

Write-a-Book Awards

Over 1550 teachers, parents and pupils converged on Racket Hall Hotel, Roscrea on Wednesday 9th May last and on The Heritage Hotel Portlaoise on Wednesday 16th May to celebrate the publication of over 1,500 books by 1593 pupils from thirty two schools in the Midlands in the Write-a-Book project. This project is co-ordinated by Laois Education Centre in partnership with Laois County Enterprise Board and is one which is enthusiastically received by both pupils and teachers in the many schools in the catchment of Laois Education Centre which provides support to the educational partners in the counties of Laois, parts of Offaly and North Tipperary.

The Laois 'Write-a-Book' project which is in its fourteenth year, links the curricular areas of Visual Arts and English, while also prompting integration with practically every other curricular area for teacher and pupil. It is a very valuable tool for teachers as it allows students engage in the process of writing which includes planning, drafting, editing, re-drafting, publishing & binding. When books are completed, they are swapped with those of other schools, so pupils can experience the writings of other similarly aged children. It gives pupils the opportunity to explore different writing genres, allows them examine language and structure and enables them develop techniques and skills and ultimately see their writing valued.

Guest of Honour on the night, Michael Creagh, author, pantomime writer, poet, complimented Laois Education Centre on the very valuable project and commented on the efficient organisation of the project. He said the books were a great compliment to all the teachers, pupils and parents involved and encouraged students to continue writing and not to consider this as a once off activity. He also said that it was not just the number of books published that was significant; it was the quality of the work of all involved. Michael entertained all present with his reading of one of his own poems on 'Billy Egan' and finished by singing a song of his own creation 'My Boomerang Won't Come Back' much to the delight and amusement of both young and old present

In welcoming everybody to the Awards Night, Jim Enright, Director of Laois Education Centre said the Write-a-Book project is one of the most exciting and rewarding projects that Laois Education Centre is involved with. Jim went on to compliment all the 'young writers' on the quality of their writing and the further commented on how the books which represent a very diverse range of topics were beautifully and artistically illustrated and presented. 'Each year we receive entries from schools that have taken part in this project over many years but I am delighted to report that each year also we have schools that take part for the very first time. This ensures the continuation of the project into the future.' Jim also stated that the Write a Book project is very much in keeping with the National Literacy Strategy 2012 and will serve to improved literacy standards in our region. Jim thanked his colleagues in the Education Centre particularly Yvonne Nolan who had done enormous work in coordinating and organizing the vast quantity of entries. He thanked Laois County Enterprise Board for their continued support of the project and also thanked the teachers and principals who supported their pupils, read other class books and helped with recommending merit and highly commended awards. He also thanked the pupils and their family members and had a special word of thanks for the representatives of the Laois Education Centre Management. Finally Michael Creagh was thanked for his very significant contribution to the success of the evening.

148 Merit awards and 343 highly commended awards were presented over the two evenings by Michael Creagh and each of the 1593 participating pupils received a certificate of participation as well as a Write a Book pack.