

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LEAVING CERTIFICATE APPLIED COORDINATORS

NEWS BULLETIN

April 2008

Issue No 3

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New Awards for LCA Students

The National Association of LCA Coordinators will be presenting special awards to LCA students who achieve 195+ credits in the LCA in 2008. These awards will be presented at a special event in the Autumn. The purpose of the awards is to publicly recognise the outstanding achievement of LCA students. The winners will be notified and details of the event will be circulated to all schools next September.

AGM 2007 a huge success

This year we had one of our most successful agms to date. There was a large attendance which fully endorsed the work of the Association. This year a new format was introduced. The agm was combined with workshops, the focus of which had been suggested by a survey of our members. The workshops covered Whole School Evaluation and the LCA Coordinator and Iflow, a text messaging system for parents. The workshops were very practical and the discussions which followed provided the coordinators present an opportunity to share experiences. A coordinator present had recently experienced an inspection of the LCA programme and provided an invaluable insight into the process.

Liam Deaton, chairman, detailed the progress made by the Association in the past year and outlined the funding received from the TPN. A financial report was issued to the delegates and the funding from TPN was explained. J. Linehan distributed the draft constitution, which was unanimously endorsed by the meeting. The new council for 2007/2008 was elected.

LCA students win top awards in Dublin and in Sligo



Laura Jane Feeney, Kevin Lowney, from Ballinodine Collge, Co. Sligo who gold and bronze medals in the Schools Cookery Competition.



LCA students from Jobstown Community College, winners of the LCA section of the South Dublin County Council Social Inclusion Competition for Second Level Schools, with the Minister for Integration, Brian Lenihan and Councillor Marie Corr

News from your Assoc

Membership 2008

*John Linehan,
Doneraile Secondary School,
Membership Secretary.*

Membership of NALCAC has continued to grow and now stands at one hundred and twenty three members. Not all these members have renewed their membership this year and I would ask those to contact renew their membership as soon as possible. Membership forms are available on our website www.lca-association.com. Members who do not renew their membership will unfortunately have to be dropped from our list at the end of the year. We are delighted that we have members from most counties in the country. The cost of membership still stands at 20 euro per coordinator or 30 euro per school if there are two or more coordinators in a school.

I would like to thank all our members for joining NALCAC and for their continued support. Obviously the more members we have the stronger the Association will be. I would also like to take this opportunity to invite members to become involved at Council Level of the Association. The Council runs NALCAC on a day to day basis and the names of the members of the existing council appear elsewhere in this newsletter. Council meetings usually take place in Dublin, however a lot of business is conducted by means of teleconferencing which results in no travel from your own home. Membership of the Council doesn't mean that you have to attend every single meeting so don't feel tied. Travelling expenses are paid to those who attend.

So if you are interested please give it a try even on a trial basis. You can do this by contacting me or any council member.

My numbers are 02242290 (Home)
02224500 (work)
email: jlinehan@yahoo.com.

On behalf of the members, I would like to extend best wishes for the rest of the school year.

*John Linehan,
Membership Secretary*



*Liam Deaton, Chairman, Mary Farrell, Secretary,
John Linehan, Membership Secretary*

Meetings:

Council Meetings – The council met on five occasions so far this year and we will end with a two day review of the year in June 2008. There were a number of phone conferences between the meetings.

Once again representatives of the council met with staff of the State Examinations Commission in December 2007. The key issues discussed were attendance, the timing of the orals, the supervision of Irish and the problems created by Irish exemptions, the level of maths in the LCA and the associated problems. The issue of interpreters for international students was also discussed. The Commission staff explained the problems experienced by examiners in schools were work experience and task interviews clashed. It was agreed that this is not an acceptable practice in any school. In addition whilst great progress has been made between the SEC and schools in relation to entries on line, extra work is being created by those schools who do not adhere to the closing date. The Association urges all schools to endeavour in so far as is possible to adhere strictly to the deadlines!

Members of the SLLS and the National Coordinator attended a joint meeting during the two day review held in June

2007. Issues of concern for members included the profile of the LCA, the need for an updated destinations survey and the progression routes to Third level for LCA students. The meeting was informed that the NCCA was employing a researcher to do the survey and that an interim report on the longitudinal survey of second level students would be available shortly. This would give an indication of the progression of LCA students.

Regional Meetings were held in November 2007 and March 2008 in four different venues. The focus of the meetings was task assessment. Experienced examiners facilitated the session. The response from those at the sessions was very positive as indicated by the following sample comments. 'The advice was very practical in relation to maximising marks for the Contemporary Issues Task', 'Presentations were practical, relevant, hands on and excellent!'

Survey of Members

A survey of members has taken place. The purpose of the survey is to assist the council in meeting the needs of our members. The survey revealed that members were interested in further support on the assessment of tasks and WSE. In addition the key issues of concern to coordinators that emerged included: Status of LCA with employers, the promotion of the LCA in workplaces and with the public, the effectiveness of work placements for students with special educational needs, further education and employment opportunities for LCA students, and the need for ongoing support for post LCA students. The Association continues to aim to meet the needs of LCA coordinators and highlight issues in relation to the LCA programme.

Annual Review

The annual reviewed debated the extension of members to all LCA teachers. It was also decided to survey members for feedback on activities. A follow up Conference was discussed as was an awards ceremony for LCA students. It was also decided to seek a meeting with the Minister for Education, Mary Hanafin.

ociation.....

Teacher Professional Networks (TPN)

In 2005 the Department of education and Science developed a scheme to provide supplementary funding to support the work of teacher professional networks. Teacher professional networks are teacher organisations which afford peer support to members. They comprise Subject Associations e.g. the Geography Association and other networks which support teachers of curricular programmes spanning a number of subjects e.g. The National Association of Leaving Certificate Applied Coordinators (NALCAC). The TPN scheme is administered by Blackrock Education Centre on behalf of the Department of Education.

The Steering Committee comprises of:

- Lynda O'Toole (Senior Inspector)
- Seamus Cannon (Director Blackrock Education Centre).
- Michael Garvey (Director of SLSS).
- James Mulcahy (ATECI).
- Denis Bates and Katherine Fitzgerald (SARG).
- Adela Fernandez (BEC Administrator).

TPN grants are provided to members of TPN under two headings:

- Administration/Development Costs for the National Executive.
- Planned Activities for the year by the National Executive.

In 2006 we applied for membership of TPN and nominated Dublin West Education Centre as our base. This Education Centre manages both the lodgement and drawdown of funds on behalf of our Association. We subsequently applied for a €10,000 grant for administration purposes and €20,000 for activities. Subsequently we used this money as follows:

Administration:

1. Payment of travel and subsistence allowances to members of the Executive.
2. Production of a Newsletter.
3. Creation and maintenance of our Website.
4. Acquisition of relevant resources.
5. Development of the National Executive e.g. two day review and planning meeting at the end of each year.

Activities:

1. Organisation of four Regional Meetings (Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Mayo).
2. Organising and running our first National Conference (November 2006).

In subsequent years we have applied for and received generous grants to continue the development of our Association. One of our developments, which have impressed TPN is our regular holding of Teleconferences. Normally most of our Executive Meetings are held in Dublin West Education Centre, Tallaght on Saturday mornings. The Teleconferences reduce the number of meetings and hence the inconvenience of executive members having to give up their Saturdays and travel long distances (from Cork, Mayo, Sligo etc.). We hold the Teleconferences at times convenient to the Council.

This year we have held five Regional Meetings and we at present planning our second National Conference. Our next Teleconference will decide on Date, Venue and Theme.

On your behalf I would like to express our sincere thanks to the TPN Steering Committee for their interest and support in our Association. In particular, I would like to express our gratitude to Adela Fernandez, Seamus Cannon, Michael Garvey and Lynda OToole.

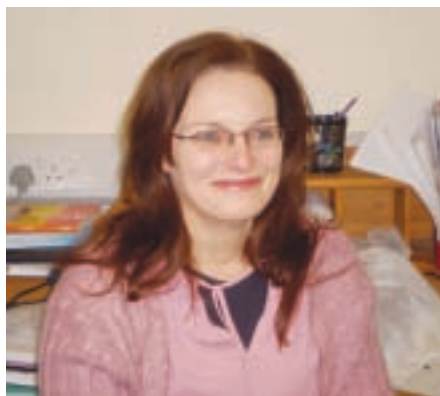
Liam Deaton
Chairman

This Space Available

Coordinators Corner

Spotlight on

Congratulations to Deborah Dunne, the LCA Coordinator and VPG teacher in Greenhills College who has won a prestigious Enterprise award from NFTE (National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship). Deborah has won the NFTE International Centre of Enterprise Teacher of the Year Award for 2008. The award was presented at a Gala Ball in New York. Deborah comments: It was great to win and the prize was amazing. They paid for me to go to New York and I got a 1000 euro spending money'. Deborah had the opportunity to network with Enterprise teachers from India, China, Belgium, England, Germany and the United States.



Deborah Dunne

Deborah explained that the Leaving Certificate Applied programme affords teachers the opportunity to avail of the numerous programmes organised nationally that LCA students can become involved in. These programmes such as NFTE and the Students Enterprise Awards further motivates the students in the completion of their task and pushes them further to achieve more thus increasing their self confidence and self esteem.

NFTE Students Enterprise Awards tie in very well with the LCA Enterprise Module. With NFTE the student gains more (the teacher has to give a lot more too!). Deborah has worked with NFTE on the LCA plan and have made changes to it so that sections can be used to (A) complete a Task Report (B) A business plan is completed to met the key assignments of the Enterprise module. (More needs to be done this year to streamline the plans)

A Reflection on an LCA programme Inspection

5.30pm - Monday evening - early November - the phone rings, it is the Principal and you hear those dreaded words 'Deirdre the Inspector called, she would like to come to do a programme inspection'. What??? An anxious feeling lodges in the pit of my stomach. Thoughts race: Oh my God, 5 teachers on maternity leave, why couldn't this have happened last year and last years group were so good, this couldn't have come at a worse time. Will the inspector understand these students? Who do I know who has had an inspection? I know, I'll check the web, read other reports and figure out what this is all about. 'Don't worry, you'll be fine' says the Principal reassuringly; we'll talk about it tomorrow.

Having trawled through the DES website, I identified one school who had undergone an inspection in the previous year. As I read the report I began to relax a little, there was nothing in it I wasn't familiar with. I made contact with the coordinator the following day and was reassured even further. Although her school was preparing for a WSE the following week she was very generous with her time and took me through the process.

What happens during a programme inspection? After the initial phone call from the Inspector to agree the date for the inspection, there is a Programme Questionnaire to be completed. This questionnaire is very comprehensive and really covers all aspects of LCA. The questions relate to the following areas: coordination profile, planning of the programme in the school, curriculum and programme content, students with special education needs within the LCA programme, students with English as an additional language, assessment, attendance and home-school liaison, resources, continuous professional development, review and evaluation, and factors influencing implementation.

Having completed the questionnaire the next task was to gather the list of indicative documents, which had been requested. 'General school documents' such as the school literacy/numeracy policy and the school policy on special educational needs, 'programme specific

school documents' such as the written plan pertaining to the programme, the LCA enrolment form, the school brochure/prospectus, information material given to parents and students regarding the programme, the programme admissions policy, list of LCA core planning team and records of meetings, communications with home/parents of LCA students and communications with LCA support service and 'programme in operation documents' examples of key assignments and tasks completed by LCA students to date, LCA assessment records, template of reports sent home, school attendance strategy pertaining to LCA, LCA student school attendance records and records relating to work experience. I have to say that it is the first time I was grateful for the hoard of boxes in the LCA office. The list seemed daunting at first but it was all there in those boxes it just needed to be ordered.

The inspector spent two days in the school. She met with the Principal and Deputy Principal. She spent time in the LCA office going through the documentation. She observed seven lessons and met with each teacher individually at the end of their lesson to give them feedback on the lesson. She met with 8 students for an informal chat about the programme. At the end of the two days the inspector met with the Principal and myself and gave us a verbal report of the inspection.

Despite my initial fears, I found the programme inspection to be a very positive process. The inspector made a very quick and accurate assessment of the needs and abilities of the students; she had a thorough understanding of the programme and the particular challenges posed by the students. Teachers found her observations of lessons to be very affirming and positive. The students enjoyed being the center of attention and rose to the challenge of the scrutiny while retaining their own unique spirit. All in all, my experience of LCA inspection was positive, it is a constructive process, which affirms the work of the LCA student and the LCA Teaching team. MY advice to coordinators preparing for programme evaluation would be keep copies of everything and don't throw anything out!

Ramblings of an LCA Coordinator!

You're having a word with the principal, exchanging civilities, nothing heavy You notice the demeanour changing and you see out of the corner of your eye a clutch of students approach in a disorderly fashion, uniforms far from parade ground standards. Somewhere in there is an LCA1 student. Now what does the boss say? ...“She’s one of yours, isn’t she?” Nobody has to answer for the others, but the LCA’s are yours, as are all their works and all their pomps, 24 hours a day (yes, even at night), 7 days a week (yes, including weekends....especially at weekends!) 52 weeks a year (yes, even during the holidays) for two years. It’s like having a family of a dozen 16 year olds and a dozen 17 year olds....and you a single parent.



You learn to live in a parallel universe and to think in a different way so that, for instance, a student arriving at 10 o'clock

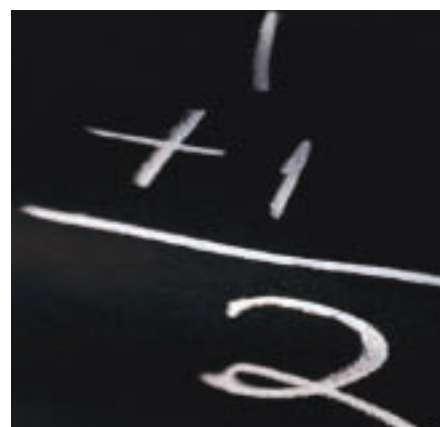
is not an hour late, but rather 4 hours early. You and your teaching team and your 24 children live in a state within a state, a kind of Vatican, often with your own currency and language. The rest of the staff treat you with certain ...respect? Wonder? Awe? Wellll, a certain something!

You dream of Key Assignments, Tasks and Work Experience. You have nightmares about P2’s and blue screens which refuse to turn green seconds before the S.E.C. is about to bring the guillotine down on your mouse’s attempt to enter creditseven though you have been entering XZTruyb6574AND co-orYrHHb7654 for the last two hours.

You know what’s it’s like to have ten students trying to put the finishing touches to their two tasks both of which are being examined TODAY, Jan.30 t 9.00 a.m. It’s now 9.05 and TWO students haven’t turned up yet. The Examiner has45 minutes ago and is now pleadingno!...insisting that she simply does NOT WANT MORE COFFEE!

You know, also, what it’s like to be trusted with dreams which may or may not come true; to be asked to the opening of a new crèche by the one who shared that dream; to be asked what you think of a Deb’s dress: to be greeted with a smile by a past pupil in the local hairdressers, to get a photo in the post of a familiar face in the uniform of a

young Garda in the passing out parade at Templemore. You have seen your family try to make the world a better place by fund-raising(Maybe you were the coordinator who asked one of your students doing a staff-car wash for charity where the principal’s car was – only to be told that T.J. and Jackie had taken it for a spin to dry it off, but “not-to-worry, miss, as T.J. does dough-nuts better than anyone!”), by visiting nursing homes, organising parties for special needs children.



Now and then you get a feeling that maybe you are making a difference, that maybe,.....you are an educator. Now since they are yours maybe you should go and collect all that Children’s Allowance and don’t forget the years of back-money!

Benji Hallihan

Jobstown LCA students win top award!

Congratulations to the two group of LCA students from Jobstown Community College who won the first and second award in the Social Inclusion Competition organised by South Dublin County Council. This was an excellent competition which invited students to develop their Contemporary Issues Task around the theme of social inclusion. The awards were presented by the Minister for Integration, Conor Lenihan, T.D. in the council chambers of South Dublin County Council. This was an excellent educational opportunity for LCA students combining a visit to the council chambers and meeting a government Minister and the Leas Cathaoirleach of South Dublin County Council. Well done to Maria Finn, social inclusion coordinator in South Dublin County Council who organised this very worthwhile competition.



Picture Names

LCA Students Report on ...

Congratulations to the LCA students from Ballinode College Sligo

On Wednesday 16th January, the LCA class went to the Radisson SAS Hotel to take part in a schools cookery competition, organised by the Panel of Chefs of Ireland, to take place during the North West Food Fair. Two of our students were selected to participate in the competition, which involved making three sandwiches each, using sweet or savoury fillings and the finished sandwich could be hot or cold. The three sandwiches had to be completed in the thirty five minutes allowed.

After registration, our students were given a chefs uniform and faced their daunting task, as each competitor was being videoed and their work shown on a big screen in front of a large group of chefs and exhibitors in the ballroom of the Radisson. Laura Jane Feeney prepared an open tuna surprise sandwich which was flavoured with Ballymaloe country relish, a chicken and Spanish bacon club

sandwich and a hot ciabatta with mozzarella, sun dried tomatoes and fresh basil.

Kevin Lowry presented quesadillas which were served hot with a melted cheese and ham filling, an open prawn and apple sandwich on brown bread and a pitta bread filled with sweet chilli chicken. Judging took place after all the contestants had completed their dishes and we were delighted with the results. A gold medal, the highest accolade possible, was awarded to Laura Jane , while Kevin received a bronze medal. This was a fantastic result and the presentation



Ms. Mc Garvey with Laura Jane Feeney and Kevin Lowney, who gold and bronze medals in the Schools Cookery Competition.

was then made by Mr. Ian Flanagan, Chairman and Mr. Alan Fitzmaurice. We were a happy and proud group of students returning to school that afternoon. A big thank you to our Home Economics teacher Ms. Mc Garvey for all her help and encouragement, and also to Ms. Colliery.

LCA Trip to London 14th January 2008

Our class wanted to go on a day trip and after a lot of discussion we decided on London. Our Class Teacher and Year Head told us that if we did the research and organised the whole day we could go. We did a lot of research. We got a one day return ticket to London for 26 euro each and Melissa Kinsella collected the money. Then we booked on-line. We looked up London on the internet and found out about our tour bus and places we could visit.

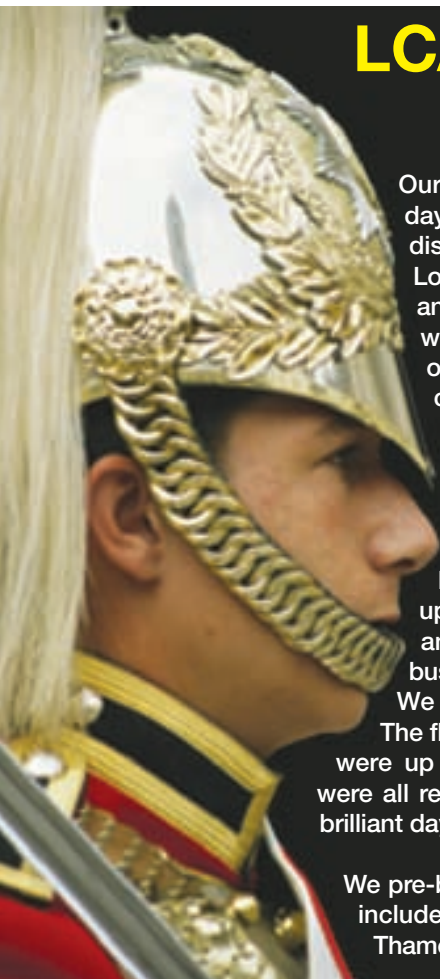
We made a plan for the day. The flight was at 6.30 a.m. so we were up really early ---4 a.m.! We were all really excited and we had a brilliant day.

We pre-booked the tour bus (which included a boat trip on the river Thames). We started at the Tower

of London and then we went on the river. We saw Westminster, Big Ben and the Globe Theatre, where Shakespeare put on his plays. We planned to go on the London Eye (the big wheel), but it was closed for maintenance! We did go to Buckingham Palace and saw the changing of the guard. One of the guards asked us where we were from and we took pictures with him. We had time to go shopping and that was great. We went to where the celebrities shop, very posh!

Some of us hadn't been to London before, or been on the tube. It was a great experience and we would recommend it to other LCA students. You come home tired but happy.

**Natalie Peavoy,
Colaiste Eoin**



Community Links.....

County Dublin VEC LCA Co-ordinators network

When I started working as County Co-ordinator in County Dublin VEC in 2006, I found that 'networks of excellence' had been set up. These had the aim of developing collaboration and integration within the VEC's many and varied programmes and services. At that stage the networks included principals, VTOS programme co-ordinators, Adult Literacy Organisers, Adult Education Officers and Special Needs Co-ordinators. Networks usually meet in the VEC

Head Office in Tuansgate in Tallaght. Each network meets three times a year, on a specific day of the week, usually from about 1.30 to 3.30 pm. Principals of schools receive a network calendar in advance so that timetabling can facilitate the relevant teachers' attendance at network meetings. Networks are usually co-ordinated by a County Co-ordinator or Education Officer.

My main responsibilities as County Co-ordinator were in Adult and Further Education development. However, in a previous existence I had worked in the LCA support service for many years, so I was aware of the demands of the LCA Co-ordinator's role. I also knew that, because usually staff colleagues in schools are inevitably unaware of the complexities of the LCA co-ordinator's work, some co-ordinators can feel isolated. With twelve County Dublin VEC schools running the LCA programme, there seemed both need and potential for an LCA Co-ordinators' network. My suggestion for setting this up was welcomed by the VEC management and by principals and co-ordinators with whom I consulted.

The LCA network had its inaugural meeting in October 2006. We got off to a great start with 11 of the 12 co-ordinators attending. Although working in the same VEC many of the co-ordinators had never met before, so we enjoyed introductions and sharing/comparing experiences. We agreed that the purpose of the network would mainly be sharing and support and that we would not need external inputs. I would email co-ordinators to remind them of the meetings and to circulate minutes or other documents and would write to principals to request facilitation of attendance. At each meeting we would decide on the agenda for the next one.

We had no trouble generating a list of topics we would like to discuss and decided that, as one of the co-ordinators was about to experience whole school evaluation, WSE and its relevance to LCA would be the topic for the second meeting.



Since then, topics for meetings have included difficult student behaviour and suggestions for a review of LCA programme. However, sometimes we have abandoned the agenda to have a more immediately relevant discussion. For example, at our first meeting this year, in October 2007, the attendance was unusually low at five, with a mixture of three very experienced co-ordinators and two newly-appointed. We decided that a general discussion of issues and sharing of ideas, suggestions and advice would be the most beneficial use of the meeting. It turned into a wonderful discussion of LCA and the practical issues facing co-ordinators – motivating for everyone and extremely helpful for the new co-ordinators.

The ideas generated at meetings are always summarised and circulated to all group members so everyone can get some benefit. The LCA Support Service in the shape of Sheila O'Driscoll has been extremely helpful in the background, supplying advice and information when needed. Sometimes, when the minutes have details that need to be very clear, I send the notes to Sheila for proof reading before circulating them to ensure accuracy – as recently when some group members reported on the SLSS inservice for co-ordinators which they had attended the previous week, and my report summarised the resultant advice on preparing for Programme Evaluation

We are now nearing the end of the second year of the network's existence. Attendance at meetings has stood up well, which is a good indicator that the network is meeting needs. In an evaluation of the network at the end of the first year co-ordinators indicated that they thought the network was a great idea and 'badly needed'. The benefits they listed included sharing of ideas, hearing about different approaches, help for co-ordinators who are stressed, sharing problems and getting support. I should also mention that it's not all complaining - we have some good laughs as well.

The network is a very simple idea with great benefits for those involved. Not only is it supportive and encouraging for the LCA co-ordinators, but also for me personally it has proved a very enjoyable and satisfying part of my job and a great way of keeping in touch with Leaving Certificate Applied.

Marie Rooney

New Student Task Workbook...

The ONLY comprehensive resource available for the Student Task

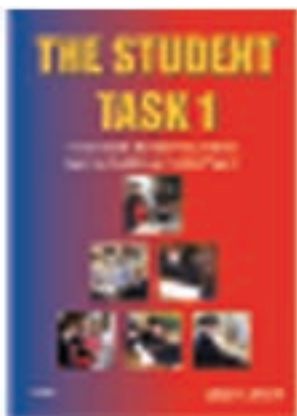
Golden Key now offers a pair of workbooks specially written to help LCA students get the most out of their tasks. Each book covers the relevant tasks for that year and includes lots of activities for students to dip in and out of.

Author Jane Landy says "Writing these books and setting up a publishing business was just like a very long student task. I used lots of the activities in the workbooks myself at one stage or another. They really do work."

Jane visited several schools while carrying out her research. "I have seen LCA students using these activities outperform senior managers, in terms of their creativity and ability to think," says Jane. "It was very exciting."

Teachers who have used the workbooks have cited the following benefits:

"The word banks are a great way of developing students' vocabulary"



Jane is grateful to the following people and organisations for their help along the way: National Association of LCA Coordinators, SLSS, LCA teachers and students from Jobstown Community College, Greenhills College, St James CBS and Balbriggan Community College. Worked examples in the workbooks are based on tasks carried out by LCA students from Balbriggan and Jobstown, Co Dublin.

"I like the links to key assignments. They help students to "kill two birds with the one stone"

"The workbooks provide a backup to use whenever a teacher is out and a detailed introduction for teachers new to LCA"

"Our students were excited when the work books arrived. The books seemed to lend a certain credibility and seriousness to the whole business of doing student tasks."

The content of the books is linked broadly to the Department of Education's marking schemes and incorporates recommendations from recent Examiners' Reports. The workbooks make it easier for teachers to deliver the outputs and outcomes specified by the NCCA.

For more information contact Golden Key on 01 849 0598 or email info@goldenkey.ie Website: www.goldenkey.ie

Conference 2008

The Association is planning to organise a second National LCA Conference in the Autumn of 2008. Details of the conference will be circulated to all schools in September 2008. Book your place early to avoid disappointment.

Thank You.....

Thank you to all the coordinators who joined our Association this year. A special thanks to those coordinators who joined the National Executive and who give freely of their time to further the work of the Association. We are also extremely grateful to the staff of Dublin West Education Centre who carry out the administration work of the Association. Finally we would like to thank the TPN who generously fund the work of the Association during the past year.

For Your Information

To contact the Association:

Tel: 0862358638 or email: info@lca-association.com

Web: www.lca-association.com

This Space Available