an overview of the experience of Whole-School Evaluation; a report on the NCCA research 'Moving Up'; The role of the SDP Coordinator; Subject Planning; and schools sharing experiences.

The 'Schools Sharing Experiences' section included:

- Coláiste na Toirbhirte, Bandon**, outlined their whole-school project on developing student motivation. They took the approach of developing a five-week programme, one class period per week, specifically designed by the year heads and class teachers for each year group and facilitated by each class teacher with their own class. They began by reviewing suitable resource material accessed from the internet with the valued assistance of the Guidance Counsellor. They then designed each class session and implemented the sessions. Students and teachers were involved in the evaluation of the project and, in the case of First Years, parents also participated in the evaluation process. An evaluation report on the project was produced which included session plans and recommendations for the following year.
- De la Salle College, Macroom** outlined their approach to developing a policy on the Induction of First Year students which paid particular attention not just to the pastoral but also to the learning needs of First Years. Arising from the review carried out with First Year students and their parents, the issue of homework was identified as a major concern. To address this concern, one of the main elements of the new policy was cooperation among all teachers in the assignment of homework, in recording homework, in setting appropriate amounts of homework and in guiding students on meeting the expectations of their teachers in completing homework assignments. In the evaluation carried out following the implementation of this policy, many improvements were found in the induction of First Years and the levels of concern regarding homework had diminished considerably.

News from the Clusters

- **Schull Community College** worked very intensively with the electronic School Plan Template and succeeded in organising all the School Plan documentation into a manageable structure. It was a challenging undertaking as, like most schools today, a large volume of policies and planning documents had been generated at different times and in different formats. The Schull Community College format has successfully achieved coherence and readability and at the same time reflects the dynamism of the planning process.
- **North Presentation, Cork** demonstrated their experience of Subject Planning. The model of their subject department planning folder, and the inclusion of a disc with all the templates to provide an electronic option for teachers, was much appreciated by the other schools attending as an example of what might be helpful in both layout and content.

Top Ten Tips ... from a School Development Plan Co-ordinator

1. Make use of all your teaching contacts. Find out what all your colleagues are doing in other schools. Ask if you can actually see their work, there's nothing like looking at the real thing. You'll find that no one is very far ahead of you and you'll feel a lot better about the challenge ahead.
2. Use the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) website – www.sdpi.ie. It has loads of very useful information, guidelines and templates. You need to be patient and work through every heading, even if you think it is not relevant. If you dig deep you will find excellent material. Hopefully the site will have a better index soon.
3. Attend all the SDPI cluster meetings. You get loads of information and guidelines. You meet lots of people from other schools and get the opportunity to share experiences. This is **invaluable**.
4. Use the blue book – *School Development Planning, an Introduction for Second Level Schools* – as a starting point. Also use *Looking at our School, An aid to Self-evaluation in Second Level Schools*.
5. Spend a day trawling through offices, classrooms and staff rooms in school to find relevant information. Generally all the information you need is already in the school, stored away in boxes, in filing cabinets, on shelves. It needs to be relocated into one central filing cabinet, well filed and documented.
6. Get a lever arch file and to start with, divide it up as per the headings in the blue book section on *Content of the School Plan*. You will have lots more divisions relevant to your own school, in time. Type up a one page summary document for each file, making reference to the relevant file in filing cabinet.
7. At this stage, get your colleagues on board. Explain to staff what is going on; show them your filing system and DELEGATE! No one will object to writing a one-page summary for you. Plan ahead for Staff Days; use them for drawing up policies, for subject planning, etc. Share the responsibility out amongst the staff, the School Plan belongs to us all.
8. Set up a School Development Planning Team and a schedule of meetings for the rest of the school year. Prioritise!
9. Draw up a realistic list of things for you to do for the next term. Allocate a certain amount of time each day or week for School Development Planning and stick to it. Otherwise it will take over your life!!
10. Remember you can only do so much. Basically we are all employed to be teachers not administrators and this work does not necessarily come easy to us all. Don't let the threat of Whole School Evaluation cast a shadow on the great work you are doing. Any visiting Department Inspector can only expect you to do your best in the time available. This will always be 'work in progress'; so don't ever expect to have a completed work.

**Nuala Ní Bhriain,
Schull Community College**



Nuala Ní Bhriain

School Planning Goes Electronic

In Villiers School we put *file sharing* on our Local Area Network to good use in the school planning process.

There are various *shared folders* for the various *departments* in the school on the network drive. There is one folder which only staff of the school can access. In this folder we have a folder called *School Plan*. Until our current round of school planning, i.e. subject planning, only a small number of staff made use of *file sharing*. We had been anxious for some time for staff to benefit from wider use of file sharing. We are delighted to report that a dozen subject departments, through the use of file sharing, have made their subject plan available for viewing by all staff. Furthermore, during the planning process staff collaborated around a PC and wrote their plans. Common elements were worked on by a small group of staff and shared out to all other departments.

The beauty of using file sharing in the school planning process is that the various documents are easily accessible to all staff, so long as one can log onto a computer. Files are password protected: they can only be edited by the staff that wrote them, thereby ensuring a staff member would not destroy data through lack of ICT skill. Another bonus is that we have saved considerably on paper by not having to print several copies of the various documents. Perhaps something we will see in the longer term is that having electronic copies will ensure that subject departments will not have to start from scratch each time they wish to update their subject plan; neither will policy writers in other areas.

John McCrohan

Programme Coordinator
Villiers School, Limerick

Higher Diploma in School Planning

We are happy to announce that the Higher Diploma in Professional Education Studies (School Planning) will be offered again in 2006/07, in partnership with NUI Galway and the Department of Education and Science.

Accreditation

The diploma provides accreditation for a one-year training programme conducted by SDPI. It is also recognised for credit in the Master's programme in NUI Galway and in several other 3rd level institutions.

Benefits

The course provides an opportunity for:

- Development of skills relevant to school planning
- Collaborative learning through dialogue with fellow professionals from a diversity of backgrounds
- Reflective practice
- Exploration of the "bigger picture" regarding education policy
- Updating re current developments
- Enjoyable networking

The Course

The course consists of three taught modules and a practical experience component. The taught modules are:

1. The Context of School Planning
2. The Planning Process
3. Facilitation Skills

Participants are assessed on three types of assignment: essay, case-study, and portfolio.

When and Where

The course involves regionally-based outreach sessions and central summer school sessions. Most outreach sessions take place at weekends (Friday evening/Saturday) between October and April – generally, one per month. The locations for outreach sessions are selected in accordance with the pattern of applications. A regional centre can be established only where there are sufficient applicants from the area to make it viable and where personnel are available to deliver the course. The concluding one-week summer school takes place in June in NUI, Galway.

Fees

The tuition fee will be met by the Department of Education and Science.

Participants pay only the NUI, Galway Registration Fee: **€690**

To apply

See accompanying information sheet (also on www.sdpi.ie) or contact the SDPI Office. **Preference will be given to applicants who have attended an SDPI Summer School.**



Dublin – 2005/06



Carrick-on-Shannon – 2005/06



Tralee – 2005/06



Carlow – 2005/06



Galway – 2005/06

SDPI National Office



Sinéad Breathnach
National Coordinator
Mobile 087 2240793
email sineadbreathnach@sdpi.ie

St. Patrick's Hall
Marino Institute of Education
Griffith Avenue
Dublin 9

Phone 01 8057729
Fax 01 8535112
email info@sdpi.ie



Jacqueline Daly
Administrative Officer
Phone 01 8057729
email jdaly@sdpi.ie



Rosemary Cadwell
Administrative Assistant
Phone 01 8057729
email rosemarycadwell@sdpi.ie

SDPI Regional Coordinators



West-Northwest 1
Gerry KIELTY
Regional Coordinator

Longford, Roscommon, Sligo, West Cavan, part of Donegal, part of Galway, part of Leitrim

Sligo Education Centre
Ballinode
Sligo

Phone 071 9138700
Mobile 087 6307175
Fax 071 9141909
email gerrykielty@sdpi.ie



West-Northwest 2
Jacqueline DILLON
Regional Coordinator

Mayo, part of Donegal, part of Galway, part of Leitrim
Donegal Education Centre
Floor 2/3 Pier 1
Quay Street
Donegal Town

Phone 074 9725562
Mobile 087 2376068
email jacquelinedillon@sdpi.ie



Mid-West
Anne TUOHY
Regional Coordinator

Clare, Limerick, Tipperary NR and part of Galway
Clare Education Centre
Government Offices
Kilrush
Ennis,
Co. Clare

Phone 065 6845504
Mobile 086 1702012
Fax 065 6842930
email annetuohy@sdpi.ie



South I
Jean GEOGHEGAN
Regional Coordinator

Cork (50%) and Kerry
Cork Education Support Centre
The Rectory
Western Road
Cork

Mobile 087 6469989
Fax 021 4254247
email jeangeoghegan@sdpi.ie



South II
Jim O'LEARY
Regional Coordinator

Cork (50%), Waterford and Tipperary SR
Cork Education Support Centre
The Rectory
Western Road
Cork

Phone 021 4255604
Mobile 087 2883088
Fax 021 4254247
email jimoleary@sdpi.ie



South-East
Paul FIELDS
Regional Coordinator

Carlow, Kilkenny, Wicklow, Wexford and part of Dublin
Kilkenny Education Centre
Seville Lodge
Callan Road
Kilkenny

Phone 056 7760212
Mobile 087 2377471
Fax 056 7760250
email paulfields@sdpi.ie



Greater Dublin I
Mark FENNEL
Regional Coordinator

Dublin South, Greystones and Bray
Blackrock Education Centre
Kill Avenue
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin

Phone 01 2365011
Mobile 087 9678832
Fax 01 2365080
email markfennell@sdpi.ie



Greater Dublin II
Anne HENRY
Regional Coordinator

Dublin West, North-East Kildare and part of North Dublin
Dublin West Education Centre
Blessington Road
Tallaght
Dublin 24

Phone 01 4528008
Mobile 087 9799724
Fax 01 4528010
email annehenry@sdpi.ie



Midlands
Gerry WATCHORN
Regional Coordinator

Kildare, Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and part of North Dublin
Laois Education Centre
Block Road
Portlaoise
Co. Laois

Phone 0502 72411
Mobile 087 6429938
Fax 0502 61137
email gerrywatchorn@sdpi.ie



North-East
Dolores MULLINS
Regional Coordinator

Louth, Meath, Monaghan, East Cavan, Fingal and part of North Dublin
Navan Education Centre
Athlumney
Navan
Co. Meath

Phone 046 9060831
Mobile 087 2833143
Fax 046 9060831
email doloresmullins@sdpi.ie