37 years at the chip face

Bhí fear ann fadó is fadó a bhí

Since 1973 the Computers in Education Society of Ireland have been supporting the development of methodologies that help to marry new technologies with a sound pedagogy. It is a non-profit, voluntary body that draws its members from primary, post primary and third level teachers. Organised and driven by practitioners for practitioners, at all three levels of the educational system, CESI promotes the practical implementation of ICTs at school and classroom level. Since its inception, education and not technology has been the focus of attention for those involved in CESI, exploring how we can take this remarkable and flexible tool and use it to assist in our teaching and our students learning.

In the early days all activity involved face to face meetings, courses, conferences and fairs in Galway, Limerick, Dublin, Navan and various other locations. In more recent times we have seen increased activity on the web –www.cesi.ie – where discussions run daily on topics as varied as where to get a good price on a laptop or good websites for classroom use to news highlighting the highs and lows of new developments in the world of ICT in education integration. The site has a growing archive of DigiTeach articles by CESI members sharing their experiences with projects and technologies like eTwinning, Camara, the Asia-Europe classroom network, virtual learning, *Nintendo DS* and *Wii* in the classroom, mind mapping, digital convergence, interactive whiteboards and Twitter. Dip into this archive and you are sure to find something that will spark an idea that will work in your 21st century classroom.

The widespread provision of broadband internet access now to be coupled with laptops and projectors in every classroom is opening up a new world of ideas and information allowing our classrooms the opportunity to travel to and interact with the four corners of the world. If you are looking for ideas on how you might use these resources and want help with ideas and projects like eTwinning, blogging, podcasting etc., the CESI mailing list is a good place to start as it will put you in touch with others facing the same challenges as you, others who have experience they will share and solutions they will offer when you come up against walls you can't see around.

It is all too rare that we get the chance to share and experience the excellent and often pioneering, world class work that is taking place in our classrooms. The CESI annual national conference is one of those occasions and this year's conference in Portlaoise College in February with the theme of **"Creative Technology in Challenging Times"** will be no exception. This year we will have keynote talks from international experts on integrating ICT into the MFL classroom, Joe Dale and our own Dr Conor Galvin from UCD School of Education. The programme for the conference is rich and varied and will include talks and workshops on digital literacy, modern languages in primary schools, Google Wave, Smart Pens, social software in rural Irish schools, XtraNormal, primary school blogging, the 21st century classroom, Second Life in education, Crazy Talk and many others in a tightly packed day guaranteed to send you on your way with ideas you will want to start implementing in your classroom at the first opportunity. Visit the cesi.ie website for the full line-up.

Last February we ran with our first ever 'CESI Meet' social evening in Tallaght, Dublin followed by another in the Digital Hub last September. We will be running our third CESI Meet in the Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise on 5 February, the night before the national conference. It will offer teachers an opportunity to hear about a wide variety of ICT related topics in an informal, friendly and relaxed atmosphere. A good night out and a chance to meet and network with other teachers and share experiences of what does and doesn't work integrating ICT into the classroom. You can get a feel for what a CESI Meet is about by watching the video on the cesi.ie website that captures the atmosphere of the autumn CESI Meet.

So if anyone complains to you that Irish classrooms are all chalk and talk, or still based on a 19th century model, point them to www.cesi.ie where they will get a flavour of the 21st century classrooms that have been growing in numbers in Ireland since 1973.

Computers in Education Society of Ireland – www.cesi.ie

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