

Press Release: Embargo 11am, Tuesday 27 September 2011

Every second-level school in Ireland is to be afforded the opportunity to teach their students about language rights in a new multi-media educational initiative developed by the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga and launched in Galway today 27 September 2011 by Gaeltacht Minister of State, Dinny McGinley TD.

The initiative is aimed at giving students an insight into language rights generally and Irish language rights in particular, in the overall context of human rights. It involves a series of bilingual lessons and projects to be taught in the Junior Certificate course in Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and includes a teacher's manual, posters, task cards, a CD Rom and a DVD of video clips as well as online resources. Copies are currently being distributed to every second level school in Ireland.

The module deals with the advantages and challenges of multilingualism and explores the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It includes the screening of the award winning short film *Yu Ming Is Ainm Dom (My Name Is Yu Ming)*, the story of a young Chinese man who learns Irish in anticipation of his visit to Ireland but experiences communications difficulties initially until he finds himself a job as a barman in the Gaeltacht.

Images of Irish national identity compiled by Nuacht TG4/RTÉ with a soundtrack from The Coronas form part of a lesson on culture and nationality; a set of tasks cards is used in a lesson that asks students to explain elements of Irish society to a visiting Martian and a further lesson involves developing bilingual stationery and signage.

The initiative was tested as a 'pilot project' in a selection of 15 schools throughout Ireland last year and the resultant feedback used to perfect the material. It can be taught through Irish, through English or bilingually as suits individual schools, teachers or classes.

"More than anything else this project should ensure that students are given a context for their learning of Irish in schools and that they understand and respect the concept of language rights" according to An Coimisinéir Teanga, Seán Ó Cuirreáin.

He described it as “potentially the most important initiative undertaken by this Office since its establishment if it sees significant numbers of students each year being taught the importance of language rights.”

He reminded students from Coláiste na Coiribe in Galway who were present at the launch that as custodians of the Irish language we in Ireland are guardians of an important and endangered aspect of world heritage.

Launching the project Gaeltacht Minister of State, Dinny McGinley TD, said that he hoped it would help students develop their sense of identity as citizens of a country which has two official languages as well as increasing their awareness of the importance of protecting and promoting our national language.

The educational resource on language rights is being distributed with the support of COGG, the Department of Education and Skills’ advisory council on Gaeltacht and gaelscoil education. Chief Executive of COGG, Muireann Ní Mhóráin, said she hoped teachers would make full use of the material which afforded them every opportunity to put awareness of language rights on the educational agenda in a way which would be of enormous benefit to pupils.

The material was developed by a panel of CSPE teachers with assistance from a wide range of organisations including the Department of Education’s Professional Development Service for teachers, NUIG’s Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge, COGG, Nuacht TG4/RTÉ, and others.

(ENDS)

The material is available in electronic format at www.coimisineir.ie/schools

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