

THE FINDINGS OF A DELEGATION OF NORTH CAROLINIANS  
THAT STUDIED THE CONTRIBUTION EDUCATION HAS MADE TO  
THE ECONOMIC GROWTH OF IRELAND.

LEARNING *from*

# IRELAND



A COLLABORATION OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL FORUM AND THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

---

To many, the picture of Ireland is one of vast expanses of green fields dotted with sheep and damp with mist. The picture is framed through Irish songs and pubs that conjure up an Ireland that was, not the Ireland that is today.

---

LEARNING *from*

# IRELAND

---

- 4 INTRODUCTION
- 6 WHY IRELAND
- 12 LESSONS LEARNED
- 18 IMPLICATIONS
- 20 POSTSCRIPT





## INTRODUCTION

---

In preparation for traveling to Ireland to learn about the contribution education made to the phenomenal economic turnaround Ireland has enjoyed in recent years, the twenty-person delegation of North Carolina policymakers and educators underwent extensive briefings. One of the expert presenters posed the following question to members of the delegation:

“What are the top four exports from Ireland?”

The answers volunteered by the delegation members fell into the “W” category: “W”hiskey, “W”aterford china and “W”oolens. The delegation’s answers were, in all probability, typical of the average view Americans have of Ireland. To many, their picture of Ireland is one of vast expanses of green fields dotted with sheep and damp with mist. The picture is framed through Irish songs and pubs that conjure up an Ireland that was, not the Ireland that is today.

The correct answers?

Computer software, Pepsi, Botox, Viagra

That was but the first surprise the delegation would encounter in its study of Ireland. There were many more to follow.

The “Learning from Ireland” study is the ninth in a series that has taken North Carolina policymakers, educators, foundation officials, and business leaders to countries as diverse as Ireland and India, Denmark and South Korea, the Netherlands and Singapore, England and China.

The original intent of the studies was to examine best practices in education in the hopes that North Carolina could import ideas that hold the potential to strengthen schools across the state, especially in STEM-related areas (i.e., science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The early studies looked at countries that were among the top performing on international tests comparing the performance of students in countries around the world.

That led delegations of North Carolinians to the Netherlands to examine its strategies for teaching

mathematics and preparing teachers; to see the impact long-range educational planning and benchmarking to education leaders around the world had made on schools in Japan. It led a delegation to Great Britain to see why the nation dismantled a countrywide voucher plan that failed to live up to expectations.

More recently, the studies have been focused on examining the role that education has played in nations that are emerging as economic leaders. That has led to studies in China, India and Singapore, as well as the most recent study of Ireland. A delegation saw firsthand the impact India’s investments in world-class institutes of technology and math and science have had on making the country an international magnet for outsourced jobs in high-skill areas. Another saw how Singapore has integrated its national education and economic development plans in such a way that it has gone from a nation with low literacy and low wages to one that has the highest standard of living of any nation in the Pacific Rim.

---

**These studies have been made possible through the support of the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, the Japan Fund, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and leading North Carolina corporations including SAS, Cisco and Glaxo.**



DUBLIN REFLECTION



AERIAL VIEW OF DUBLIN, IRELAND



# WHY IRELAND?

---

In recent years, Ireland has been named the “Celtic Tiger,” a European counterpart to the Asian countries dubbed “The Pacific Tigers” by those studying the rapid emergence of national economies of nations like Japan, South Korea and China. Ireland earned that title as a result of a rapid and remarkable economic turnaround.

Since the 1850’s, Ireland has suffered through over 150 years of what they call “the troubles.” Through those years, the population of Ireland declined from over 6.5 million to a low of less than 3 million in 1961. As the Irish describe it, beginning with the famine in the mid nineteenth century and continuing through most of the twentieth century, “their chief export has been people.”

Today nearly 58 million people living in countries around the world claim Irish roots, 39 million in the United States alone. Through those years, the economy of Ireland was based largely on agriculture and the lack of economic opportunity resulted in a steady outflow of population, especially to English-speaking nations including the United States, Australia, Canada and Great Britain where jobs and opportunity could be found.

In 1973 when Ireland became part of the European Union (EU), Ireland had the poorest economy of the original EU nations. Under the terms of the EU Ireland’s economic woes entitled it to a large infusion of aid from the newly created Union. That aid could have gone into magnificent governmental edifices. It could have gone into a massive welfare program. It could have been spent on roads and bridges. That was, however, not what happened.

Instead, Ireland’s policymakers opted to make investments that held the potential to turn around its ailing economy; investments that had the potential to create jobs and opportunities that would stop the outflow of its most precious commodity – its people.

Today, Ireland’s population is roughly 4.5 million. It is attracting immigrants from EU countries, especially those in Eastern Europe where economic opportunity is limited. More over, Ireland is today seeing its native sons and daughter returning as jobs and opportunities become available.

Today, Ireland has the second highest per capita income level in the European Union – behind only Luxemburg.





This remarkable turnaround – beginning in the mid 1980's – is why Ireland was chosen as the ninth country in the “learning from” study series.

It should be added that other reasons Ireland was chosen was because of its similarities to North Carolina. Like North Carolina, Ireland's roots were agricultural. Like North Carolina, the nation is undergoing major changes as a result of the global economy. And North Carolina and Ireland share a common language and historical roots, both having struggled to gain independence from England. Today, Ireland, like North Carolina is challenged by an influx of immigrants. There is much in common between the two.

### **A CONFLUENCE OF EVENTS**

As noted earlier, Ireland's entry into the European Union (EU), provided the opportunity for Ireland to grow and prosper. Not only did the EU result in an infusion of aid to Ireland, it eliminated barriers to trade by opening borders across Europe, and it rationalized import/export regulations in such a way that member nations could compete on a fair trade playing field.

Those two factors gave Ireland an opportunity. The opportunity, however, could have resulted in little had it not been for far-seeing public policies that provided the foundation for the nation's economic turnaround.

The architects of Ireland's turnaround concluded that the nation had limited assets and that to succeed they would need to maximize those assets. First, Ireland's geographic location positioned them to be a bridge between North America and Europe.



## BUILDING AN EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

When Ireland's policymakers opted to invest in its people, it faced a daunting challenge. Compared to other nations within the EU, Ireland was not only an economic laggard, it was an educational laggard as well. In 1950, for instance, only 33% of Ireland's young people had completed high school and only 10% had advanced on to post-high school learning in institutes, colleges or universities. By the mid-sixties, high school completion had improved to 40%, but Ireland's educational attainment levels remained among the lowest in the EU.

The primary reason for the nation's low standing in education was rooted in poverty. Ireland's high schools charged tuition and fees that were simply out-of-reach for many of its citizens. Subsequently, many Irish young people did not complete high school and consequently fewer yet attended college.

Ireland's policymakers made two educational decisions that, in large measure, account for its dramatic turnaround in high school completion and going-to-college rates. First, tuition and fees for high school were eliminated, thus opening up educational opportunities to all, not only to those fortunate enough to afford them.

Second, Ireland made another historic decision that few nations in the world, including the United States, have made. In 1996 college education was made free-of-charge for those able to meet the nation's rigorous admission standards.

Obviously, these decisions did not come cheaply. However, the nation is reaping major benefits from its education investments. Today, over 80% of the population have completed secondary education and 50% have gone on for post-high school education.

While Ireland's investment in education reaped large measurable dividends, an educated populace without an economic development vision is nothing more than a highly prized export – something Ireland had suffered from for over a century.

Ireland's investment in education was second only to its investment in a multi-faceted economic development plan that, when combined with education, has changed the face of the nation.

Second, while Irish remains the national language, education in Ireland is conducted using English. With English being the language of commerce, the universal language of the internet and the language of the world's largest market, the United States, it was a major asset for the nation.

Third, the enormous outflow of Irish to other countries provides the nation an existing affinity to English-speaking nations that few other countries can claim. National politicians, business leaders, civil servants, and others in the United States, Canada, Australia, Great Britain and elsewhere have Irish roots and, it was reasoned, a positive disposition toward Ireland.

Last, and most important, the architects of Ireland's turnaround saw people as the nation's primary resource. To succeed not only within the EU but in the global marketplace, Ireland needed to capitalize on its most important national resource, its people. To do that, education would have to be the cornerstone for growth. "Brains, not brawn," became a national mantra.

### A MULTI-FACETED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Ireland's economic development plan does not rest on a single strategy. Instead, it is a multi-faceted plan designed not only to attract international investments but to retain existing business while stimulating innovation and start-up growth of home-grown businesses.

#### Forfás

Forfás is Ireland's national policy advisory board for enterprise and science established in 1994. Its primary function is to provide research, advice and support in enterprise and science policy which informs government responses to the global business environment, ensuring a coherent policy response across agencies.

Forfás also oversees the Export Group on Future Skills Needs which is a body appointed by the Irish government to advise it on aspects of education and training related to the future skills requirements of the enterprise sector of Ireland's economy.

#### IDA Ireland

A major component of Ireland's economic turnaround rested on attracting multi-national companies from abroad. But Ireland wasn't looking for just any jobs. Unlike most countries in the early stages of development, Ireland did not compete in an arena that it could not win – attraction of low-wage, low-skill manufacturing jobs.

Instead, Ireland looked for industries that needed a pool of talented workers, industries less likely to offshore jobs to third-world countries offering cheaper labor. Toward that end, the Irish plan focused on industry-specific recruiting, most notably in the high tech and pharmaceutical areas.

Here Ireland found a confluence of its assets. Geographically, it offered high-skill, high-wage companies a gateway to Europe. If one recalls the question regarding Ireland's top exports that was in the introduction, Ireland's top export today is computer software. It is the leader in the production of software that is sold throughout the EU.

It also had the benefit of a common language with pharmaceutical and high tech companies in Great Britain and the United States.

And last, but most importantly, it could offer companies a highly skilled and well-educated workforce.

To say that Ireland's international recruiting efforts are aggressive would be an understatement. Today, IDA has 15 economic development offices located in countries around the world. Staffing these offices are 60-70 economic recruiters.

It must be noted that while Ireland's geographic, language, human resource and recruiting assets were formidable, they were deemed not sufficient. Ireland also slashed corporate taxes to a rate that is one of the lowest in the EU and in the industrial world.

#### Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)

SFI was established in 2000 following a study commissioned by the Irish government that concluded that biotechnology and information and communications technology were the wave of the future in the global economy. In order to be positioned for future growth, Ireland realized it would need world class research capability in those areas. Thus, SFI came into existence charged with administering awards to support scientists and engineers working in the fields of science and engineering that underpin biotechnology, information and communications technology and sustainable energy development. Its goal was to create, attract and grow jobs in Ireland.

A primary focus of the SFI is entrepreneurship using research grants that have the potential to create new industries or jobs. SFI makes grants to researchers working in Ireland's colleges and universities and to researchers around the world who are willing to relocate and work in Ireland. These grants typically go to teams of researchers in different higher education institutions. A key element in the grant-making process is to place a priority on grants that can lead to technology transfers that create new industries or that will give existing industries value-added products and advances.

#### Enterprise Ireland

The last component of Ireland's economic development strategy is Enterprise Ireland which exists to provide technical support and grants to innovative start-up companies that have the potential to revitalize communities while building self-sustaining businesses in Ireland.

Enterprise Ireland recognized that for businesses to be self-sustaining, they must be export-minded from the start. Therefore, a primary focus of Enterprise Ireland is to help indigenous companies access export markets. To this end, Enterprise Ireland operates 32 offices overseas with approximately 150 staff dedicated to helping Irish companies navigate export markets. (It must be noted that when Enterprise Ireland's overseas offices are combined with those of the IDA, Ireland has 47 overseas offices staffed by 210-230 employees at work attempting to recruit businesses to Ireland or to open up markets for Irish-produced goods. In contrast, North Carolina has 6 overseas offices employing 12 staff.)

Support from Enterprise Ireland has also helped to create sophisticated occupational training programs in Ireland's institutes and universities. They have created

business incubators housed in technical institutes and universities that provide seed money grants and facilities to promising start-up businesses. These campus-based incubators provide a transition space between research and industry.

Enterprise Ireland also works with local county enterprise boards to help provide training and technical assistance to communities attempting to grow local business or to attract tourism revenue or to shore-up faltering companies that provide jobs and stability to communities.

Through its work, communities large and small now have economic development centers and start-up ventures that are providing new jobs, especially in more rural areas of Ireland.



CAMPUS OF GALWAY-MAYO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY





NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND AT GALWAY

# LESSONS LEARNED

---

This study focused primarily on the components of education most closely linked to Ireland's economic development aspirations. What lessons can be learned from the "Celtic Tiger?"

---

## **ECONOMIC LESSONS LEARNED FROM IRELAND...**

In the 1980's the Southern Growth Policies Board issued a report on the status of the Southeast entitled "Halfway Home and a Long Way to Go." The report was prophetic in many respects. The central premise of it was that the South had largely exhausted its economic recruiting strategies by overly relying on marketing a mild climate, low wages and little unionism. It called for far more sophisticated, long-range planning recognizing that the economy was rapidly becoming more global and that emerging nations would begin eroding the very jobs that had flocked to the South. In short, it warned that what it termed "the buffalo chase" (i.e., northern and midwestern plants relocating to the South) was coming to an end.

And come to an end it did. Through far-sighted vision, the Irish appear to have side-stepped the economic recruiting mistakes made by others. What lessons can be learned from the "Celtic Tiger?"

---

### **1: THERE IS NO "SILVER BULLET"**

One dimensional economic plans rarely sustain themselves. A strategy, for instance, based on low wages and no unions, will collapse when confronted with nations like China and Vietnam that can offer employees for dollars per day.

Ireland's plan is multi-faceted. In addition to aggressive recruitment around the world, it marketed its highly-skilled, competitive work force. It put in place corporate tax policies that provided a bottom-line incentive to companies considering expansion or relocation. Its economic development agencies offer grants and research that enable companies to value-add their products. At the same time, it is working to build sustainable small businesses in communities across Ireland.

And last, but not least, Ireland's integrated planning is not limited to economic development. A central part of their plan focused on education as the building block upon which growth could be constructed.

---

### **2: VISION IS CENTRAL TO SUCCESSFUL GROWTH**

Ireland's planning was future oriented. It resisted the temptation to recruit yesterday's jobs and focused instead on sustainable industries that should grow and thrive in the global economy.

Ireland also had the vision to build on its assets. Much of its economic development growth, for instance, has occurred in two areas of the country – the metropolitan Dublin area which is home to nearly one-third of Ireland's 4.5 million people and the region around Galway on the Atlantic Coast. Why these areas? Both are located on the sea and provide a natural bridge to both Europe and the United States. Both have an attractive, cosmopolitan quality of life. Both have an infrastructure that not only can support growth, but provide a high standard of living to newcomers and natives alike.

Perhaps most important, Ireland's vision for economic growth was industry specific. Instead of scatter shot recruitment efforts, Ireland focused on sustainable industries that rely on a highly skilled workforce.

---

### **3: REWARDS STIMULATE INNOVATION & COLLABORATION**

Ireland's Science Foundation grant program, its business incubators, research grants designed to result in technology transfer and innovation, competitive college admission standards that reward achievement... all of these stimulate innovation, entrepreneurialism and collaboration.

Throughout the delegation's visit to Ireland presenter after presenter echoed the same themes. "Our strongest asset is our people." "Knowledge is in our nature." "Brains not brawn." The North Carolina delegation members were struck by the fact that everyone they met seemed to be on the same proverbial page. There was a stated purposefulness of focus that permeated what the delegation heard whether being briefed by governmental officials, meeting with business people or talking with college students.

The purposefulness of Ireland's plan appears to have created a "can do" spirit that translates into an optimism about the future – in sharp contrast to well over a century of "the troubles" and the exodus of millions from within Ireland.

---

#### **4: BENCHMARKING AGAINST THE BEST**

Throughout their time in Ireland, the North Carolina delegation was also struck by the degree to which those in the economic development community (and those in the educational community) were benchmarking against the best in the world. Virtually every governmental agency visited described not only their long-range plans (typically five years in duration), but the measurable benchmarks they were striving to meet.

While that was noteworthy, not only were the agencies benchmarking, they were aspiring to be the best in the world – not simply in the EU.

---

#### **5: VISION IS NOT ENOUGH**

Many countries have a vision for a better future. Few can muster the political will to translate their aspirations into reality.

Ireland's investments in its future are striking – free college education, a national health plan, millions invested in international recruiting, financial support for entrepreneurs, to name but a few.

It should be noted that these investments came with a cost. As anyone who has ever driven in Ireland can tell you, the nation's highway infrastructure leaves much to be desired. However, Ireland has largely accomplished what it set out to do when it opted to turn around a moribund economy.



**IRISH STUDENTS MEET WITH NORTH CAROLINA DELEGATION**

## **LESSONS LEARNED FROM IRELAND'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

Unlike previous “learning from” studies, the Ireland study did not attempt to examine Ireland’s entire educational system. Typically, study delegations visit elementary, middle and high school facilities as well as teacher training institutions. However, this study focused primarily on the components of education most closely linked to Ireland’s economic development aspirations. Thus, visits were confined to high schools, technical institutes and colleges and universities.

This narrower focus meant that the delegation was unable to learn about Ireland’s preschool program (also provided free-of-charge), its elementary school strategies and much more. What was learned, however, was instructive.

---

### **1: EDUCATION & EDUCATORS ARE HIGHLY VALUED**

It is perhaps dangerous to speculate on why education and educators are highly valued in some societies and not in others. However, one could not help but be struck by the degree to which education and educators are held in high regard in Ireland. As in the Asian countries that have been part of the “learning from” studies, there appeared to be a near-universal valuing of education and educators.

It may well be that Ireland’s long period of suffering created a realization that those who were educated had economic opportunity that others did not have – be it within Ireland or elsewhere in the world. It may also be that since high school tuition made a diploma out-of-reach for so many that today’s free high school and college education have put within reach an economic future that many could once only dream about.

Whatever the reasons, the Irish value their schools and their teachers. In sharp contrast to the United States, teaching is a highly respected profession. Ireland’s competitive college admission policies are drawing prospective teachers from the academically top 20% of high school graduates. Teacher pay is attractive and remains competitive with other professions; albeit, an unintended consequence of Ireland’s new prosperity is that wage and cost-of-living inflation are changing the marketplace.

---

### **2: INCREASED ACCESS EQUALS INCREASED OPPORTUNITY**

The dramatic surge in high school graduation and going-to-college rates in Ireland was noted earlier. It should also be noted that Ireland has created a free preschool program giving more and more young people a better foundation when entering school.

Study after study in the United States bemoans both the seemingly intractable high dropout rate in states across the country, including North Carolina. Studies looking at the future needs of the workforce also decry the large college-going gaps between middle and low-income students and between minority groups and white students.

Ireland has eliminated the financial barrier to education beyond high school and in doing so it has provided an incentive for all students, regardless of their families’ income levels. And one looking for evidence that it is making a difference need look no farther than at the going-to-college rate increase that has occurred since policymakers opened the doors to higher education.

---

### **3: VALUE ON OCCUPATIONAL/TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

Ireland’s integrated planning process bringing traditional educational “silos” together with the economic development community results in an educational system designed to produce a skilled workforce tailored to national economic aspirations. For the North Carolina delegation, that was best seen at the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, a growing, vibrant campus, that is clearly aimed at creating a workforce for the future.

Ireland places less emphasis on traditional United States degree programs. Instead, it offers programs of varying length – some leading to a degree, others to a certificate. Housed within the Institute is one of Ireland’s business incubators. Students are learning on state-of-the-art technology – some of it provided by leading United States technology companies such as CISCO.

And Ireland is not only focused on STEM-related occupations. Students can study culinary arts, traditional Irish literature and language, movie production and much more. Other programs are geared to boosting Ireland’s growing tourism industry.

The “take away,” however, for the North Carolina delegation was the melding of the nation’s economic aspirations and their investment in institutions of higher learning; institutions, one must remember, that charge no tuition and are open to all that meet admission standards.



STUDENTS AT GALWAY-MAYO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

---

#### **4: ADVANCEMENT IS EARNED, NOT ENTITLED**

One of the aspects of Ireland's education system that was most contentiously discussed by the North Carolina delegation was the competitive nature of advancement into Ireland's higher education system – be it to universities or occupational institutions.

High school students aspiring to go beyond high school education must take a “completion” examination. Passing the completion exam is necessary to meeting high school graduation standards, and it will be used by colleges to determine not only whether a student is admitted to a particular college but what major the student will be placed in. This is in sharp contrast to North Carolina where end of high school tests have virtually no bearing on college admission.

Students applying to move into higher education must indicate their preference not only of institutions they would like to attend, but the area they want to major in. And there are national quotas, not only for admission into institutes of higher learning but for majors.

This is not the only contrast between college admission policies in North Carolina. Departments set quotas on admission. Thus, areas like teaching and pre-medicine that are in high demand set a limit on the number of students that will be admitted. And admission is strictly by the numbers. Having parents who are alumni or buildings named for wealthy relatives does not come into play when it comes to college admissions – it is strictly a meritocracy, the highest scores prevail.

This process obviously flies in the face of what North Carolinians take for granted when it comes to college admission. It should be noted that, once admitted, a

student is in a much narrower course track than they would be in a North Carolina college. If a student, for instance, admitted to pre-med determines in their sophomore year that medicine is not for them, it is possible, but difficult, to change majors.

More to the point, in this type of system there are winners and losers. In North Carolina if a student is not accepted into their first or second choice college, there is almost certainly a college that will accept them. If that fails, community college offers essentially an open door admission process that offers a second chance.

The same thing is not true in Ireland. Gaining admittance to state-paid higher education requires meeting rigorous admission standards.

---

#### **5: SCHOOLS ALSO BENCHMARK AND GOALS ARE HIGH**

Finally, just as economic development-related governmental agencies typically have long-range plans and rigorous benchmark goals, so do Ireland's schools. When Ireland began its turnaround journey, the original goals were to equal or best the top performing EU countries when it came to high school graduation and going-to-college rates. As noted earlier, they have made great strides in those areas.

Their benchmarks, however, are remarkably specific. The Ministry of Education, for instance, has a five-year plan to increase the number of high school graduates that is exacting and disaggregated. Their goal is not merely to increase the graduation rate by so many percent. Instead it is to increase it by so much in rural areas, by so much for differing economic groups, by so much for recent immigrants. Their goals are exacting and they annually report progress to the nation.

For North Carolina perhaps the greatest lesson that can be learned from Ireland is what can be done when a relatively small country within a large Union determines to excel, to become what we now call “world class.”

---

# IMPLICATIONS

*for* NORTH CAROLINA

Ireland is, in many respects, to the European Union what North Carolina, or to be more precise, North and South Carolina, is to the United States. It is a small country of 4.5 million in a Union of 490 million. Within the EU, the traditional economic leaders have been large countries like Germany, France and Great Britain.

For North Carolina perhaps the greatest lesson that can be learned from Ireland is what can be done when a relatively small country within a large Union determines to excel, to become what we now call “world class.”

When Ireland embarked on its turnaround journey it did not enjoy the benefits North Carolina takes for granted. Unlike North Carolina which has become a magnet for jobs and people, Ireland’s population was barely one-half of what it was in the 1850’s.

It did, however, have a vision for a better Ireland. It had the determination and the political will to aspire to create a world-class economy, to become a magnet for high-skill companies, to create an Ireland that would bring its people back from the corners of the globe. To do that it utilized best practices from business and from education. It established clear, measurable goals. It integrated educational and economic development planning. It invested in things that held the potential to make a long-term difference. It has had the political will to stay the course.

There is an obvious lesson here. If an impoverished nation of 4.5 million could earn the title of “Celtic Tiger” in little more than 20 years, what could a state of 9 million-plus with an intact infrastructure of education, roads, airports, governmental services do if it aspired to become “world class?”





TRINITY COLLEGE'S SCIENCE GALLERY



TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN

# A POSTSCRIPT...

As noted earlier, this study focused primarily on how education contributed to Ireland's economic turnaround. There are many other issues about the Irish system of education on which the delegation could have focused. Most schools, for instance, are church-run and state-supported. The governance of schools is much different than that in North Carolina. Ireland, unlike the United States, does not have end-of-year tests that rank school effectiveness; instead, their testing has consequences for young people through their rigorous college admission process.

All of these issues, however, are for another day. If there was one major lesson that the North Carolina delegation brought back from Ireland it was the potential that can come from integrated education and economic planning that uses education as a tool to reach national economic aspirations.

For those who have been part of previous "learning from" studies, the parallels between Ireland and other nations that are emerging as economic leaders in the global economy were striking. The closest parallel yet studied in the "learning from" series would be to Singapore.

In both cases, two small nations had large aspirations. They began far behind other nations. They established a common vision based on building on their strongest assets – their people. Their educational systems mirrored and enabled their economic aspirations. Education is valued. Educators are valued, well trained and well compensated. They benchmark against the best in the world. And in a remarkably short period of time they have become text book cases illustrating what is possible when nations can muster the political will needed to become "world class."

## **Even Economic Tigers Are Not Immune to Worldwide Economic Woes**

Economic "Tigers" be they Pacific or Celtic are not being spared the economic meltdown that has swept the globe in recent months. While Ireland's economic turnaround has been dramatic it was, like the United States and other countries, vulnerable. Its banks were enmeshed in the subprime debacle resulting in Ireland investing billions in its banks à la the bank bailout plan in the States. Ireland had experienced a real estate "bubble," especially in the Dublin area where home and commercial real estate values have plummeted. Last, Ireland like other countries has seen a spike in unemployment rates as the impact of the slowing economy has deepened. It was ironic that on the same days that the delegation would be briefed on Ireland's dramatic turnaround, newspapers read like those in the United States as they documented the mounting impact of the worldwide recession.

---

...in a remarkably short period of time

---

Ireland has become a text book case

---

illustrating what is possible when a

---

nation can muster the political will

---

needed to become "world class."

---

# IRELAND DELEGATION

Dr. June Atkinson, State Superintendent, NC Department of Public Instruction  
 Representative Larry Bell, House of Representatives, North Carolina General Assembly  
 Mr. John Burris, President, Burroughs Wellcome Fund  
 Mrs. Sally Burris, Former Montessori Teacher and Children's Librarian  
 Mr. Phil Dixon, Member, UNC Board of Governors  
 Mr. John Dornan, Executive Director, Public School Forum of North Carolina  
 Senator Tony Foriest, Senate, North Carolina General Assembly  
 Representative Rick Glazier, House of Representatives, North Carolina General Assembly  
 Ms. Meredith Henderson, Director of Programs, The Center for International Understanding  
 Senator Vernon Malone, Senate, North Carolina General Assembly  
 Dr. Mary McDuffie, Executive Director, North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching  
 Mrs. Jo Ann Norris, Associate Executive Director, Public School Forum of North Carolina  
 Senator Joe Sam Queen, Senate, North Carolina General Assembly  
 Ms. Hilda Pinnix-Ragland, State Board Chair, North Carolina Community College System  
 Ms. Millie Ravenel, Executive Director, The Center for International Understanding  
 Senator A.B. Swindell, Senate, North Carolina General Assembly  
 Representative Joe Tolson, House of Representatives, North Carolina General Assembly  
 Dr. Hope Williams, President, North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities  
 Mr. Patrick N. Woodie, Vice President of Rural Development Programs, North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center  
 Representative Doug Yongue, House of Representatives, North Carolina General Assembly



## ITINERARY *Learning from Ireland – November 15-22, 2008*

<b>Sat, Nov 15</b>	Depart from North Carolina	<b>Tues, Nov 18</b>	Visit to Irish Parliament/Houses of the Oireachtas with briefings by the Minister of State and Speaker of the House
<b>Sun, Nov 16</b>	Arrive in Ireland Guided tour of Dublin Group dinner		Visit to Trinity College, including its Science Gallery, Bridge2College, Trinity Access Programmes and Trinity Immigration Initiative
<b>Mon, Nov 17</b>	Visit to IDA Ireland Visit to Enterprise Ireland Visit to Forfás Company visits in small groups to: Cisco Systems, Wyeth, SAS Visit to and briefings at the Irish Business and Employers Confederation	<b>Wed, Nov 19</b>	Group dinner, hosted by SAS Visit to and briefings at the Department of Education and Science, including the Higher Education Authority Visit to St. Mark's Community School Visit to Science Foundation Ireland Travel to Galway
		<b>Thur, Nov 20</b>	Visit to Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology Visit to Calasanctius College
		<b>Fri, Nov 21</b>	Visit to National University of Ireland-Galway Travel to Dublin
		<b>Sat, Nov 22</b>	Depart for return to North Carolina

# RESOURCES

---

## RESOURCE PEOPLE IN NC

Mr. Mikael Hagstroem, Executive Vice President EMEA and Asia Pacific, SAS  
Mr. Jens Olivarius, Senior Marketing Director, SAS  
Dr. Sarah O'Flaherty, Post-doctoral Researcher, North Carolina State University  
Dr. Joseph Kehoe, Post-doctoral Researcher, North Carolina State University  
Dr. Edward Brynn, Professor, UNC-Charlotte  
Ted Abernathy, Executive Director, Southern Growth Policies Board

## RESOURCE PEOPLE IN IRELAND

### Advisors

Ms. Jane Magnier, Managing Director, Abbey Tours  
Mr. Dan Flinter, Retired, Former CEO, Enterprise Ireland  
Mr. Ben Dunne, Principal Clerk, Head of Interparliamentary Affairs and Secretary to the Irish Parliamentary Association, Houses of the Oireachtas  
Mr. Martin Heffernan, Principal Clerk, Houses of the Oireachtas  
Ms. Eileen Punch, Associate Director, Trinity Foundation  
Ms. Elaine Healy, Media and Public Relations Executive, IDA Ireland  
Mr. Tim Doyle, former First Secretary (Economic), Embassy of Ireland  
Mr. Laurence Simms, First Secretary (economic), Embassy of Ireland  
Mr. Patrick Gaule, First Secretary, Bilateral Economic Relations Division, Department of Foreign Affairs

### Presenters

Mr. Brendan McDonagh, Manager, Planning and Regions, IDA Ireland  
Mr. Paul Maguire, Senior Development Advisor HPSU, Enterprise Ireland  
Ms. Kay Hallahan, Senior Policy Advisor, Human Capital and Labour Markets, Forfás  
Mr. Andrew Colgan, Policy Analyst, Human Capital and Labour Markets, Forfás  
Mr. Michael Kearney, Country Manager, SAS Institute  
Ms. Kim Majerus, Country Manager, Cisco Systems  
Mr. Peter O'Brien, Senior Director, Public Affairs & Communications, Wyeth Grange Castle  
Mr. Tony Donohoe, Head of Education, Social and Innovation Policy, Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)  
Minister Jimmy Devins T.D., Minister of State, Houses of the Oireachtas  
Speaker John O'Donoghue, Speaker of the House, Houses of the Oireachtas  
Dr. James Callaghan, Associate Director, Research and Innovation, Trinity College  
Dr. Michael John Gorman, Director, Science Gallery, Trinity College  
Ms. Keelin Murphy, Education and Outreach Officer, CRANN, Trinity College  
Dr. Robbie Gilligan, Associate Director, Children's Research Centre, Trinity College  
Ms. Cliona Hannon, Access Officer, Trinity Access Programmes, Trinity College  
Mr. Brendan Tangney, Senior Lecturer, Department of Computer Science, CRITE, Trinity College  
Mr. John Lawlor, Bridge2College, Trinity College  
Mr. Muiris O'Connor, Head of Policy and Planning Unit, Higher Education Authority  
Mr. Sean MacNamara, Department of Education and Science  
Ms. Eithne Coyne, St. Mark's Community School  
Mr. Mattie McCabe, Director, Secretariat and External Relations, Science Foundation Ireland  
Mr. Larry Elwood, Head of School of Business, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

Dr. Marion Coy, President, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology  
Dr. John Kennedy, Commercial Services Manager, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology  
Ms. Ann Finn, Adult Education Office, Enterprise Ireland  
Ms. Mary Surlis, Adult and Community Education Project Officer, NUI-Galway  
Mr. Joe Harrison, Principal, Calasanctius College  
Dr. Seamus O'Grady, Adult Education Office, NUI-Galway  
Dr. James J. Browne, President, NUI-Galway  
Dr. Seamus MacMathúna, Secretary for Academic Affairs, NUI-Galway  
Dr. John Kavanaugh, Director, Technology Transfer and Incubation Centre, NUI-Galway  
Dr. William Golden, Dean, School of Business, Public Policy and Law, NUI-Galway  
Ms. Patricia Walsh, Technology Transfer Initiative, NUI-Galway

### Faculty, Staff and Students of the Following Schools and Institutes of Higher Education

National University of Ireland – Galway  
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology  
Trinity College  
St. Mark's Community School, Tallaght, Dublin  
Calasanctius College, Oranmore

### Management and Employees at the Following Companies

SAS Institute  
Cisco Systems  
Wyeth Grange Castle

### Study Coordinators

Meredith Henderson & Millie Ravenel,  
The Center for International Understanding  
Jo Ann Norris & John Dornan, Public School Forum

### Report Author

John Dornan, Public School Forum



THE CENTER *for*  
INTERNATIONAL  
UNDERSTANDING

## the FORUM

**FEBRUARY 2009**

PUBLIC SCHOOL FORUM OF NORTH CAROLINA  
GLENWOOD PLACE, CUMBERLAND BUILDING  
3739 NATIONAL DRIVE, SUITE 100  
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27612  
TEL 919.781.6833 • FAX 919.781.6527  
[WWW.NCFORUM.ORG](http://WWW.NCFORUM.ORG)