

Welcome to TaLEz²

Welcome to the second edition of TaLEz, an ezine which showcases some of the teaching, learning, and assessment practices that take place on an ongoing basis in our schools and FET Centres.

In late 2018, LOETB set up the Teaching and Learning Centre based at Castle Buildings, Tullamore. The purpose of the Centre is to help place a specific focus on education among our family of teaching staff and students. The provision of specific professional development opportunities will be a particular focus of the Centre.

As Chief Executive, I am very much aware that we have a responsibility to encourage our teaching staff and leaders to explore new horizons of teaching methodologies, learning styles, and alternative assessment techniques. If the quality of the education provided to students is to be maintained or improved in the face of the increasing pressures and demands from a variety of stakeholders, teachers must be "assisted in sustaining their enthusiasm for, and identification with their work, which demands considerable investment of their cognitive and emotional selves" (Day, 2000a). LOETB takes its responsibility very seriously in assisting and supporting our teaching and learning community. We aim to continue to support and nourish that learning in whatever practical and realistic way that we can. There is no doubt that the Teaching and Learning Centre will assist us greatly in this work.

I look forward to hearing more about the innovative teaching and learning practice that occurs on a daily basis in all of our schools and FET Centres. Thank you for your contribution to those milestones and achievements. If we can support you further in this important work through the Teaching and Learning Centre, please let us know.

Joe Cunningham
Chief Executive



International Experience for Portlaoise Institute Hair and Beauty Students

On 2nd February 2019, 13 students and 2 staff from the Hair & Beauty departments of Portlaoise Institute took part in a 2 week Erasmus programme in Budapest, Hungary.

This was an extremely exciting opportunity for the students of Portlaoise Institute as it offered them the opportunity to work in Budapest's top salons and spas. They gained experiences in new styling and colouring techniques in the hair industry and different approaches to beauty treatments in the beauty industry. These experiences will allow them to further advance their careers and it is also an opportunity to put into practice many of the skills they have learned, both on the QQI certified Level 5 and 6 Hair and Beauty courses here at Portlaoise Institute.

It wasn't all hard work however, as Budapest is a beautiful city that is packed with museums, restaurants, state buildings, parks, theatres and culture.

CPR 4 Schools - Help save a Life!

How does it work? Irish Heart Foundation's expert CPR 4 School team will deliver training over two hours to LOETB school teachers. After training, teachers leave with unique login details to an online portal which delivers the programme into any classroom. In addition, Irish Heart Foundation provides schools with free kits worth €600 which consist of training mannequins. **CPR 4 Schools** is linked to the curriculum making it easy for teachers to roll out in their schools during class time. Training videos stream through an online portal which has a wide range of resources and can be even run in a 40-minute class. Ask your school Principal for further details.



CPR Training that could prove lifesaving!
Thursday, 4th April @ 7.00pm

Conference Suite, Floor 3, LOETB Admin Offices,
Castle Buildings, Tara Street, Tullamore.

To book a place at this training workshop please email chphelan@loetb.ie

Show-Stopping Pantomime for Oakland's Community College Students



Oaklands Community College has received rave reviews following its sell out production of the pantomime, *Beauty and the Beast*, which took to the stage from January 16th to 18th last. This production marked a welcome return for the Arts in the school as a show of this scale was last staged in the school over 20 years ago.

The stunning production was fronted by an exceptional cast and chorus of students from all year groups and was supported by a staff orchestra. Audience members were entertained through popular well known numbers such as "This is me," "I need a Hero," "Best day of my Life," "Beauty and the Beast" and a show-stopping number "Somebody to Love" amongst others.

Complementing the cast were an

accomplished orchestra composed principally of teachers from the school. Show directors, Jack Colgan and Rory Maher played bass and acoustic guitars respectively, musical directors, Mairead Mc Kenna and Claire Donohoe played piano and trad whistles, and saxophone was played by Kenneth Crann. The staff orchestra was joined by Stephen Colfer from Maynooth who played drums. Choreography for the show was arranged by Ms. Jennifer Colgan and Ms. Niamh Fitzpatrick. The show was produced by Ms. Hazel Weir.

Again, what was striking about this production was the amount of in-school talent on show. All backdrops and art work were produced by students under the careful guidance of Art teacher, Ms. Claire Johnston, and the stage was managed efficiently and superbly by students supported by teaching staff. Students also took on the role of master of ceremonies and this was confidently handled by Student Council members, Leanne Mallen and Abdullah Butt.

Following the show-stopping success the cast and crew are now in recovery mode, but audiences are already wondering when the next production will be on the way. The production has been a landmark event for the school, raising its profile in the town and surrounding area.



THE GREAT BAKEOFF

The Level 3 Office Procedures Class (Portlaoise FETC) embraced the Christmas Spirit when they elected to organise a Bake-off and donate the proceeds to The Cuisle Centre.

The class worked as a team. They planned the event and delegated a specific role to each class member. They received clearance from their Centre Manager and decided on two people (one from within the Centre and one from outside the Centre) who had the experience to critique and judge, to assume the roles of Paul Hollywood and Mary Berry. They approached both people, Orla Cant and David Farrell and they very graciously accepted the roles. The class sent e-mails, made telephone calls, created and laminated posters and place cards. They reconfigured the Canteen to accommodate the Bake-off adhering to Health and Safety considerations.

Each class in the Centre was visited by members of the Office Procedures Class to explain and promote the Bake-off, which encouraged Centre participation. Each member of the class reported back to the group on their progress and great teamwork was demonstrated.

The Bake-off itself was great fun, assisted greatly by the bakers and the professionalism of the judges. The class welcomed participants and judges, fed the masses and charged a small fee for a slice of the fabulous cakes. The class presented a sum of €80 to The Cuisle Centre. A lovely result while also meeting many learning outcomes of the Office Procedures Level 3 module.



**Before a child talks
they sing.**

**Before they write
they draw.**

**As soon as they stand
they dance.**

**Art is
fundamental
to human
expression.**

Phyllicia Rashad

SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT

Skills for Employment, Edenderry is a learner centred Local Training Initiative delivering a QQI Level 4 Major Award in Employment Skills. The learning objectives are achieved through working with the individual learners, taking into account their individual specific learning capabilities. As a result, an innovative pilot was launched to offer an online programme for the October 2017 - June 2018 group. This gave learners the opportunity to spend time on an online course while waiting for others to complete assigned work, which takes into consideration learners various levels of ability in different areas.

After consulting with the learners, it was decided that the first online course was Nutrition. The nutrition course incorporated meditation and visits to a local gym. When the nutrition course was completed, learners were encouraged to continue with self-directed learning by participating in online courses of their own choice with learners opting for courses including psychology, animal care and Excel.

Following the success of this pilot, online learning will be incorporated into future planning. Online learning is a tool that the learners can continue to use when they have completed the Skills for Employment course. It gives them an introduction to lifelong learning which can be continued at home or at the local library. All learners on Skills for Employment have become members of the local library, which they joined on commencement of the course.



ARTISTS ON DISPLAY

Tullamore College students Clodagh Redmond, Mark Dunne, Caoimhe Johnson and Ruairí Meenan are the first students from local schools to have their artwork adorn the walls of the administrative offices of Laois & Offaly Education & Training Board (LOETB). As part of an initiative to support and promote the work of art students in their schools, LOETB are making dedicated space available in both offices to display the superb skills shown by students at both junior and senior cycle. All LOETB schools will have an opportunity to display their student work on a monthly basis.

Director of Schools, Paul Fields stated "The qualities, skills and attitudes that visual art develops are critical components in building and developing a holistic approach to education. We are proud, and hugely impressed with the quality of artwork which has been

submitted for this project; it is a fitting testament to the commitment of the students, and the quality of tuition and support provided by the teaching staff in our schools".

Tullamore College Principal, Edward Mc Evoy added to this saying, "we feel this is an ideal opportunity to showcase the excellent work of our students; it is vitally important that we use such opportunities to encourage and build confidence in our students as their skills develop. This public showcase of their work and endeavors affirms and celebrates their learning and achievements, and the excellent guidance provided by their teacher, Mr Caslin."

Photograph L-R: Mark Dunne, Caoimhe Johnson, Edward Mc Evoy (Principal), Clodagh Redmond, Joe Caslin (Teacher) - Missing from photo Ruairí Meenan.

Music Student achieves top marks with Royal Irish Academy of Music

A music student in Portlaoise Prison has achieved top marks in his exams with the Royal Irish Academy of Music and has been accepted to study a diploma in music, harmony & counterpoint.

The student began studying music in Portlaoise Prison in 2013 and has completed his 8 grades. In May this year, he sat the senior certificate in Theory & Harmony in which he achieved 88%. As a result of this high grade, his application to the Royal Irish Academy of music to study a diploma in music has been accepted and he will sit his exams in December 2019. Part of this course will include a teaching practice module where he will take part in supervised peer teaching. Upon completion of his studies, he will be qualified to teach music theory. This is a huge achievement both for the student and his music teachers as he is the first prisoner to be accepted on the diploma course with the RIAM.

On line initiatives promoting Teaching and Learning Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, Clara



Mangahigh

Mangahigh is an on-line game based learning programme used to teach maths. This programme allows teachers to; set assignments, review results, track progress and most importantly personalise learning.

The Maths Department has used this programme for a number of years focusing on Junior Cycle Maths. Each student has an individual account to log onto and complete assignments both in school and at home. Students enjoy the game based element of the programme and have to complete assignments to progress to the next level, building on numeracy skills.

This programme allows teachers to set assignments for class and homework, individual to each student's needs. Their progress can be reviewed and tracked by teachers in real time and it provides valuable feedback which can result in teachers adapting their teaching methodologies to improve learning outcomes. Teachers can personalise student learning and provide personalised feedback. The programme encourages students to attempt the maths puzzles and focus on completing assignments to enable them to progress.

We were delighted when Chris Greene from Mangahigh facilitated an interactive teacher/student training session on 22nd January which was very worthwhile and ensures we can continue to benefit from using this platform.

Quizlet

Quizlet is a very popular and innovative on-line revision tool which allows teachers to organise quiz questions on their chosen topics. Quizzes can take the form of multiple choice questions, flash

cards etc. Quizlet has been adopted by our History Department to enhance learning and literacy levels.

A recent survey of all 2nd and 3rd Year History students revealed 65% of them used Quizlet, mostly at home, showing high levels of student engagement outside of the History Club and the timetabled History classes.

The level of student engagement was so positive that a new initiative was introduced to incorporate the use of Quizlet as part of end of term assessment. Over 80% of students achieved the full percentage of marks given. Over 90% of students said Quizlet was useful and that the initiative should be continued, while 85% said Quizlet should be introduced by other subject departments. In response to its success Quizlet has been successfully adopted by a number of subject departments including Music, English and Science.



Don't limit yourself.
Many people limit themselves to what they think they can do.

You can go as far as your mind lets you.

What you believe, you can achieve.

Mary Kay Ash

YRFest 2018 – Celebrating 30 years of Youthreach

NAYC (National Association of Youthreach Coordinators) hosted a very successful event YRFest on Wednesday October 24th in the National Sports Arena Blanchardstown. Great credit must go to the organising committee of this very successful event which was opened by our newly appointed Education Minister Joe Mc Hugh, who previously worked in Youthreach himself.



Youthreach Edenderry embraced this event and preparations for YRFest commenced by participating in the flag competition. A group of learners worked collaboratively and with the guidance of Petra Moll Art, produced a beautiful creation which incorporated all their individual ideas. Joe Hackett felt Youthreach is a jigsaw, a sum of different parts. Adam Flynn cited the various activities learners engage in within the centre. Pdraig O Reilly devised a very smart acronym using the letters YOUTHREACH, while Saoirse Flanagan brought floral décor to the flag. Josh Rooney worked on some elaborate script while Thomas Doran added characters.

Not content with designing their flag, our learners also participated musically in YRFest. The fantastically talented Saoirse Flanagan was our lead singer, and boy did she belt out "Gangsters Paradise" and "Heathens" on the day. Our music group have been working consistently for the past while under the expert tutelage of Adela Meally. The fact that some of our music group only joined Youthreach in September 2018 is a testament to the fantastic work done by the learners themselves and Adela, that they could play in such a vast venue and to such a large audience on October 24th.

Although we missed the initial deadline for main acts, through Lorraine and Adela's persistence and persuasion, the group succeeded in getting a slot on the main stage. They then totally proved on the day their right to be there. Our group

of nine consisted of Saoirse Flanagan as lead singer, Alan Craven on keyboards, Joe Hackett on drums and Ciarán Reilly and Brenda Hoey on electric guitar. They were supported by Pdraig O Reilly, Jackie Craven, Cian Lynch and Brandon Weldon on ukuleles.

The group practiced diligently in recent weeks, and decided to call themselves Senan Street, as our centre is located on that street which is named after Sr Senan, a nun who served the Edenderry community for years.

Chelsea Judge and Kristina Stanley Curran were charged with wardrobe management and Anne Crombie was their supervisor. Lorraine's office became a de-facto costume, jewellery and accessories store.

On the morning of October 24th, learners were in Youthreach at 7am to get breakfast and left at 7.30pm. We needed to be in Blanchardstown to conduct a sound check at 9am. To their credit all our learners arrived in the dark just after 7, we ate, packed and were on the bus within half an hour. Great praise must go to some learners who made considerable arrangements to be in Youthreach at 7am to participate or to support the band. I really think the support of everyone in Youthreach was a great confidence booster.

YRFest was opened by the minister at 9.30am and Senan Street performed at 11.30am. As an LOETB centre manager, I must commend our other centres in Portlaoise and Mountmellick who sat with us throughout the performance. Their managers, staff and learners were

so positively supportive of our music group.



Regarding the nine band members and Adela, I can only say well done on a fantastic performance. Considering it was their first public performance and in such a big venue, they were brilliant. Saoirse's voice carried powerfully over the sound system and everyone else played their part perfectly.

Well done to all concerned, we can only hope that this is the beginning of bigger and better things for this lovely group of talented young people. Finally our biggest thanks from all in Edenderry must go to Adela Meally whose music expertise, hard work and belief in the group brought it all together.



SEANAN STREET – Brandon Weldon, Brenda Hoey, Adela Meally (Manager), Cian Lynch, Jackie Craven, Saoirse Flanagan, Pdraig O Reilly, Ciarán Reilly, Joe Hackett, Alan Craven.

STEM EXPERIENCE NIGHT AT PORTLAOISE COLLEGE



On Thursday January 31st, Portlaoise College welcomed a large group of 5th class pupils and their parents to the annual STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) Experience Night. Information Leaflets had been distributed to primary schools across Laois and parents were invited to register with their child for this free event through Laois Education Centre.

Participants and their parents were welcomed to the college by the Principal, Mr. Daly. Each group was led through the evening by the school's Prefects. The students and their parents worked their way through four interactive workshops in Science, Maths and Technology, where they were challenged to use their teamwork and problem solving skills. These workshops were facilitated by a variety of Portlaoise College teachers from the Science, Maths and Technology departments. Each group also visited a mobile Planetarium provided by Exploration Dome, where they had the opportunity to learn about science and astronomy in a dome with 360 degree 3D digital projection. Each student also received a STEM resource pack with a Certificate of Participation.

The night was a great success with feedback from parents complimenting the variety of interesting and informative workshops. Portlaoise College would like to thank all those involved in the planning and preparation for the event and the participants who engaged so well with the activities in each of the workshops.



Banagher TY Students Excel at MOS



Presentation of Microsoft Office Specialist Certificates to BCCNS TY Students

Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certification is the leading IT certification in the world. More than 1 million MOS exams are taken every year in over 140 countries. Banagher College has now been delivering this course for four years.

Banagher College focuses predominantly on Word, PowerPoint and Excel modules with all Transition Year students engaging in training, with subsequent testing taking place in the school three times a year. This gives all students access to flexible and up to date online training, facilitated and supported by experienced IT teachers.

To succeed in MOS students must

demonstrate in an automated on-line 50-minute exam that they have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to productively use Microsoft Office.

Microsoft Office Specialist is a globally recognised qualification and is the certification most widely recognised and highly valued by Irish employers. It is the world's most recognised computing qualification for proving a person's skill and abilities in Microsoft Office Applications.

By completing these exams, it is hoped that it will help differentiate Banagher College students in today's competitive job market, and hopefully broaden their employment opportunities.

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Data Protection – General Data Protection Regulation

All staff are required to undertake mandatory GDPR Training being provided by LÖETB through the ETBI on-line training system. You must log in for training by using your LÖETB email address. The Data Protection Officer (DPO) for LÖETB is Kathleen Donnellan and any data protection queries can be sent directly to dpo@loetb.ie

LOETB APPRENTICESHIPS



Phase 2 off-the-job electrical apprentices based in Mountrath, Co. Laois

There are over 200 approved employers in the Laois and Offaly region currently engaging with approximately 400 apprentices across a variety of trades. These trades include the craft apprenticeships in construction, engineering, electrical and motor. However apprentices in the region are also registered to new apprenticeships including Industrial Electrical Engineering (Level 7), Insurance Practice (Level 8) and Accounting Technician (Level 6). A phase 2 off-the-job six month electrical apprenticeship training placement for 28 apprentices is currently taking place in Mountrath where apprentices are trained under the guidance of qualified electrical instructors. For further information on apprenticeships visit www.apprenticeship.ie



Recent apprentice induction facilitated by Senior Training Advisors Sandra Doyle and Niamh Desmond

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“Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway.”
Earl Nightingale

“Life is a journey, not a destination.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Abbeyleix FETC Art, Craft & Design Work Experience

This year the Art Department in Abbeyleix FETC are delighted to work with the Abbeyleix Bog Committee and the general community of Abbeyleix town in creating an experiential celebration of the bog as a preserved site. The main concept behind this project lies in the connection between the community and this unique wet land. In order to celebrate this the students from the art department will work with Italian sculptor Enrico Ferrarini, making a sculpture to commemorate an event which symbolises the protection of the bog for future generations and for the sustainable environment. The students wish to emulate previous artists work in land and environmental art in a site specific project with an Italian flavour. After the initial research and design process it was decided to create a sculpture based on three key areas of community, protection and the natural pattern of water. The students felt that this sculpture, donated to the bog, would visually highlight the importance of wet lands to our environment. It also commemorates the work carried out by the community to ensure the protection of this space. During the National Biodiversity Week, the students wish to hold an event on the bog based on the traditional and ritualistic use of water and it is hoped that the schools, community groups and the general public will get involved. Important work like this needs the backing of many and it is hoped that the schools, community groups and the general public will come to get involved.



Coding and Design for the future in Portlaoise College

Introduced as a short course in 2017, the coding and design class in Portlaoise College is proving to be extremely popular amongst the participating students in first and second year. Catching up with some first year students really brought to attention the effect the class is having and the benefits it is bringing. With a week 10 assessment behind them which involved making a movie or creating a 5 level computer game, the students reflected on why they enjoy coding.



Student Nike Olutu introduced us to the idea 'it's all about creating codes and really being creative' this was followed up enthusiastically by Noah Carroll informing us that 'the fun part of it all is that you get to choose what to do for yourself'. The theme of the student directing their own experience of the subject is enhanced by Tymon Galka 'with so many options at your disposal coding really gives you freedom to express yourself'.

Students are constantly busy working on projects, testing what they have done so far and taking great pleasure from sharing ideas and working together. Weronika Popko told us, 'I'm constantly working on projects and when finished moving on to the next', whilst Liam Woulfe commented that, 'I chose this subject as I see these skills as being part of my future'. In a class that the reporter knew little about it on entering it was certainly refreshing to see such enthusiasm and interest and it appears coding and design has a bright future.

Maths Through Darts



Maths through Darts was initially set up by the Adult Literacy Service, Portlaoise, as a programme for anyone that enjoys a game of darts and wants to develop their basic numeracy skills and simple calculation.

It began by just throwing some darts and having a bit of fun, while at the same time building on the basic mathematical skills, in particular adding and subtracting, learning about place value and the addition process, and also the concept of renaming when subtracting.

The dart board contains many possible combinations of numbers and numerical outcomes involving the basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

While developing the basic numeric operational skills, it was then decided to work towards the QQI Module 'Level 2 Data Handling'. This involved developing a knowledge of concepts such as identifying uses of data in everyday life, data collection, constructing and interpreting basic representations of this data.

In each class, the learners create their own data through throwing a sample number of darts and recording the outcomes on a tally sheet. This data can then be used to create a table and hence an appropriate graph or chart can be produced.

This experiment is carried out weekly with results being compared week on week. Through the process of gathering information using this primary data collection method, the group are meeting the required learning outcomes, while at the same time, each individual learner is developing and enhancing their basic numeric operational skills.

The learners really enjoy the class, it is

fun, competitive at times and a great sense of achievement is felt when someone hits the winning double at the end of a game. There has been a huge change in the learners' attitude to Maths and the ability they possess when working with numbers. The dartboard provides an opportunity, depending on ability, to enhance addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, percentages and averages.

It also looks at price comparisons between various sports stores for darts equipment such as darts, dartboards, flights, stems and clothing. This leads to the use of terms such as 'more than' or 'less than' when comparing prices for statistical purposes. Data Handling also involves looking at databases of records created previously, such as World Darts Champions, the years they won, prize money over time and many other facts and figures involved in the Data Handling process. They learn about analysing and describing findings, coming to conclusions and making suggestions.

The learner develops the language, literacy and numeracy skills related to Data Handling through the medium of the darts theme and course content.



New Engineering & Motor Technology Facility opens in Tullamore Community Training Centre



It was with great pride that Tullamore Community Training Centre unveiled their new Engineering & Motor Technology Training Facility this month. Based in Kilcruttin Business Park, alongside their existing provision; the space was almost two years in development and is now equipped to provide advanced training in specialised engineering courses such as Welding, Turning, Milling, Plasma Cutting, Machine Operating and Fabricating. Learners will also have the opportunity to participate in Manual Handling and Abrasive Wheel Training. Tullamore Community Training Centre has been offering training in Tullamore since 1987



and the new facility will provide a step-change in what the CTC can offer the town and surrounding areas.

The facility boasts 16 welding bays, two of which are wheelchair accessible, and will offer training in Mig, Tig and Manual Arc Welding which are highly valued skills in today's local labour market. Investment was driven by the popularity in recent years, of the centre's QQI L.4 programme in Certified Craft Skills. By investing in this area of the provision, Tullamore CTC and LOETB have increased learners opportunity for progression to traineeships, apprenticeships and employment in the engineering sector for residents in both Laois and Offaly.

In order to fully utilise the space, the centre have welcomed a QQI Level 5 traineeship in Motor Vehicle Technology which commenced last October. The opportunity to develop knowledge of both the theory and practical elements of auto mechanics has proven very popular and there are plans to develop this further in the near future with emphasis being placed on auto electricity & diagnostics. This collaboration has been a very positive move forward for the CTC as it not only provides a direct progression route for learners but has brought renewed energy to the Centre.

APPRENTICE PLUMBER

Apprentice Plumber Ailbhe Lacey presented her 'Apprenticeship Journey' at the ETBI conference on Diversity & Inclusion in Education & Training. The conference was organised by the ETBI, held at the Killashee House Hotel, Naas and included a variety of keynote speakers, networking workshops and exhibition stands. Ailbhe participated in the session entitled 'Apprenticeships & Traineeships in 2018: Pathways that value the range of human differences'. All speakers were welcomed by Dr. Fionnuala Anderson, Dublin & Dún Laoghaire ETB and the session was moderated by Padraig Boland, Training Manager, LOETB.

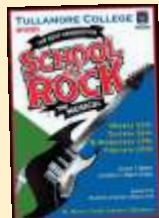


Apprentice Plumber Ailbhe Lacey, Apprenticeship Services, LOETB

Tullamore College Rocks!

It has been over three decades since Tullamore College performed a school musical. Music was re-introduced as a subject last year, when Ms. Aoife Gavin joined the staff. The reintroduction of the subject has brought music back into all parts of school-life, with extra-curricular music activities such as choir and a traditional music group at lunchtimes.

In February the students performed Andrew Lloyd Webber's School of Rock, based on the 2003 film starring Jack Black. It tells the story of debt-ridden Dewey Finn (played by Tristan Berrill), who poses as a substitute teacher in an elite, fee-paying school called Horace Green. Shortly after discovering that the students in his class possess significant talent for playing classical music, in particular Zack (Mitchell Wyman), Katie (Ellen O'Brien), Lauren (Emma Fitzpatrick) and Freddie (Edward Bello), Dewey sets about trying to transform them into rock musicians, ready to compete in Battle of the Bands. Faced with the challenge of keeping this secret from his fellow teachers and the parents, Dewey attempts to get on the good side of principal, Rosalie Mullins (Ciara Bell) – all while teaching his students the true meaning of Rock.



Under the direction of Mr. Paul Norton (also director of Tullamore Musical Society's Jekyll & Hyde), and under the musical direction of Ms. Aoife Gavin, our cast, ranging from 1st to 6th years, rehearsed after school and at the weekends over the past few months. The show was a huge success, thanks to the hard work of: the cast and crew, the students who helped build and decorate the set, the students who put together the programme including the advertising and who sold tickets and programmes every night. There was huge teamwork between students and staff and the Parents' Council who pulled together to make it all happen.

An education that is out of this world!



Six students from Oaklands Community College recently returned from Florida tired but happy after their adventure in The Kennedy Space Centre for the Student Astronaut Challenge. The six students were Abdullah Butt, Rory Egan, Alan Harte, Katie Lawlor, Leanne Mallen and Thomas McAuliffe.

The students flew out on Tuesday 5th February with their teacher Ms Guinan. The first day they went shopping in the Florida Mall and then travelled to Titusville which is close to The Kennedy Space Centre.



The first of the challenges took place on Thursday morning. Alan and Rory represented the team in the Landing Challenge. First up was Rory. He had to land the shuttle safely on the runway while Alan acted as Mission Control and called out his altitude and speed as he approached the runway. For the second part of the challenge they had to reverse roles, but this time there was the extra challenge of a blind landing. Most of the screen was obstructed to simulate a bird hitting the windshield and losing visuals. Alan had to land the shuttle blind while Rory talked him through the directions and also informed him of his speed and altitude. They showed great teamwork and both students landed safely on the runway.

Next up was the Engineering Challenge. All students participated in this section.

They were divided into two groups, one in Mission Control and the second in Skylab. This was a very practical challenge and good communication was vital. First they had to establish communication to each other and then they had to build a circuit and complete a number of worksheets. This was a difficult challenge but they all worked hard throughout.

On Friday morning they had the Lab Challenge. The question asked them to look at an aspect of weather that could use an improvement and develop an experiment to improve the aspect. The students decided to look at rain and flooding and devised a system that would prevent flooding and reduce insurance costs and flood damage. They made an excellent presentation including a demonstration of the pervious concrete they used in their system.

The last challenge was the Simulator Challenge. For this challenge they were again split into two teams, three in the shuttle and three in mission control. In the shuttle was Commander Abdullah Butt, Pilot Thomas McAuliffe and Flight Engineer Leanne Mallen. They had to launch the shuttle, orbit, de-orbit and return back to Earth and land on the runway. In Mission Control were Rory Egan and Alan Harte and Flight Director Katie Lawlor. Communication between the Shuttle and Mission Control was vital throughout. They found this to be the most fun as it was in a simulator and gave a realistic impression of what it would be like in a real shuttle.

The semi-finals and finals were held on Saturday and the event culminated in the awards ceremony that evening. Unfortunately Oaklands did not place in the top three in any of the events but they were presented with a trophy for Highest Scoring Guest team. The overall winners

were Florida State University Schools.

It was a super experience and they made great memories and met a lot of students and friends from the other competing schools. It was a great learning experience and very practical so students could see STEM subjects in action in real life situations. They drew on Maths, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Geography throughout the competition. On Sunday they had a fantastic day in Universal Studios and got to ride all the rollercoasters and visit Hogwarts and Hogsmeade.

This was a once in a lifetime experience for all the students involved. They had a fantastic time and really enjoyed participating in the challenges. They also had some very famous supporters following the updates on Twitter: Dr Norah Patten followed all their adventures closely and is going to Skype them after the midterm break. Dr Niamh Shaw also followed their adventures and might even visit the school later in the year. It was amazing to have these inspirational ladies wishing them well during the competition.

This trip wouldn't have been possible without the support of our sponsors. Thank you to Bord na Mona as our main sponsor. Thanks also to Siemens Gamesa, Collen Construction, TK Building Services, Polar Ice, Gemfler, Kaideen & Co, O'Grady Crane Hire & Transport Ltd, the Harte Family and Café India. Your support was really appreciated. Thanks also to Peter Carafano and the Board of the Student Astronaut Challenge for the invitation to participate and for covering our entry fees, hotel in Titusville, transport and tickets to Universal Studios. It was an experience of a lifetime.



Portlaoise College Students Shine at BT Young Scientist Exhibition



Portlaoise College students Luke Kelly, Byron Sage McGuirk and Lee Carroll Talbot were thrilled to represent the school in the BT Young scientist competition in the RDS, Dublin. As part of the 550 entries into this prestigious event, the lads were disappointed not to pick up an award but extremely grateful for the experience.

The project title 'Does heading the ball in football affect your memory and reaction speed?' is certainly very topical. The investigation involved formulating reaction speed tests and memory games. Lee explains where the idea came from, "I remember watching an interview with former player Alan Shearer on the impact heading can have

and as me and the lads all play soccer I was interested in finding out more."

After the event the reaction was overwhelmingly positive, Byron commented 'Meeting new people with similar interests was fantastic and seeing the new ideas that other students had in their projects was really interesting. The standard was really high, such a great competitor'. Lee was also taken aback by the experience but was particularly satisfied with the attention his project gathered, 'We had so many visitors to our stand over the four days and this meant a lot to us that people were interested in our work'.

Teacher Ms. Aoife Fox was glowing in her praise of the students, 'They have put so much time and effort into their work and really have an appetite for next year's competition already!'. Over the four days there were thousands of visitors to the RDS, most welcome of all were the Portlaoise College contingent on the Thursday. Minister Charlie Flanagan also paid a visit.

The final word on the BTYSE for 2019 goes to Luke Kelly, 'This whole experience has been so much fun and really inspiring, we can't wait to get back into work for 2020!'

Tullamore College U16 Basketball Team are All Ireland Champions!

Tullamore College were crowned U16 B Girls All Ireland Schools League champions this evening, thanks to a 51-61 point win over St Mary's of Midleton in the final.

A scoring masterclass at either end was the talk of the court, as Lisa Osaghae for Midleton led the charge for the Cork side, Meadhbh O'Brien also put on an exhibition at the other end for Tullamore, while an MVP display from Emma Glavin was ultimately what helped the midlanders over the line.

A close and hard-fought opening quarter, saw Osaghae get Midleton off the mark early with some great scores, while Mia Tarrant found her rhythm to hit the target as well. At the other end, Ellie Galvin, Meadhbh O'Brien, Emma Galvin and Mia O'Mahoney were the pick of the scores to see Tullamore with a slender 10-11 lead going into the second quarter.

Tullamore upped the ante in the second, with both Galvins putting in superb displays, while O'Brien began to rain scores in. Good defense from Midleton soon led to rewards on the offensive end though, with Osaghae,



Shannon Deady and Tarrant all hitting the mark, but they trailed 26-32 going in at the half time break.

Tullamore stretched their lead out in the early part of the third quarter, with O'Brien again to the fore for her side, along with good scores from Jean Carson, but a late surge from Midleton saw them begin to chip away at the lead, with great scoring from Osaghae and Ella Tarrant, but Tullamore held a 36-48 point lead going into the last.

St Mary's kept the pressure up in the fourth, with some big scores helping

them to close the gap back down, but again, it was the Glavins and O'Brien who stood firm under pressure, to see them home to a memorable ten point victory in the end.

Tullamore College Team: Theo Asoro, Lauren Martin, Mia O'Mahoney (4), Ashling Scally, Niamh Dunne, Dora Asoro, Emma Glavin (10), Ellie Galvin (17), Meadhbh O'Brien (19), Jean Carson (6), Sinat Azeez, Hannah Dooley, Dubhan Goulding, Aimee Gleeson, Ellie Gary.

Boundary-pushing with postgraduate study. Is it for you?

At a certain time of the year one of the most discussed items in education circles and social media platforms is the area of further, or post-graduate study. Teachers, for various reasons, enquire about courses that may be on offer and seek advice on current trends. I would also suggest, through asking these questions, they are seeking to determine their own capabilities and place themselves and their perception of their abilities into the unknown of post-graduate study. The complexities of potential answers varies for each individual, depending on their age, experience, current stage in career, relationships and/or marriage, the arrival or potential arrival of children, ageing parents and many other factors. Suffice to say, everyone who considers post-graduate study needs their study path to "fit in" with an already busy professional and personal life.



However, the one downside of many such questions is that they frequently come at the wrong time of the year, when the post-graduate course application deadlines have already closed. When returning to school in September, after the Summer sojourn, many teachers think of post-graduate study, many times too late for that year. I would suggest that now is the time to consider post-graduate study options for September 2019. This gives you time to investigate what is on offer, digest the ramifications and benefits of various post-graduate degrees, prepare for the financial requirements and to place yourself in the positive frame of mind needed to undertake such study.

As with undertaking any choice in life there are a number of options to be considered if thinking about post-graduate study?

Which course of study should I undertake? Well, rather than answering

or suggesting answers, maybe you should ask yourself these questions:

Why am I doing this? There are many reasons for undertaking study but let's simplify it. A post-graduate degree will give you a feeling of accomplishment and personal satisfaction upon completion. Maybe you want more. It may give you a deeper understanding of your chosen area of study; perhaps history, geography or the Irish language. It may give you a broader depth of understanding of education in the wider sense. Perhaps you see yourself as an educational leader in the future? It may give you better promotional prospects and help you up the career ladder just that little bit faster. This may sound simple, but knowing what you want as the outcome can assist in you choosing the course that is best suited to your requirements.

At what level should I undertake study? Again, this depends on your circumstances and commitment. In broad terms, a post-graduate diploma can be achieved within 1 to 2 years, a masters degree within 2 to 3 years, and a doctoral level degree within 3 to 4+ years. Some people may take longer than the stated time – that's fine; circumstances change and your priorities may dictate that you have to take your foot off the pedal for a little while. Colleges and academics are well aware of the pressures of education and where priorities require to be changed on a temporary basis, this can normally be accommodated.

What format should I undertake? Delivery methods for post-graduate studies have changed significantly over the past number of years. There are now three predominant methods of delivery: face to face, online and blended.

Face to face is the traditional lecture, seminar, workshop delivery we are used to from our undergraduate studies. It involves regular attendance at a college or external venue and will keep you "on your toes" throughout the course of the study.

Online delivery is achieved via an internet connection and specific purpose virtual learning environments (VLEs). Anyone with basic IT skills will be well able to undertake the requirements for this method of delivery. A password and username and away you go. Some people may question their ability to undertake what is sometimes perceived as "remote" and "lonely" learning and to keep focused on the workload. From my own experience and that of many

colleagues, there are regular interactions via a variety of platforms and social media streams that keep you "connected" to your colleagues, plus, it is very rare that you will remain purely in the virtual world. Once contact is made, a lot of individuals form support structures in their local geographic regions to assist with their studies. One major benefit of such online delivery is the lack of travel to a formal venue, saving on both time and fuel costs.

Blended learning is a combination of face to face and online learning. Certain modules may require attendance at a venue, while some modules may be delivered partially, or completely online.

What are the challenges of further study? It is my belief that there are three difficult stages when applying for, or completing, post-graduate study: 1) Completing the application form and submitting it to your chosen college or university. This starts a process with which you become engaged and automatically follow. 2) Making the initial and subsequent payment/s to go along with your application. Rest assured, this is just a normal human reaction. You will probably think of everything else you could have spent that money on! 3) The last three weeks of your thesis, that time when you are restructuring sentences for the fourteenth time, you can't find the title of the journal you read online and you now need for your bibliography. But, everyone else has been there, they've all managed to get through it and so will you.

So, as we approach the Easter break, perhaps now is an opportunity to investigate what is on offer and more importantly, what is the closing date for 2019 applications. This is an opportunity to aim higher and assist your career trajectory to climb again. As the quotation from Paul Brandt says "Don't tell me the sky's the limit when there are footprints on the moon".

