



Partnership Board members with Lord Mayor of Belfast Nichola Mallon, August 2014

Leadership Mission 2014

On August 24th, the Irish American Partnership commenced its biennial Leadership Mission, aimed at monitoring program funding and building relationships in Ireland. Mission participants, including Board members, staff, and guests of the Partnership, enjoyed a week packed with school visits, meetings with government officials, and reports from supported programs.

Science Teacher Training

The trip focused on a review of Partnership efforts in education. It kicked off with a meeting at St. Patrick's College, where the Partnership is funding a teacher training program for primary school science. This idea, inspired by the results of a study co-financed by the Partnership, has made a meaningful impact on science education in Western Ireland. By bringing teachers together in local educational centers, St. Patrick's created a cost-effective way to instill confidence and understanding in the primary science curriculum. While St. Patrick's focuses on schools in Mayo and Kilkenny, Dr. Maeve Liston, head of science teacher training for Mary Immaculate Teaching College, performs similar work in the Munster area. Her innovative approaches to science education are profiled in further detail on page 3.

Meetings with Government Officials

The Leadership Mission also had the great fortune to meet with a number of government officials in the North and South. At Stormont Castle, participants engaged with Committee for Education member Trevor Lunn, MLA, and Minister for Education John O'Dowd on ways

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Leadership Mission Itinerary

Day 1, Dublin

- St. Patrick's College, *science teaching program*
- Fastrack to IT (FIT), *employment learning program*
- Trinity College Foundation, *university access scholarship program*
- Department of Foreign Affairs
- Royal Dublin Society, *primary school science fair*

Day 2, Belfast

- MLA Trevor Lunn, *Committee for Education*
- Roundtable with MLAs Chris Lyttle, Alex Attwood, and Jim Wells
- Lunch with members of Sinn Fein
- St. Lousie's College, *direct grant recipient*
- Dinner hosted by Belfast Lord Mayor Nichola Mallon
- Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Day 3, Belfast

- Springvale Employment & Learning Solutions, *youth coding program*
- Minister for Education John O'Dowd
- University of Ulster, *university access scholarship program*
- Avoniel Primary School, *direct grant recipient*
- Drumlins Integrated School, *direct grant recipient*

Day 4, Dublin

- Irish Primary Principals Network, *principal training program*
- Dr. Maeve Liston, *Mary Immaculate College science teacher training program*
- Sarah Davis, *Cork Institute of Technology master's scholarship program*
- Minister of State Sean Sherlock
- Industrial Development Agency of Ireland
- Dublin City University, *university access scholarship program*

Full Circle: The Impact of IAP Master's Scholarships

Dr. Breda Kenny was one of the Partnership's very first master's scholarship recipients in 1992. Now, she serves as the Head of the Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence at **Cork Institute of Technology** and is advising this year's master's scholarship recipient, Sarah Davis. Ms. Davis returned to school as a mature student committed to lifelong learning. Hailing from a background in engineering, Ms. Davis is currently in the preliminary stages of a thesis entitled **"The Irish Electronics and Software Industry from 1960-2010."** Her professionalism, knowledge, and confidence in the subject were displayed in the excellent presentation she gave to Leadership Mission participants. Ms. Davis is conducting over 20 interviews with key players in the industry to determine catalysts for and impediments to change in electronics and software over the past 50 years. While the scale of this work is undoubtedly a challenge, Ms. Davis is planning to use analytic software to distill the content of her interviews into core themes. Employing a critical realist methodology, she will then track the industry based on these core drivers of change. All going well, Ms. Davis hopes to complete her thesis by April 2015. We cannot wait to see the result!

1: Leadership Mission with **Committee for Education** member Trevor Lunn. 2: Mission participants learn about **Springvale's** Saturday coding lessons for students. 3: Board members talk with **St Patrick's** staff about their science teacher training program. 4: Chairman John Murray and Executive Director Mary Sugrue McAleer present Peter Davit a check for **Fastrack to IT**.



Leadership Mission 2014

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to best serve the Northern Irish primary education system in an evenhanded manner. Later, the Partnership experienced a warm welcome from Belfast Lord Mayor Nichola Mallon, who hosted the group for dinner at City Hall. In the Republic, Mission participants met with the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Industrial Development Agency of Ireland, and Minister of State Sean Sherlock to discuss education and community development.

Direct Grants to Schools

By far the most rewarding visits were not to the hallowed halls of government, but the lively hallways of local schools. From Avoniel, Drumlins, University of Ulster, and St. Louise's in the North, to St. Patrick's, Trinity, and Dublin City University in the South, Mission participants were consistently reminded of the impact even a small donation can make on a school. The teachers and school administrators were incredibly grateful for the Partnership's contributions, which can make an enormous difference for a primary school scraping by with donated labor and trailers for classrooms. Whether a direct grant to a local school or an access scholarship to a university, these funds create a world of opportunity for Irish students.

Investing in Ireland's Future

If there is one thing the trip highlighted, it



is that a small organization can have an enormous reach. The Partnership has truly blossomed into a household name throughout Ireland due to its persistent presence and positive impact over 28 years. The feedback from teachers, administrators, and government officials serves as a testament to the progress we have attained, but the work is far from done. Ireland's education system has greatly suffered from government budget cuts, which have increased class sizes, decreased teachers, and left no funds to buy science equipment or new technology. As Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Here at the Partnership, we hope that by carefully funding educational initiatives in Ireland, we will be able to empower the next generation with the resources to enact positive change.

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Full STEAM Ahead!

A Spotlight on Dr. Maeve Liston, Primary Science Teaching Program Facilitator

Building Confidence Through Science Teacher Training

When Dr. Maeve Liston began lecturing at Mary Immaculate College, undergraduate students were only receiving 12 hours of science education during their entire degree program. Upon graduation, these students would then enter Ireland's primary schools without a strong grasp of science or the confidence to teach it. Dr. Liston observed this problem and made it her mission to fix it. Starting with Mary Immaculate, she pushed for more classroom time with undergraduate students; today, each student gets at least 72 hours and has the option to specialize in science. These teachers will enter the classroom with the utmost confidence in executing the science curriculum, and their passion for the subject will hopefully inspire thousands of primary students to find science fun.

Putting the "A" in STEM

But her efforts didn't stop there. Dr. Liston went out into the community to give current teachers the skills they need to properly implement the science curriculum. Through Partnership funding, she taught three summer courses in science education, seeking to bridge the gap between science and other curricula. For example, she fused literacy, numeracy, and scientific investigation by creating a lesson plan based on the popular children's story "Sheep in a Jeep." This innovative approach truly puts the "A" (Arts) in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), bolstering the sciences without hindering arts. Dr. Liston's approach is based around investigation—allowing students to ask questions, form hypotheses, conduct experiments, and determine the results without an authority figure ever telling them what the "right" or "wrong" answer may be. By cultivating an inquisitive nature at a young age, Dr. Liston's approach molds lifelong learners that will be able to think critically in any situation.

Mallow Development Project

Another inventive example of Dr. Liston's crusade to transform science education in Ireland is the Mallow Development Project. This endeavor arose organically from the community when businesspeople decided that increasing math and science in the school system would improve industry in the town. They brought on Dr. Liston to offer Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in math and science for teachers in the area. While CDP is entirely optional, the classes were continually oversubscribed. 30 schools have now participated in the CPD program, which is four sessions of math and science teaching courses over one year. The effect has been positive and immediate. Mallow students are now getting higher grades in math and science, and their passion for the subject has demonstratively increased, as more Mallow students enter the BT Young Scientist Fair than ever before. The community is also engaged in the program through a local science and math fair, where parents, grandparents, and neighbors can see what the children are learning. This support structure is crucial in ensuring that the math and science reforms stick after Dr. Liston finishes her work.



1: Trinity College access scholarship recipients talk to the Partnership about their experiences. 2: Chairman John Murray and Executive Director Mary Sugrue McAleer present a check to Dublin City University President Brian MacCraith and two DCU access students.



Creating Opportunities for a College Education Through University Access Scholarships

The Partnership funds Access Scholarship Programs at four universities in Ireland, North and South: Trinity College, Dublin City University, University of Limerick, and University of Ulster. Access scholarships target student populations that may not be able to attend college without financial support, allowing equal opportunity for all Irish students to have a college education. They also provide vital counseling services and tutoring to help students acclimate once they get to school. This has proven so successful that, at DCU, access graduation rates are significantly higher than non-access!

This year, the Leadership Mission had the privilege of meeting with recipients of Partnership-funded access scholarships at three of the schools—Trinity College, University of Ulster, and Dublin City University. Mission participants were impressed by the students' passion for their disciplines, academic success, and dedication to the access program.

Supporting Education in Northern Ireland

Drumlins Integrated Primary

The Partnership was greeted with great fanfare at Drumlins Integrated Primary School in County Down, where students put on a performance showcasing their talents in music and dance. Over the 10 years of the school's existence, enrollment has skyrocketed, but Drumlins is yet to get a permanent building. The school has been operating out of mobile classrooms, carefully pieced together to form the semblance of a campus. Despite these obstacles, Drumlins has thrived and is consistently over-subscribed. The teachers have squeezed every ounce of space out of their mobile units, transforming the cafeteria into a music hall, gym, conference room, and recess area all in the course of a day. It is for this reason that Drumlins used the Partnership's grant to purchase another mobile unit. This unit now provides a space for teachers to work one-on-one with struggling students in literacy and numeracy and give music lessons without disturbing other classes. However, the mobile unit days are coming to an end, as Drumlins has been promised a brick and mortar structure of their own. It is due to open next year.

Avoniel Primary School

It was a dreary day for the teachers at Avoniel Primary School in East Belfast. Mission participants arrived at the school only hours after Principal Todd shared the news that Avoniel would close at the end of the year. However, the teachers could not have been happier to see a friendly face when the Partnership arrived with a direct grant. The funds may be gone in no time, but the message of goodwill will certainly live on.

St. Louise's College

St. Louise's Comprehensive College is a leader in girls' education, earning the top spot in non-selective schools in Northern Ireland for the past three years in a row. The secondary school, located on the Falls Road in West Belfast, has provided a haven for students in times of violence. The Partnership gladly provided a direct grant to this hugely successful school in the hopes that they will continue to offer robust, upper-level STEM courses to provide the skills needed for future economic growth.



1: Drumlins students perform for the Partnership. 2: The Board poses in front of the mobile unit that the Partnership funded. 3: The Board presents a check to Avoniel. 4: Board members and Executive Director Mary Sugrue McAleer present a check to St. Louise's.

"You and your Board are great friends to Northern Ireland and your continued involvement makes a huge difference to life here across all areas of education, business and reconciliation" —Baroness May Blood MBE

What's Next?

The Partnership has a very exciting fall activities schedule coming up. If you are interested in attending any events, please email therese@irishap.org.

Friday, September 26th: Boston Luncheon with the Minister of Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mr. Paschal Donohoe, TD

Thursday, October 23rd: Boston Breakfast with Belfast Lord Mayor Nichola Mallon

Tuesday, January 6th: Annual Nollaig na mBan (Women's Christmas) breakfast celebration in Washington, D.C.

RDS Science Fair

While in Dublin, the Mission met with the Royal Dublin Society's Science and Technology unit to discuss our collaboration on the primary science fair. Each year, the RDS hosts a non-competitive primary science fair where classes of students can present a project and learn from other children at the fair. This event takes place in conjunction with the secondary school level BT Young Scientist Fair. The Partnership provided 18 travel grants for schools that would not normally be able to afford the trip to Dublin, allowing hundreds of students to take part in this exciting event.

Grants Awarded Leadership Mission 2014

University Access Programs

Trinity College	\$10,000
Dublin City University	\$10,000
University of Ulster	\$10,000

Direct Grants to Schools

St. Louise's College	\$5,000
Avoniel Primary School	\$5,000
Integrated Education Fund	\$10,000
Inchigeelagh National School	\$2,000
Derryclough National School	\$2,000

Science Teacher Training

Mallow Development Project	\$2,000
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Employment & Learning

Fastrack to IT	\$10,000
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TOTAL	\$66,000
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