

A quick note:

*Happy new year to all of our readers!*

*I hope you all had a very merry and restful Christmas.*

*We have a number of interesting articles for you this year; including why chewing gum in class may not be so bad after all (unless it ends up stuck under the desk!)*

*As always we are interested to hear your comments and feedback.*

*Please e-mail us your input to [news@eirim.ie](mailto:news@eirim.ie)*

Rebecca James  
Director

## Students DARE to go to College by RJ

The CAO application process is well underway. This is a quick guide to the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) which is available to students with specific learning disabilities as well as those with physical disabilities.

Research shows that disability can have a negative impact on educational attainment at school and progression to higher level. As a result of this a number of third level colleges established The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE).

Students applying through DARE may secure a college place on a reduced points basis. Each participating college has allocated a quota of places on a reduced points basis and this quota varies from one institution to another.

All DARE applicants must provide evidence confirming that their disability has had a significant impact on their educational performance. In the case of a student with a specific learning disability (e.g. dyslexia) a psycho-educational report, no more than 3 years old, must be submitted with the CAO application no later than 1st April 2010. DARE applicants must meet the minimum entry (matriculation) and subject requirements of the institutions to which they apply. Applicants will then compete for a quota of places based on their Leaving Certificate results.

More information on the disability access route to college can be found on [www.accesscollege.ie](http://www.accesscollege.ie)

### Journal Reviews:

*In this series we will review some recent research articles of interest to teachers*

## Chew your way to better grades by TJ

Do students ever chew gum in your class? And if they do, do you insist they stop? Well maybe you shouldn't. Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine in Texas studied 108 students from 13 to 16 years old. One group was assigned to chew gum during maths class, while doing maths tests and even while studying maths. Another group was told to refrain from gum chewing. After 14 weeks the students' test scores were assessed. They found that

students who chewed gum had higher scores on a standardized math test after 14 weeks and better grades at the end of the term than students in the class who did not chew gum.

The reasons for the increase aren't known but there is good evidence from other studies that chewing gum improves attention and memory. Lots of possible reasons have been suggested - sugar boost (but it works with

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*Chewing gum in class improves your grades*

sugar free gum); particular tastes or smells (but they don't seem to make a difference); stress reduction (it doesn't seem to work for Alex Ferguson) or most likely, chewing helps keep you awake. There is some evidence

from brain imaging studies that chewing gum helps sustain arousal in parts of the brain. So maybe you should think twice before getting them to spit it out. It might be what's keeping them awake in your class!

## Improving Students Brain Power

by TJ

Scientists used to think that the brain didn't change much after the first few years of life but now we see that it is changing all the time with new experiences. Good teaching actually changes the structure of the students' brains.

minute sessions (100 hours total), with three students per teacher. The focus of these programmes was **phonic training**, aimed at improving the students' ability to decode unfamiliar words.

Writing in the December 2009 issue of the journal Neuron, brain researchers Marcel Just and Timothy Keller from Carnegie Mellon University reported that after just six months of intensive remedial reading instruction, children who had been poor readers had not only improved their reading skills, but had grown new white-matter connections in their brains.

As well as investigating the reading progress made, the researchers also looked at the quality of the white matter connections in the brain. At the completion of the intensive training, the poor readers showed significant increases in the quality of connections, but those who did not receive the training did not show this increase, suggesting that the changes seen in the remedial training group were not due to natural maturation of the brain.

*“Teaching Phonics can increase white matter connections in the brains.”*

For the study, Just and Keller, randomly assigned 35 poor readers ages 8-12, to an intensive, remedial reading program, and 12 to a control group that received normal classroom instruction. For comparison, the researchers also included 25 children of similar age who were rated as average or above-average readers by their teachers. The average readers also received only normal classroom instruction.

Along with the brain changes, the students receiving the training made gains in their reading. Even though the 35 didn't achieve the same skill level as a group of 25 excellent readers, their white-matter connections in one particular pathway of their brains became just as strong as those in the top reading group. Meanwhile, 12 poor readers who attended regular classes showed no change in the connecting tissue.

The remedial reading programme was given over a six month schooling period, for five days a week in 50-



## Useful Websites:



- [www.hadd.ie](http://www.hadd.ie)

Irish ADHD charity website containing information on ADHD

- <http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/phonics/>

This is an English government website containing information on criteria used when choosing a phonics programme. It also contains information on many different phonics programmes

- [www.senteacher.org](http://www.senteacher.org)

Good website providing lots of free resources which can be downloaded.

*If you have found any websites particular useful please e-mail them to us and we would be delighted to share it with others in the next newsletter.*

\*\*All of these websites and more can be found on our website [www.eirim.ie](http://www.eirim.ie) under the useful links section



***Did you know:***  
*Research shows that doodling increases concentration and attention*

## Notes for your Diary

### □ Top Doodler:

Google have launched a competition for Primary, Secondary & Youthreach schools.

Doodle4Google is inviting students to create a doodle logo based around their own Google logo. They even have lesson plans based around the competition for teachers. Visit [www.google.ie/doodle4google](http://www.google.ie/doodle4google)

### □ Training in Educational assessment

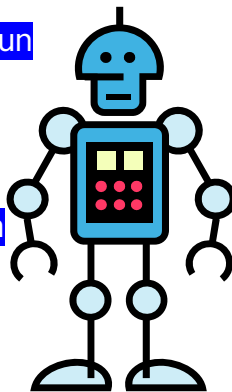
4 day course in Dublin leading to a certificate in educational assessment. Awarded by the British Psychological Society (BPS). February 16<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup>. Contact [training@eirim.ie](mailto:training@eirim.ie)

## Cool Science

Looking for something new and fun to do with your science class?

A great Irish website focusing on science and robotic teaching. In their own words they "provide innovation and invention through making" (robots).

Visit [www.spiderfish.ie](http://www.spiderfish.ie)



## Congratulations

Recent graduates of the Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing

◆ Siobhan Colclough  
(Third level support officer, Co. Cork)

◆ Aisling Macken  
(Primary school teacher, Co. Mayo)



## Feature:

### A Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing



*“Test misuse has led to inappropriate decision making affecting future lives of individuals”*

Since the introduction of the Education Act (1998) and the Special Education Needs Act (2004) regular screening and testing of students has now become an integral part of modern school and college life. But there is evidence that bad testing practice and test misuse has led to inappropriate decision making affecting the future lives of individuals/students. The Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing (Level A) is a qualification awarded by the British Psychological Society (BPS) which ensures high standards are maintained in test use. A training course leading to this qualification is being offered for the first time in Ireland by Éirim: The National Assessment Agency Ltd.

Ability, attainment, aptitude, behavioural and dyslexia tests etc., are all conducted by teachers, guidance counsellors and support officers at school and third level. Some of their uses include: identifying strengths and weaknesses; monitoring progress; identifying students/individuals that may be at risk of a learning disability and/or those that may need extra resources to aid their progress.

While professionals such as educational psychologists and speech and language therapists receive extensive training in testing, this is not necessarily the case for other professionals. Although many other professionals, including teachers, guidance counsellors etc. have practical experience of

administering such tests, not all will have confidence in their ability to select, administer, score, interpret, and justify their findings.

In fact, there is much anecdotal evidence of test misuse by those with little or no training. Because of their value and the effects that such tests can have on the future lives of individuals it is imperative that high testing standards are sought and that testers can provide evidence of their competence.

Now, Éirim: The National Assessment Agency Ltd. has teamed up with Real Training (UK) to provide training leading to The Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing. The certificate is a system of certification for professionals including psychologist, teachers, career officers, SNA's, support officers etc., who wish to have an objective means of demonstrating their competence in educational testing.

This Certificate has been developed and verified by the British Psychological Society. Those who hold the qualification can apply to be included on the BPS Register of Competence in Psychological Testing.

Some Benefits of the course include:

- Analyse test manuals to decide if a test is reliable, valid & appropriate for students
- Develop hypotheses about students'
- Know when it is appropriate to undertake a test
- Interpret test scores and integrate test score information with other forms of assessment
- Analyse students' needs thoroughly
- Write reports to communicate

**Feature:****A Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing**

your understanding to others

- Understand and confidently interpret reports from other professionals
- Develop your competence, provide career opportunities and enhance your confidence
- Access higher level tests

Online courses or 4 day intensive courses are available. The intensive course is delivered by a senior educational psychologist. All students of the course are provided with tutors that are experienced practising psychologists and all of the students work is overseen by a BPS verified assessor.

**Next intensive 4-day course**

Date: 16th - 19th February 2010.

Venue: Bewley's Hotel Dublin Airport

Time: 9am to 5pm daily

Price: €1,700 (introductory offer)

**Price includes:**

- Four days intensive training with an educational psychologist and a personal tutor
- All course materials and course manual
- Access onto e-learning platform
- Lunches /tea/coffee.
- BPS certificate
- Registration and entrance onto BPS register of competence

**Find out more**

For more information visit  
[www.eirim.ie](http://www.eirim.ie)  
 Phone (01) 6674174  
 or E-mail [training@eirim.ie](mailto:training@eirim.ie)

**Graduate****Testimonial**

Siobhan  
Colclough,  
Cork

*“I was very pleased with the course and the support I received from Eirim. I had a very good tutor, who gave good advice and always got back to any queries I had quickly. This was particularly useful as I was moving through the course quite quickly, so it was great to receive feedback quickly so that I could move onto the next module.”*



## Feature:

### A.D.H.D. or B.O.L.D. ?



*ADHD is REAL. It is a neurobiological condition affecting the brains neurotransmitter levels.*



*"1 in 25 students may have ADHD"*

"They're not A.D.H.D. they're just B.O.L.D.!" This is a phrase that I have often heard thrown around the staff room in schools (all in good spirits).

A disruptive child can make teachers a life a living hell, but are we sometimes too quick to dismiss the possibility of an underlying disability?

ADHD is a real condition and according to The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), it affects between 3% and 5% of preschool and school-age children. This means in a class of 25 to 30 students, it is likely that at least one student will have this common condition.

#### What is ADHD?

The terms ADD/ADHD are often used interchangeably, but both mean the same thing. ADHD can exist with or without hyperactivity-the inattentive type and hyperactive type.

ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a medical/neurobiological condition resulting in reduced production of the brain's neurotransmitter chemicals, noradrenalin and dopamine. The lowered levels of neurotransmitters mean that different areas of the brain do not communicate efficiently with each other. This disrupted communication affects the child's problem solving, attention, reasoning and planning.

The HADD website gives the following analogy: "The brain of a child with ADHD is like a TV set that isn't receiving a perfect signal. For the child it's as if the channel keeps changing. Imagine you are

watching the news on BBC1. Suddenly, somebody picks up the remote control and flicks over to RTE. A second later the programme changes to Channel 4 and then back to BBC1. Then it switches to BBC2. If you were asked about the news on BBC1, you might find it hard to remember.

For a child with ADHD the world is a constant stream of changing images and messages. It's difficult to focus on anything because something new is always coming along. It's all rather bewildering and it's hard to keep pace." (HADD website)

#### Common Characteristics

Children affected with ADHD can exhibit any combination of the following characteristics in varying degrees:

- Easily distracted
- Difficulty following directions
- Difficulty focusing
- Poor or inconsistent academic performance
- Poor organisation
- Desk, locker in constant disarray
- Low self esteem
- High frustration level
- Talks excessively
- Unable to make/keep friends
- Immature
- Gets in frequent trouble
- Frequently out of their seat/ find it hard to sit still
- Engage in dangerous behaviours
- Aggressive

ADHD can co-exist, with any or other disorders such as dyslexia,

**Feature:****A.D.H.D or B.O.L.D ? (Cont.)**

autism, learning disorder, dyspraxia, conduct disorder(CD), oppositional defiance disorder (ODD). There is a high co-existence with ODD and CD.

**Identification & Diagnosis**

It is easy to confuse ADHD with normal childhood development. However, if you are concerned it is your responsibility to take appropriate action.

- Document the child's behaviour over say a period of a week or two.
- Gather history- Speak to different teachers, the child's parents and the child themselves about their behaviour.
- Use a behavioural screening tool such as the *Conners' Behavioural Rating Scale*. This is a questionnaire which is given to teachers and parents (and the child if they are older than 8) and can provide an 'at risk' of ADHD index score.
- Discuss the results of the screener test e.g. Conners' with the parents of the child and if necessary encourage them to seek further professional advice
- Diagnosis is normally carefully made by an experienced multi disciplinary team (educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists)

**Treatment**

Medication--e.g. Ritalin can temporarily relieve the symptoms associated with the symptoms of ADHD. These work by increasing the production of neurotransmitters, temporarily increasing brain function increasing the child's ability to concentrate and learn.

Diet-- adjustments in the child's diet can play a large role in relieving the symptoms of ADHD e.g. cutting out certain food additives and colourings.

Awareness--knowing how to work with ADHD students effectively and in positive ways

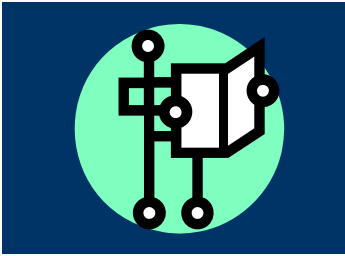


**Mental health in Children & Adolescents:** This book is written by psychiatrists with experience of working closely with teachers. Many topics are covered including ADHD. Published: 2009  
 Authors: S. Buckley; B. Gavin; F. McNicholas  
 ISBN: 978-0-9551241-8-1



*Screening tools like the Conners' Rating scales can help identify children at risk of ADHD and aid behavioral development programmes.*

*They are available to those who have completed a relevant training course.*



## Quote Corner

*"If you find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn't lead anywhere" -  
(Anonymous)*

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## About Our Company.....

Éirim: The National Assessment Agency Ltd conducts educational assessments for both private individuals, educational institutions and the HSE. All of our reports are accepted by NEPS and can be utilized to apply for resource hours/exemptions/SNA's etc.

Éirim is also running online & intensive training courses leading to the Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing. This course has been verified by the British Psychological Society (BPS).

*We're on the Web!*

See us at:

[www.eirim.ie](http://www.eirim.ie)

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