THE Institute of Technology, Tallaght, was buzzing with entrepreneurial spirit last Friday, when nearly 200 local students showed they meant business when they presented their companies in the County Finals of the Student Enterprise Awards.

An inspirational event, which bodes well for the future of job creation and businesses in the county, the Enterprise Awards saw more than 60 student businesses showcased at the County Final – which was a hive of enthusiasm, creativity and healthy competition.

Since last September, more than 850 enterprising secondary school students have been attending workshops, alongside researching and running their own viable businesses – many of which have been working at a profit.

Competing across Junior, Intermediate and Senior Categories, the students were interviewed by an experienced panel of judges before the awards for First Place, Second Place, Most Innovative, Best Display, Craftmanship, Corporate Social Responsibility and Sales Award were announced at a presentation ceremony.

The judging panel was made-up of Diane Richmond, Partas, Tom Rooney, Synergy Centre, IT Tallaght, John Byrne, Logic Fleet Management Ltd, Karla Cofley, Nic and Ally, Pasqueline Tierney, IT Tallaght and John Clarke of Clarke Warner Consultancy.

All students competition for the hotly contested trophies, a prize fund of more than €2,500 and the chance to represent their County at the National Finals in Croke Park on April 2.

After tough deliberation, the three business projects chosen to represent the County included Ballyroan Bakers Cookery Book in the Junior Category – which, devised by student Dara Ward from Coláiste Éanna, boasted tasty recipes shared by people within his community.

Accessoknits, which started by Coláiste de hÍde students Cara Ní Ronain and Grace Ní hIci, bagged 1st prize in the Intermediate Category for its attractive and practical reversible handmade bags and purses, while Gael Sael from Coláiste de hÍde also won 1st place in the Senior category for its innovative approach to building the profile of the Irish language through unique signage they have developed.

The Maurice O’Connell Perpetual Trophy was awarded for the third year in a row to Enterprising School of the Year Coláiste de hÍde for the “energy” and “enthusiasm” invested by both students and teachers across all categories of the awards.

This award was presented by John Kearns of Partas, which sponsors the trophy, to teachers Marcus Ó Leanachain and Stiofáin Ó Diomasaigh.

The awards are supported by the South Dublin County Enterprise Board, which was established in 1993 to provide business support services at local level, with sponsorship from IT Tallaght.

For further information on the competition visit www.sdenterprise.ie.