

## **ASTI Contribution to JOC on continuous assessment and the State examinations**

### **Outline of 3-minute presentation**

ASTI welcomes today's event and the space it affords the teaching profession to communicate its views to legislators.

It is also the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Commission on the points system which, inter alia, made recommendations on diversifying assessment in the state examinations. The final report of the Commission strongly argued for the retention of external assessment for the Leaving Certificate examination but equally strongly recommended that more diverse modes of assessment be introduced to supplement the written examination.

It is important to acknowledge that since the Commission's report, all subsequent curriculum review at both junior and senior cycle has widened the modes of assessment for the State examinations.

For example, in Irish and foreign languages, there oral and aural examinations; project work in history and geography; tasks in home economics; music, art, technology and science subjects have practical/performance tasks. In this sense, we already have a model of continuous assessment in our curriculum.

There are different types of assessment currently in use in our schools. Teachers assess their pupils on a daily basis in that they provide feedback to students in order on their learning. This is supplemented by weekly, monthly and end-of-term tests. The state examinations are also a form of assessment in that they are a statement of achievement at the end of a period of learning.

Because of this status, the ASTI has always insisted that the State examinations are externally assessed in order to meet the criteria of fairness, transparency and objectivity. In other words, teachers should not assess their own students for the purposes of certification in the state examinations.

The international research on high quality education systems cautions against assessment-heavy models. Having a balanced model of assessment is seen as central to sustain student motivation and progress in learning. It is also important of teachers' workload. We do not have to travel too far to see the demoralising impact of assessment-heavy models which continually erodes the time for teaching in classrooms.

A review of senior cycle education is now underway. It is clear that education must continually be open to change to ensure that young people are prepared for their future roles and lives. However, we should be mindful of the strengths in our system. The State examinations have many strengths in terms of promoting educational standards; they are trusted by students and parents in terms of their objectivity and fairness; they are trusted by higher education institutions in terms of providing reliable evidence of students' learning.