



THE IRISH AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP

Supporting Education in Ireland, North and South

MAY 26, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IRISH AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP HOSTS ROUNDTABLE WITH JAN O’SULLIVAN, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Boston, MA—This morning, the Irish American Partnership hosted a roundtable with Jan O’Sullivan, Minister for Education and Skills. The breakfast, co-hosted by the Irish Consulate in Boston, was attended by leaders in business, education, and government from Ireland and America.

Minister O’Sullivan endorsed the Partnership’s programs in Ireland, reiterating the importance of supporting schools directly and the impact of early intervention. As a former pre-school teacher, the Minister appreciated the Partnership’s emphasis on primary education and involvement in the promotion of STEM subjects. She knew first-hand that a child’s early years in schools are some of the most formative for math and literacy skills, and said that the best way to make a university education available to all students is to ensure that they have a solid understanding of the fundamentals in primary school.

The Minister was particularly interested in the Partnership’s work around science education and the Royal Dublin Society Primary Science Fair. The Partnership has been involved with the RDS Primary Science Fair since its inception, providing travel grants for rural schools to attend the Fair in Dublin. Irish American Partnership Executive Director Mary Sugrue informed Minister O’Sullivan of the Partnership’s plans to regionalize the Primary Science Fair in conjunction with the RDS, and she was eager to stay apprised of the project and attend the official launch of the Limerick Fair in June.

When asked about making university accessible to all students, the Minister encouraged organizations to directly fund universities and commended the Partnership for its work in supporting university access scholarships across Ireland, North and South. She also spoke of the importance of government support for alternatives to third-level education, such as apprenticeship programs. The Irish government is currently looking to Germany as an example and hopes to develop a comprehensive apprenticeship system in the upcoming years. This model has already been adapted to the tech sector by Peter Davitt of Fast track to Information Technology (FIT), an employment learning organization that the Partnership has been supporting since its foundation. For more information on the ICT Associate Professional Program, see the Partnership’s spring newsletter.

The Partnership would like to thank the Irish Consulate in Boston for co-hosting the breakfast, Minister O’Sullivan for her insightful comments about the Irish education system, and all those who attended for their thought-provoking discussion.



Roundtable attendees with Minister O’Sullivan



Consul General Breandán Ó Caollaí, Minister Jan O’Sullivan, Partnership Executive Director Mary Sugrue, and Jon Mahoney of the Boston Irish Business Association speak after the breakfast



Partnership Board member Bill Reilly speaks with Minister O’Sullivan



Partnership Executive Director Mary Sugrue presents the Minister with “Boston Irish” by Bill Brett as a token of appreciation for participating in the roundtable