

**Conference round-up**  
Wellbeing, singing, testing,  
funding cuts and more.

**LEGO giveaway**  
Helping children develop  
their digital skills.

**Next-generation journos**  
Free Making News toolkit  
for primary pupils.

# educateinwales

**Issue 63**  
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## NEU Cymru conference tackles the future of education in Wales

**NEU Cymru held its first amalgamated conference in Newport in November, fully uniting both NUT and ATL legacy sectors for the first time.**

The conference was opened by National Education Union (NEU) joint general secretary **Mary Bousted** and chaired by president **Amanda Martin**.

NEU Cymru secretary **David Evans** greeted delegates: “Last year I was welcoming delegates to the first policy-making conference for the NUT Cymru section of the National Education Union.

“I said at the time that I was looking forward to the event becoming a fixture in our diaries and it is with great delight that I am able to welcome you all to a fully integrated NEU Cymru conference.”

Eighty-two delegates from 21 districts (out of a total of 22 in Wales) debated 30 motions over two days, covering all the key issues concerning education workers – with live translations in Welsh and English.

Guest speakers included Cabinet Secretary for Education **Kirsty Williams AM**, who spoke about a new Welsh curriculum. “Now is the time for a truly ‘Made in Wales’ curriculum,” she said.

On changes to RSE, she said: “RSE is not about sex, it’s about relationships,” and argued there is a “strong principle-based case” for making RSE part of the curriculum – and thus removing the



Clockwise from top left: Mary Bousted, Amanda Martin, David Evans, Kirsty Williams, Meilyr Rowlands and Huw Foster Evans  
ALL CONFERENCE PHOTOS by Carmen Valino

right of parents to withdraw their children.

Conference also heard from Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales (Estyn), **Meilyr Rowlands**, who was ready “to review, to learn and to change. To foster a culture of mutual respect, to be more formative and constructive.”

Delegates also heard from **Huw Foster Evans**, the chief executive of the National

Academy for Educational Leadership Wales. All guest speakers took questions afterwards.

Conference included stalls, fringe meetings, and meet-ups for young professionals, all at the Celtic Manor Hotel in Newport. Next year, it was announced to loud applause, conference will be held in Llandudno.

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## Skill-Up's LEGO giveaway helps develop digital skills

**NEU Cymru's Skill-Up project is running a series of Facebook giveaways across Wales, aimed at helping school staff develop their digital competence skills.**

Each month the project targets three local authorities, with emails to schools and NEU members letting them know about the giveaway and giving them a link to the competition post on the project's Facebook page, [facebook.com/neucymrutraining](https://www.facebook.com/neucymrutraining)

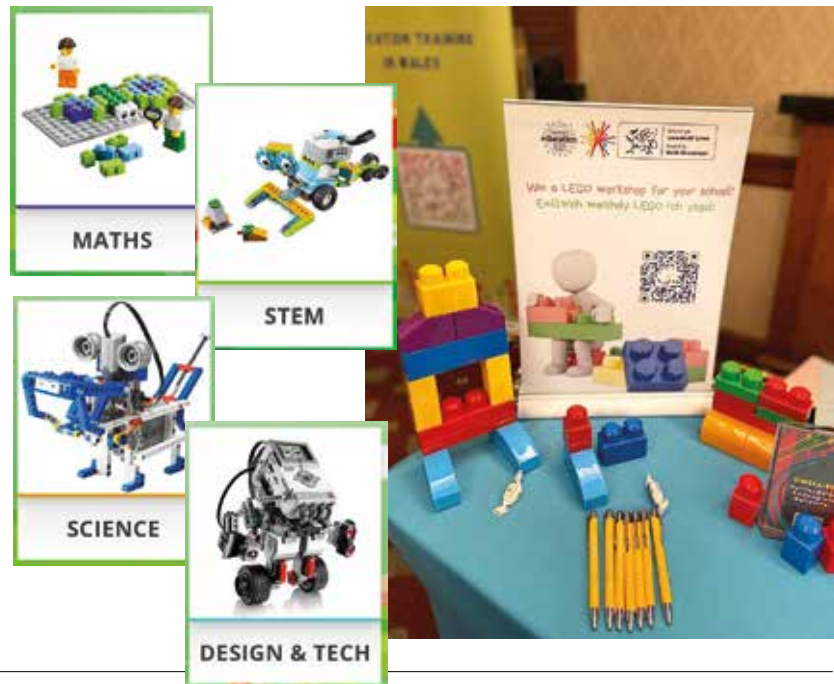
The current round of giveaways started in September 2019 and will continue through to April 2020.

Winners to date include Llanfyllin Primary School in Montgomeryshire, Adamsdown Primary School in Cardiff and Ysgol Rhyd y Llan on Anglesey.

January's target local authorities include Wrexham, Torfaen and Swansea.

Visit [facebook.com/neucymrutraining](https://www.facebook.com/neucymrutraining) or email [wulf@neu.org.uk](mailto:wulf@neu.org.uk) to find out more.

■ Skill-Up is a Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) project funded by the Welsh Government.



## Learning dates for your diary

LEARNING is at the heart of NEU Cymru and we take pride in the local training that we provide for education professionals, local officers and workplace representatives.

We represent the largest group of education professionals in Wales and our belief in the power of learning for all is reflected in our provision of learning opportunities for NEU Cymru members.

### TRAINING FOR REPS

The union's one- and three-day training courses for all new and existing workplace reps have been a great success as they give reps the tools and confidence to make a real difference to members' lives.

Having listened to feedback received from those reps who have already attended, a significant change has been made to the way the courses are delivered.

Foundation and Advanced reps courses are now available as a full three-day course, where reps will attend for all three days in one block, or as a modular course where the three days can be done separately over a period of time.

### Foundation courses

7 February – modular course, day 1 –

Future Inns, Cardiff  
12-14 February – three-day course, Gwynedd (venue TBC)  
19-21 February – three-day course, Holiday Inn, Newport  
March – three-day course (Welsh Medium), Gwynedd (dates and venue TBC)

### Advanced courses

4-6 March – three-day course, Future Inns, Cardiff

If you're interested in becoming a workplace rep and attending one of the above courses, contact the NEU Cymru office – and remember, reps are legally entitled to attend these courses.

There are courses also available through the new WULF project and a constantly updated list of

these courses, together with the ability to register for them, can be found at [eventbrite.co.uk/o/national-education-union-cymru-training-10916965546](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/national-education-union-cymru-training-10916965546)

### Your ideas for future training

If you would like the union to consider organising a particular course, then please contact either Lisa Williams at [lisa.williams@neu.org.uk](mailto:lisa.williams@neu.org.uk) or Beth Roberts at [beth.roberts@neu.org.uk](mailto:beth.roberts@neu.org.uk)

All courses must fall within the guidelines of our four main priority areas:

- Essential skills
- Career progression and development
- Health and wellbeing
- Welsh language learning

**Check your email inbox for information on the latest training opportunities. Like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/neucymrutraining](https://www.facebook.com/neucymrutraining), follow us on Twitter at [@neucymrutrain](https://twitter.com/neucymrutrain) and visit [neu.org.uk/learning-and-events](https://www.neu.org.uk/learning-and-events)**

### Qualified teacher in every class

DISCUSSING the “concerning” rise of unqualified staff teaching in classrooms, Gerry Reynolds from Tawe Afan Nedd warned: “We will reap what we sow if we allow unqualified staff to teach in our schools. Children get one bite of the cherry. Every single day of education counts. Let’s get a qualified teacher in every classroom.”

### Taking staff wellbeing seriously

BETHAN Jones (see page 4), from Vale of Glamorgan, almost quit teaching altogether two years ago but then found work in a school that genuinely values staff wellbeing

Bethan told conference: “I love teaching, my school, my work family, and I have a good work-life balance. I feel valued and respected as a teacher and I feel appreciated and valued in my job. All teachers and school staff should feel the same in their jobs.”

### Fair funding for Welsh schools

CLARE Jones, from Rhondda Cynon Taf, denounced the lack of funds for Welsh schools.

“We’re tired of having to make do and mend – and the funding formula is less per pupil than it is in England.

“School budgets are stretched, on a knife edge. Children get less, schools are forced to rob Peter to pay Paul.”

### Boycott high stakes testing

THE high-stakes testing culture in primary schools was slammed by Cardiff delegate Jane Jenkins (right), who moved a motion to hold a ballot to boycott the tests.



“These tests need to be abolished as a matter of urgency,” Jane told conference, because testing of primary school children is “detrimental to both pupils and their educators”.

“Everyone is a genius, but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid. Our children are not numbers, they’re the future, now!”



## Making News journalism toolkit launched

NEU Cymru launched the Making News Toolkit for Schools at a lunchtime session during conference facilitated by **Emma Meese** (pictured above).

The project is a collaboration between NEU Cymru’s Welsh Government-funded Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) project and Cardiff University’s Centre for Community Journalism (C4CJ).

This toolkit is a free, online, train-the-trainer pack, which aims to equip primary school pupils with the basics for news reporting. It is available in English and Welsh.

It teaches the next generation of citizens to examine news and information and aims to

combat the spread of so-called fake news in the digital age.

NEU Cymru WULF co-ordinator Beth Roberts, who initiated the toolkit, said: “This is a really exciting collaboration between C4CJ and NEU Cymru’s WULF project, and we’re also grateful to the teachers who piloted it in their schools.”

Emma Meese, Cardiff University’s director of community journalism, said: “We ran a pilot three years ago in two primary schools in Merthyr and I’m overjoyed, that by working with the NEU’s WULF project, we can now roll out this vital resource to all schools across Wales.”

Visit [communityjournalism.co.uk](http://communityjournalism.co.uk)

### Welsh lament

THE fact that Wales – known as The Land of Song – is the only country in the UK without a national plan for music was a matter of deep regret for conference delegates, who called on the Welsh Government to right this wrong.

Jennie Williams, from Rhondda Cynon Taf, spoke with passion about how music enriched her life growing up. “You can change lives through music.”

Sam Rogers – among other delegates who spoke fondly of the importance of music in the lives of children growing up in Wales – asked: “What’s happened to singing? In the old days we used to sing – the whole

school, every day. Can we bring singing back? Just for the joy of it!”

### Raising hell against cuts

JOHN Unsworth, from Ynys Môn, called on delegates to campaign against school funding cuts by adopting social movement methods – with reference to Raising Expectations, Raising Hell (pictured) by Jane McAlevey – to win the school cuts campaign. He pointed to the [schoolcuts.cymru](http://schoolcuts.cymru) website as an important resource to help mobilise the entire community.



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## Here to help

AS the largest education union, NEU Cymru can offer members an unrivalled service.

Our professional team is here to provide expertise to our network of workplace representatives and district and branch secretaries.

If you have a problem at work or want to know more about member services, contact:

- your workplace representative;
- your branch secretary;
- Adviceline;
- NEU Cymru office.

## NEU Cymru

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## Workload and the curriculum

DAI Edwards (right), from Flintshire, warned of the stressful workloads for teachers and the need for it to be taken into consideration with the new curriculum.



"Teaching is one of the most stressful careers you can choose," he said.

## Speaking out for mental health

KATHLEEN Steelandt, from Denbighshire,

spoke passionately of the need to address the mental health crisis among education workers.

"We're superstars!" she said. "But sometimes we forget to put ourselves first. It's often only when we can't continue that we realise we're not well."

"Burnout leaves us with not enough juice in our batteries to keep going. Let it not be the elephant in the room. Let it not have the stigma of weakness. Let us speak out against mental ill health."

The motion called for a mental health charter backed up by legislation.

## Supply teachers are teachers too!

A MAJOR debate was held on the exploitation of supply teachers in Wales – despite the introduction of a new framework agreement.

Sheila Jones, from Caerphilly, denounced the "unjust" way some agencies who have signed up to the new framework have managed to find a way to avoid paying the agreed rates.

The new supply teachers' framework came into effect this September, and the minimum pay rate must be the equivalent of a teacher on the minimum amount on the Main Pay Range – but agencies are getting around this.

"Supply teachers need fairness, justice and equality," Sheila said.

Angela Sandles (right), from Monmouthshire, added that not a single agency has been sanctioned for offering employers supply teachers "off-framework".



Urging all delegates to support the motion calling for whistleblowing and strengthening legislation, Angela said: "Every teacher is just one term away from being in our position."

■ The NEU is committed to calling for all teachers to be employed directly – and to abolish profiteering agencies altogether.



**"It's been fantastic. So many crucial issues I'm passionate about. It's definitely worth coming, just to experience it, get up to speed with all of the issues in education and meet new people."**

**Bethan Jones, first-time delegate, Vale of Glamorgan**