

NPCpp Welcomes the Publication of a Revealing ERSI Study

A recent study by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) has found that some parents are discouraged from getting involved in school life because they feel the teachers are not very approachable or the school discourages involvement, the study entitled *'Behind the Scenes? A Study of Parental Involvement in Post-Primary Education'* was co-authored by Professor Emer Smyth (ERSI) and Dr. Delma Byrne (NUI Maynooth).



Professor Emer Smyth (ESRI)

The study found that work and childcare commitments were the most frequently cited potential barriers to parents getting more involved with their child's school.

However, one in four parents said some teachers discouraged their involvement because they were not very approachable. And one in six said they felt the school did not want parents involved.

Parents' childhood experiences of school also emerged as a potential barrier. "Thus working-class parents may be more reluctant to approach the school about particular issues because school had been a negative experience for them," the report said.

The ESRI said the report, which also involved the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Department of Education and Skills,

was "the most comprehensive study to date of Irish parents' involvement in their children's education". It draws on surveys of and in-depth interviews with, parents and teachers and builds on the ongoing Post-Primary Longitudinal Study which is following students in 12 schools.

Professor Smyth and Dr Byrne found that one of the most striking findings was the extent of parental involvement in post-primary education.

The study found that parents were the main source of advice for young people making choices on issues such as picking subjects and third-level options.

Informal parental involvement, through discussing educational decisions, was associated with improved exam performance among young people, it said.

The study found that formal contact with the school, such as involvement in the Parents' Council, was generally limited to more highly educated, middle-class parents.

"Generally, working-class parents with lower levels of education tend to have less formal contact with the school," the authors said. "Where they have contact, it is more likely to be in response to difficulties with their child's behaviour or lack of educational progress."

The study also found that higher professional parents were more likely to send their child to a school outside the local area. Some middle-class parents planned ahead by taking into account feeder primary schools when picking a post-primary school.

While it found that parents were broadly satisfied with their children's schooling, levels of dissatisfaction were greater with the junior cycle curriculum than with the senior curriculum.

More than one-third of parents felt their children took too many

To **all** Parents of Pupils attending Post Primary Schools.
You are invited to attend the
**National Parents Council
Post Primary
Annual Conference 2011
14th – 15th October,
Sheraton Hotel, Athlone,
Co Westmeath**
Contact Sandra Boylan @ 01
8302740 or
sandra_boylan@npcpp.ie

subjects at junior cycle level. Concern was also expressed about the lack of formal guidance on the long-term implications of taking or dropping subjects at this level.

Concerns about career guidance were highlighted at senior cycle with one in four parents saying they were not satisfied with this aspect of their child's school.

The importance of providing parents with information to help them assist their children in making choices about their education was highlighted by the study.

It also said most parents were happy with the information they received from the school but there was "scope to improve the provision of information to parents of post-primary students on the options open to their children".

Post-primary schools should be encouraged to develop "a clearly defined school policy or plan for productive and effective parental involvement".

The study goes on to state that many parents would like to see increased academic guidance in the early years of second-level education when children were making decisions about subject choices.

It also noted the request from parents for a greater focus on computer skills, life skills and on

preparing children for the world of work.

NPCpp welcomes the report and said the finding that some teachers and schools discouraged parental involvement tallied with its own findings. It also called on schools to provide better support to students and parents when they were faced with narrowing down subject choices at junior cycle level.

Important 2011 Dates for Parents/Guardians and Examination Students

February 1st: Deadline for CAO applications

April 4th to 15th: Leaving Certificate oral examinations

May 1st: Closing date for receipt of late CAO applications

May - before May 15th CAO applicants will receive a Statement of Application record showing details of their individual application (recommend student review)

June 8th: Leaving and Junior Certificate examinations begin

June 23rd: Junior Certificate examinations end

June 24th: Leaving Certificate examinations end

July 1st: Final date for receipt of change of mind CAO applications

August: 17th: Leaving Certificate examination results are released by State Examinations Commission

August 17th: Launch of the NPCpp Leaving Certificate Helpline (Telephone No: 1800 265165)

August 22nd: CAO round one University/College offers released

August 29th: Closing date for acceptance of CAO round one University/College course offers

August 31st: CAO round 2 offers posted

September 7th: Closing date for acceptance of round two University/College course offers

September 7th: closing date for receipt of 2011 Leaving Certificate Examination appeals (subject/grade) by State Examinations Commission

September: Junior Certificate examination results released by State Examinations Commission - *to be decided.*

October: closing date for receipt of 2011 Junior Certificate Examination appeals (subject/grade) by State

Examinations Commission.
- *to be decided.*

Confusion, CAO applications, Change and Future Options

Nothing brings focus like the deadline for the completion by students of the CAO application form. Future employment patterns will no doubt have influenced many students in their course choices while completing their CAO application. Questions arise as to whether the students picked correctly and in the long run are 3rd level qualifications important to the future employability of graduates. Be under no doubt, qualifications matter more than ever, as the employment crisis continues in Ireland and internationally. Employment opportunities do arise as the labour market is not static. Even in recessionary times job opportunities arise and 3rd level graduates are more employable than those who have completed a second level educational qualification alone.

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs confirmed in the National Skills Bulletin 2009 that shortages have been identified in the specialised high skills areas of IT, Science, Sales/Marketing, Health, Accountancy, Engineering and Management. Demand for vacancies in these areas of endeavour will normally be confined to those with third level qualifications and with specific expertise and experience. Parents/Guardians/Student concerns as to whether the 2011 Student CAO application choices were the correct choices often arise. In many areas of academic endeavour at 3rd level there are a multitude of programmes and courses and concern arises as to whether the Student CAO choices were the correct choices. CAO applicants may use the change of mind facility up to July 1st, 2011 and so Parents/Guardians should reassure their son/daughter that they can change their CAO course choices, up to that date.

To all Parents of Pupils attending Community & Comprehensive Schools
You are invited to attend the
Parents Associations of Community & Comprehensive Schools Conference 2011
4th – 5th March,
Clayton Hotel, Ballybrit, Galway
Contact Connie Carolan
@ 0872350489 or
ccarolan@esatclear.ie

In the interim Students should continue to become as informed as possible on specific third level courses available to them in the 2011/2011 academic year. Parents/Guardians must encourage students to continue to discuss their college options with their parents, their teachers, the School Guidance Counsellor and anybody else who can inform them on the programmes available. Questions arise as to whether the Student has the aptitude, capacity or ability to undertake a specific course of study. Where do students see themselves working in the future? They must do their research to help them become as informed as possible. Reassure your son/daughter that there is plenty of time for changing one's mind about specific courses chosen, deferring programme choices where necessary, re-applying for new programme choices in a future CAO application year, securing relevant work experience that may be helpful in assisting the student make a more informed third level programme choice.

The Irish Times, the Irish Independent and Examiner all provide regular 'Going to College' advertisement features at timely intervals that are very informative and helpful to second level students reviewing their career and third level options. Also, actually visiting Universities/Colleges of Technology/PLC Colleges of Further Education to discuss programmes

and courses of study with Professors/Lecturers is very helpful.

All Universities/Colleges of Technology also publish informative publications outlining the programmes/courses of study available, syllabus content and student opportunities.

Finally, it is always possible for a student to take 'a year out' or a 'gap year' while becoming more informed about the third level career options they might wish to choose for themselves. Many students postpone going to college until they are mature enough to cope with the pressures, financial, social and academic, that will face them in University/College of Technology/PLC College. Maturity and clarity of mind are essential assets for any student contemplating going to University/College/PLC College. A student does not have to go to University/College of Technology/PLC College in the year immediately after completing their Leaving Certificate.

(This article was first published in the NPCpp Newsletter 3, 2009/10)

To all Parents of Pupils attending Christian Bros. & other Catholic Secondary Schools
You are invited to attend the
Annual Federation of CBS Parent Councils Conference 2011
Saturday 9th April
Maldron Hotel, Midway, Abbeyleix Road, Portlaois Co. Laois
Contact President, Declan Hogan
@ 087 9971958 or fedcbs@gmail.com

A Parent's Guide to Drugs

Drugs and drug use strikes at the very heart of parents' deepest concerns. Talking with your children about drugs and drug use can be quite a challenge. Many parents feel they don't know enough about the

subject or they may think that young people will not listen to them.

Parents do make a difference

You know your children better than anyone else. You know their character, their moods, their strengths and weaknesses. So don't underestimate what you as a parent can do. Research shows that parents can influence both the views and behaviour of their children towards drug use.

Encourage communications

Because you know your children, you'll know when it is a good time to bring up the subject, and when it's best to leave it for another time. Drugs should be treated like any other subject you discuss with your children. Encourage your children to talk to you, and above all, listen to what they have to say. Before you talk with them, think about what you want to say.

Inform yourself about the facts,

so that you can have a balanced discussion. Our fears about drugs are often reinforced by sensational media coverage or by misinformation and myths. Many 'new' and 'dangerous' drugs we hear about are often just new slang names for drugs already around. Once children reach a certain age, scare tactics don't work anymore. You'll need balanced information, and remember - your children may not know as much about drugs as you think they do.

What else can you do?

You can help your child develop a sensible attitude towards drugs, partly by setting an example yourself.

- Know where your children are, who they are with and how much money they have with them when they go out.
- Get to know their friends.
- Set reasonable limits about when they can go out and when they

To all Parent's of Pupils attending Minority Religion & Protestant Schools
you are invited to attend the
Co-operation of Minority Religion & Protestant Parents Association (C.O.M.P.A.S.S)
A.G.M. 2011
26th March
Wesley College, Ballinteer, Dublin 16,
10.00am - 1.00pm
Contact Pat O'Malley @ 0877807809 or PatriciaJane@eircom.net

should be home

- Encourage children to get involved in healthy activities such as sports, hobbies or youth organisations

Typical reasons why young people may experiment with drugs include curiosity, peer influence or a desire to escape boredom or worries. They may believe it's a fun or fashionable thing to do, or simply because they enjoy the effect the drug has on them.

Possible signs of drug taking

Often parents ask how they can tell if a young person is using drugs. Lists of 'signs and symptoms' need to be approached with caution, as many of the possible signs may well have other causes.

- Sudden changes in mood
- Loss of appetite
- Unusual tiredness/falling asleep during the day
- Lack of interest in schoolwork, sports, hobbies
- Change in friends and people they hang out with
- Unexplained disappearance of money or belongings from home
- Telephone calls that frighten the young person
- Physical signs, such as unusual spots or sores on arms or around the nose and mouth

If you discover your child is using drugs, don't panic.

Find out the details of their drug taking - what they've been taking,

To all Parents of Pupils
attending Vocational Schools
and Community Colleges
You are invited to attend
the

**Parents Association for
Vocational Schools and
Community Colleges Congress
2011**

**15th – 16th April,
Abbey Central Hotel, Donegal
Town, Co Donegal**

Contact Pauline O'Brien @
paulineobrien8@eircom.net

or
Jackie O'Callaghan
0877887363

for how long, and why. A trained professional can help you assess the situation and decide what action is necessary.

Drugs education is not just your job schools and the wider community also have a role to play.

Find out what your children are being taught about drugs in school. If the school has a drugs policy, find out what it says. Education works better when everyone is giving the same messages.

Why do young people use drugs?

What to do in an emergency if you find a young person drowsy or unconscious, it's important you know what to do.

- Firstly, stay calm
- Dial 999 or 112 and ask for an ambulance
- Ensure the person's airway is clear
- Turn them on their side and try not to leave them alone (take care when turning to avoid possible contact with needles or sharp objects)
- Give any powders, tablets, etc that you find to the ambulance personnel

Where to go for more information/help

A free informational booklet on drugs is available through the National Drugs Awareness campaign by ringing **1850 719 819** or by logging onto **www.drugsinfo.ie**. The Health Service Executive (HSE) has staff trained in drugs education, counselling and treatment that can be contacted through your local HSE Health Area.

Other useful contacts for information and support include your local family doctor, pharmacist, community Garda, Regional Drugs Task Force, Local Drugs Task Force or community drugs awareness group. *(Extracts from information leaflet developed as part of The National Drugs Strategy www.drugsinfo.ie)*

*"Education is the most
powerful weapon which
you can use to change the
world"*

Nelson Mandela
1918 –

NPCpp Support for National Study on Youth Mental Health

The School of Psychology, UCD and Headstrong, The National Centre for Youth Mental Health are conducting the first national study of youth mental health in Ireland. Headstrong is a new organization working with communities in Ireland to ensure that young people aged 12 to 25 years are better supported to achieve mental health and wellbeing. This research is particularly important as there is limited information available on mental health and wellbeing among young people living in Ireland. The information that is received from this survey will help to develop services and supports for young people that meet their needs, and help them with any areas of difficulty they are having.

The study will be completed by 10,000 young people aged 12-25 years across the country. In order to conduct this study, the School of Psychology, UCD and Headstrong will be contacting a random sample of post-primary schools from around the country to ask schools for permission to invite their students to participate. All participating schools will be provided with information leaflets and consent forms for parents, and all parents and students will be fully informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason

The study takes the form of a survey and will ask young people about a number of issues, such as their life satisfaction, their ways of coping with stress, their self-esteem and mood and their strengths and difficulties. This research uses a model that looks at the young person, their social networks (e.g. family, friends) and their community. Students will be reminded not to include their names or any identifying information on the surveys. This is important in order to assure students and their parents that the responses students provide will be completely confidential. The research team will provide contact details for anyone who wants to follow-up any issues directly with them, and they will give each participating student a support card with suggested websites and helplines that they can contact for further information on specific topics. The survey was developed following a review of the international literature on youth mental health. The survey has been piloted among 1,070 Irish adolescents, aged between 12-18 years and was found to be suitable for use with young people. It is hoped that this research will contribute to more accurate screening and risk assessment for mental health and well-being by identifying risk and protective factors particular to young people in Ireland.

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CHY 12800

Open: Monday – Friday,
10.00 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.