*The Centre for School Leadership, an Update*

The 2016/2017 academic year has proved to yet another busy but very successful year for the Centre.

**Aspiring Leaders-Building Leadership Capacity**

The new CSL Aspiring Leaders’ Post Graduate Level 9 course will begin next September. The tendering process was completed in October and the successful tenderer is a consortium led by UL in association with UCD and NUIG. The course will be widely advertised in late April. Places will be limited to approximately 200 in the first year and the course will be run over 18 months. This new course will be subsidised by the DES and will involve a short period of work placement in a school other than the participant’s own, and in a sector outside of the education field. It will have a blended learning approach which will allow participants to work through some of the material from home, thus avoiding too much travel. Tá leagan Gaeilge den chúrsa ar fáil. Please watch the website for updates on the application process.

**Coaching-Unlocking Potential**

The Coaching Service is now available for principals. To access it, go to the website at [www.cslireland.ie](http://www.cslireland.ie) where principals have the opportunity to apply to this confidential and free service directly through the coaching companies involved. There are 400 places available to both primary and post-primary principals, and each participant will be entitled to up to seven sessions with a professional coach, along with a chemistry check. This is a fitting and appropriate approach to the wellbeing of principals from the DES. The service is already in great demand and will serve to provide real support for the onerous position of principal at both levels. To work with an executive coach can prove very costly which makes accessing this service particularly worthwhile. A communication in relation to the coaching was posted to all schools during the month of February. This is a highly confidential support for school leaders. The CSL team have no access to the names of those who use the service but will be supplied with anonymised quantitative data. All principals, at all stages of their career are eligible for CSL coaching.

**Mentoring: Good Principals aren’t born; they’re mentored. (Wallace Foundation)**

By the end of this school year, over 300 primary school principals will be trained as CSL Principal Mentors and currently, 93 of them are engaged in successful mentoring relationships in the greater Leinster area. There will also be 100 post primary colleagues trained while 46 of these are currently mentoring. Feedback from the training has been very positive and the generosity, camaraderie and enthusiasm of the participants has made this initiative a positive and enriching source of professional development.

The current mentor training is taking place in Monaghan, Portlaoise, Kilkenny and Ennis. The Mentor Training Programme focuses on the qualities and skills of an effective mentor, the various phases of the mentoring relationship and the protocols, procedures and record keeping which ensure the formality of the CSL mentoring relationship whilst safe guarding the interest of both the mentor and mentee.

The principals who trained as mentors last year have attended two Shared Learning events, one residential in Athlone on December 1st and 2nd, and a second day on March 1st also in Athlone. They are currently looking forward to the final Shared Learning Day on May 18th. The 300 principals who are currently training as CSL mentors will have their first Shared Learning Day on May 19th, also, in the Radisson, Athlone. Feedback from the Shared Learning Days has been very positive with in-put from Dr. Joe O’ Connell, Declan Coyle and Angela Lynch (IPPN). On each day, the mentors meet with their CSL Cairde to discuss the mentoring relationships in confidence without revealing the identity of the mentees or their schools. The mentors value the support of the 18 CSL Cairde who meet regularly with the team to update them and provide feedback.

The team was delighted to have the opportunity to survey online and meet face-to-face with the mentees over the past few weeks. Listening to their experiences of this new form of mentoring and offering them the opportunity to reflect on the relationship has been highly beneficial to everyone. The learning has been significant, and many suggestions have been made to make the mentoring experience align even closer to the needs of the newly appointed principal.

The CSL team is very grateful to have received such detailed feedback from both the mentors and the mentees, and is particularly grateful to the PDST Leadership team for their support in the collection of data and in opportunities to meet with mentees as they participate in Misneach.

Current mentees will be able to access group mentoring with IPPN/NAPD from next September. CSL, in consultation with the two professional organisations, has researched and is currently developing a group mentoring programme which will require current CSL mentors to be trained as group mentors/facilitators. These groups will be organised geographically in Leinster by IPPN, and will align to the IPPN county network structure which runs so successfully.

An analysis of the geographical location of CSL trained mentors will be a deciding factor in the planning of further mentor training next year but it is envisaged that a limited number of principals will complete the training. Specific areas where it is deemed a shortage of mentors exist will be particularly targeted.

**Ensuring Quality**

The team is currently engaged in developing a formal Quality Assurance process for leadership professional development, and also in developing its advisory role on educational policy.

The Annual Report 2015/2016 was published in early February and distributed to all stakeholders.

The team would like to acknowledge the continuous support and guidance of the CSL Partnership, the DES, IPPN and NAPD, and the administrative support from Clare Education Centre.

Anna Mai Rooney

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Centre for School Leadership