



Hello All,

On foot of our very successful conference in the Sheraton Athlone Hotel, we at NPCpp would like to thank all parents and Parent Associations who took the time from their busy schedule to attend. I do hope that those of you, who attended, enjoyed it and went away with plenty of helpful information. I would ask that you keep an eye for our conference dates next year and plan ahead. I hope too, that you will bring just one other parent with you and from there, we can garner more support for the parent movement, which is so relevant in a time of great change in the education and future of our students. We would ask also, that you email us with suggestions for topics that you would like to see addressed at the conference, as it is imperative that what we provide for any parent what is truly at the heart of parental needs. As we approach the Christmas season I would ask those of you with exam students to be aware of deadline dates for project work and for the Leaving Cert students, the CAO dates and the filling of the CAO application form. This process is probably one of the most important things your young man or woman will do during this year. Therefore, I urge you to be part of this process with your student and if you are unsure, talk to the guidance councillor at your school and make sure that your student is taking the steps to maximise the benefit of their Leaving Cert result. Encourage your students but do not pressure them.

I would like to wish you and your families a very happy, peaceful and safe Christmas and know that life is short and allow yourselves and your students time to relax as well and to smile a little and have fun. It is good to do this now and again. !!

Jackie O'Callaghan
PRO. NPCpp

POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION FORUM PRESS RELEASE

Education cuts: Parents' deepest fears

Speaking at the launch of the Post-Primary Education Forum (PPEF) pre-budget submission on Monday, November 28th 2011, the President of the National Parents' Council Post Primary, Tommy Walshe said: "The impression that schools are coping with education cuts is a false one. After three years of cuts I think you could say that every second-level school in the country is struggling. Parents are extremely concerned about this." The PPEF is a forum involving the National Parents' Council Post Primary, school management associations and teachers in the post primary sector. The forum campaigns on issues of common concern to the education partners. "It is unthinkable that this situation would be made worse by the Government increasing the pupil-teacher ratio or reducing funding for schools in Budget 2012," said Mr Walshe.

Mr Walshe explained that there have been cuts to the per-capita grant and other grants to schools every year since Budget 2009: "As a result, an increasing proportion of total annual expenditure in a post-primary school must be raised through fund-raising in the local school community. Much of this work is done by parent volunteers. In the current economic crisis such levels of fund-raising are no longer sustainable."

An increase in the pupil-teacher ratio in 2009 has also had a devastating impact on schools, according to the President of the National Parents' Council (Post Primary). "At this time of rising second-level school population, there has been a serious increase in class sizes. This has impacted heavily on all students, but most especially on those who require additional support and assistance."

"The importance of education to our past and our future economic well-being has been emphasised again and again; not only by parents, teachers and schools, but by economists, politicians and business leaders."

"The cost of short-termism in educational investment will be staggering. Education is not only an investment in our children; it is an investment which benefits all of society for generations. It costs €77,222 to keep a single prisoner for one year and the stark statistic that 90% of prisoners in the State are early school leavers should speak for itself."

The 10 deepest cuts

- Education has come under attack in the last three budgets. The deepest cuts for second-level students, parents, teachers, and schools have been:
- An increase in the pupil-teacher ratio
- The loss of subjects and programmes and increases in class sizes
- A moratorium on posts of responsibility; teacher posts which involve pastoral care work are disappearing from schools
- reductions in funding for schools (capitation grant)
- The loss of extra-curricular activities (football, musicals, camera clubs, etc) due to resource pressures
- Withdrawal of many English-language teachers
- Abolition of resource teachers for Travellers and visiting teachers for Travellers
- Curtailment of a supervision/substitution scheme which schools rely on for school excursions/ educational trips
- Increase in the cost to parents of school transport for students
- Reduction in supports for students with special needs

Ends.

Leadership and Learning in Post-Primary Schools

Whole-School Evaluation - Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL) evaluates whole-school issues with a particular focus on the quality of management and leadership and the quality of teaching and learning in post-primary schools.

What happens during a WSE-MLL?

During the evaluation inspectors will:

- visit classrooms and observe the teachers and the students at work
- meet students, including representatives of the student council to hear views and opinions of students
- engage with students in classrooms and other areas of the school
- review samples of the students' work
- talk to the teachers and discuss their teaching with them
- meet with the principal, deputy principal and other teachers to discuss the work and management of the school
- review key school documentation.

How are parents involved in the WSE-MLL?

A meeting takes place with representatives of the parents' association as part of the evaluation. Before the evaluation takes place you can share your views on the school with the officers of the parents' association. You can also contact the parents' representatives on the board of management and inform them of your views. An important aspect of WSEMLL is the use of questionnaires for both parents and students. These are normally issued to students in second year and fifth year and to their parents. The completed questionnaires provide an insight into the views of parents and students on the performance and operation of the school and are an important source of evidence as part of the evaluation.

The WSE-MLL report

Arrangements for the issuing and publication of inspection reports are described in Publication of School Inspection Reports - Guidelines (2006), which is available on the Department's website. The final report is sent to the chairperson of the board of management, the principal, the patron/trustee (CEO of the Vocational Education Committee if the school is a VEC school), the chairperson of the parents' association and the chairperson of the student council.

The WSE-MLL report is concerned with the work of the school as a whole. It affirms positive aspects of the school's work and suggests areas for development. The report provides an external view of the work of the school and it is intended that the findings and recommendations of the report will facilitate development and improvement in the work of the school and school self-evaluation. Once the report is issued to the school it should be considered in detail by the board of management. The board is invited to provide a written response to the findings and recommendations of the report. The report will be published on the Department of Education and Skills website. Normally, the board's response will be published with the report.

WSE-MLL

WSE-MLL is one of a range of evaluation models used by the Inspectorate of the Department of

Education and Skills at post-primary level. Subject inspection is the most frequent form of evaluation in post-primary schools. Subject inspections focus on teaching and learning in a specific subject while WSE-MLL looks at teaching and learning in a range of subjects and levels.

WSE-MLL evaluates the following key areas:

- Quality of school management and leadership
- Quality of learning and teaching in a range of subjects and levels
- The implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations
- The school's self-evaluation process and capacity for school improvement.

Following a WSE-MLL, the inspection team collaborate in writing an evaluation report on the work of the school. This report informs parents, boards of management, the Vocational Education Committee (if the school is a VEC school), teachers, students and the Department of Education and Skills about what the school is doing well. It also makes recommendations on how the quality of education provided could be improved.

Who evaluates?

A WSE-MLL involves a reporting inspector (who has overall responsibility for the inspection) and a support inspector. In the case of large schools, with an enrolment of over 700 students, an additional support inspector is involved. The team normally spends four days in the school, one day in advance and three days during the following week. Who is involved in the WSE-MLL? During the evaluation inspectors meet with the following groups or individuals:

- The board of management
- Representatives of the parents' association.

Where the school does not have a parents' association or where the association is not affiliated to the National Parents' Council Post Primary (NPCpp) the inspectors will meet with the parents' representatives on the board of management.

- The principal and deputy principal(s)
- Teachers
- Students

Meeting of the inspector(s) with the parents' association

Where the parents' association is affiliated to the NPCpp, the reporting inspector invites three nominees of the parents' association to a meeting. This meeting is usually held in the school. At this meeting, the parents are invited to discuss:

- Quality of school management and leadership
- Quality of learning and teaching
- The parents' association's awareness of recommendations made in previous evaluation reports

The parents' association's priorities and its involvement in the school's planning process. Other matters agreed in advance with the reporting inspector can also be discussed. A brief record of the meeting with parents will be made available to the board of management.



love:live music 2012 – Music in our Schools!

Be one of the many schools around Ireland celebrating live music by taking part in love:live music 2012! Going into the third year of the event, Music Network would like to encourage EVERYONE to get involved on Friday 20 April 2012 for the day long festivities. Participation can be as simple as you wish, from a showcase of students from the school who perform music, or bringing in a local musician to demonstrate their technique and craft at lunchtime.

love:live music / National Music Day is a celebration of all forms of music in Ireland through free nationwide music events. Events range from performances by National performing groups, to music in the workplace events, to gigs in venues around the country, to music in schools and colleges. Find out if others in your area are interested in participating and come together for a whole village/town/city event!

For more information contact Music Network on 01 6719429 or email info@lovelivemusic.ie



Qualifax is Ireland's National Learners' Database. It is the "one stop shop" for learners. Qualifax provides the most comprehensive information on further and higher education and training

courses. There is a section on the website dedicated to Parents & Families.

For Parents & Families

Is your son or daughter considering continuing their studies?

Is an adult in your house thinking of returning to education?

There are lots of questions to consider when someone in your family is thinking of continuing or restarting their education or training. It may be your son or daughter who is making choices about what courses or programmes interest them. An adult in your house might want to return to education, be looking for ways to improve their skills or simply wishes to learn more about a hobby or leisure interest. Regardless of whom it is, Qualifax aims to help you support that person to make informed choices.

Detailed information is provided in the following areas:

- Search Courses by County, Provider or Course Type
- Calendar of Career Events
- Courses with Supports for People with Disabilities
- Links to Educational & Career Websites
- Overseas Education
- Adult Guidance Centres
- Useful Tools Section

www.qualifax.ie info@qualifax.ie

The National Book Exchange

There has been lots of talk in the media recently regarding the recession, and the effect it is having on education in this country. Of course one of the major problems that parents are facing when sending children to school is trying to find schoolbooks at reasonable prices. They don't seem to exist! Of course the obvious alternative is second-hand books, but again it is actually difficult to find them easily, especially when looking for ones in good condition. In the last year, a group of **secondary students** have themselves launched a project to help ease the pinch that many are now feeling, called the National Book Exchange. The students themselves were shocked were shocked when they saw how much their parents were being asked to fork up for their Leaving Cert. books, and decided something had to be done. The project now offers parents the chance to buy good quality second-hand secondary school books online at very reasonable prices. There is also the added bonus of being able to trade in your old books in exchange for money.

On the website itself, books are divided into categories depending on the quality of their condition, ranging from excellent down to usable, and are priced accordingly. In this way, parents

can be sure that they aren't paying for books that have all the answers already filled in for their child! The purchased books are then posted directly to your door. The project also purchases old school books from the parents themselves. This offers many the chance to collect money with their old books, rather than dust. Parents can simply post the books to the National Book Exchange, and will be offered a price for them. These books are then listed on the website and sellers are paid as each book sells. This service creates an essential bridge between buyer and seller of second hand school books. The organisers will also be visiting secondary schools in Leinster during the Junior and Leaving Cert exams, giving students an even more convenient method to sell their books.

The National Book Exchange not only offers a more economical alternative during the back to school process, but is also very environmentally friendly, encouraging people to purchase second-hand school books, and to sell on their old ones rather than casting them to the bin. The project is run and funded entirely by a group of secondary school students, who saw a major contradiction between the supposedly "free" education being offered, and the high prices that parents are being forced to pay for their children's books. They are now aiming to eventually force the large publishing companies to reduce the prices of their books and make a major step towards an education that truly is free for everyone. As well as providing parents with an invaluable service, the National Book Exchange is an excellent opportunity for all those involved to learn about the running of a project of this scale and nature.

For more information about the National Book Exchange, visit the website at www.nationalbookexchange.ie Or email support@nationalbookexchange.com

Competition for Post-Primary Schools

Send in your research projects and be in with a chance to win a prize!

The logainm.ie team welcomes submission of research projects on the theme of place names. Some projects will be selected and displayed on our site. There are three prizes to be won. **Research project guidelines are available at** <http://www.logainm.ie/scoil/pdf/fiontar-scoil2-11-tionscadal-taighde.pdf>. Various formats, or a mix thereof, may be used to present your research: text, wall chart, mindmap, photographs, drawings/images, poster, booklet, short film, Powerpoint presentation or recorded interview.

There are prizes of €300, €200 and €100 to be won. The prizes will be distributed by the teacher. A selection of entries will be displayed on www.logainm.ie. Please fill in an application form and send it along with your research projects to 'Competition for post-primary schools', Fiontar, Dublin City University, Glasnevin, Dublin 9 or to the email address logainm@dcu.ie. Deadline: 29 February 2012.

Projects may be submitted entirely in Irish or bilingual projects are also eligible provided that at least 50 per cent of the material is in the Irish language. Marks will be awarded based on research methods, content and on the neatness and innovation of the presentation. Enquiries and Application Form at logainm@dcu.ie.



Anti- Racism Creative Competition 2012.

'Show Racism the Red Card is calling for teachers, tutors and youth workers to register their groups to participate in the Anti- Racism Creative Competition 2012. Deadline for entries will be the last Friday of February. The competition is open to primary and secondary schools and also youth services and youthreach centres. An awards presentation will take place in the AVIVA stadium in April.

The outstanding entrants for the 2011 competition were Blakestown Community School. The fifth year group led the way within their school with a range of activities promoting good relations in the school. The group produced an 'anti racism guide book' for other schools as well as some fantastic artwork which is displayed in the school. They also got their parents involved in helping to produce a school cookery book. This was a compilation of recipes from different countries represented in the school's diverse population.

Once a group registers, they will be sent the Show Racism the Red Card DVD for free and with links to the 28 page education pack, downloadable interactive activities and other resource material that will help you promote learning around racism in your group. Once the young people have watched the DVD, they will then be challenged to create their own written, visual or audiovisual piece arising from the themes of the DVD.

For more information check out www.theredcard.ie/competition.php

National Parents' Council Annual Conference 2011



Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Ms. Frances Fitzgerald T.D. officially opening the NPCpp Conference 2011.

This year for the very first time the National Parents' Council Post Primary member organisations (**COMPASS + CSPA + FEDCBS + NPAVSCC + PACCS = NPCpp**) came together to host a joint conference for all parents of students in second level schools in the Athlone Sheraton Hotel on the 14th and 15th of October. The conference was attended by up to 200 parents and Parent Associations from around the country and deemed a great success.

The conference was opened on Saturday morning by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Ms. Frances Fitzgerald T.D. Minister Fitzgerald addressed the issues relevant to parents in the current economic climate

Tommy Walshe president of National Parents Council post primary addressed the conference and spoke on **Parents Week 2011**:

- Recognise the challenging and rewarding work parents do
- Celebrate the valuable work organisations do to support families
- Make parents aware of the support services available to them in their area
- Listen to parents to try to identify their needs and how they can be supported
- Acknowledge that 'children don't come with a handbook and it is ok and often necessary to ask for help

He called on Minister Quinn:

- To fight at the cabinet table to resource education for the future of the children.
- With the cap of 10,575 whole-time equivalent posts in special Educational needs. We have to ensure all students are full supported and have the resources for their individual special need
- To encourage schools to establish book rental schemes and cut the cost to parent.
- Develop funding to encourage technology and move away from heavy books to Fizzbooks.

Our keynote speaker was Senator Ronan Mullen who spoke on all aspects of parental involvement in school life. Three workshops took place; Monica Monahan M.Ed Aggression Studies at Trinity College hosted a workshop on the problem of, and how to tackle bullying in our schools. Eileen Keary B.A, H.Dip (Ed.), Dip(IT) hosted a workshop on Study Skills for your teenagers and Catherine O'Connor MA (Ed) Education Consultant hosted workshops on your teenager's choice of study paths and the many challenges facing them within the second and third level education system.

Frances Shearer National Co-ordinator, RSE. Support Service from the Department of Education and Skills spoke on the new Child Protection Guidelines and John Hammond at the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) gave a presentation on future developments within the education system.

Dr. Amanda Fitzgerald Postdoctoral Researcher in the Youth Mental Health School of Psychology at UCD and in conjunction with Headstrong presented the initial findings of the first national study of youth mental health in Ireland.

Another first to Ireland and NPCpp was the European Parents' Association (EPA) President Mr. Johannes Theiner who spoke on European schools and general aspects of European parents' participation in these schools.

MOVING UP, a new illustrated book for parents of children transferring to second-level schools was officially launched by the book's author John Stevenson, a former Principal. "Moving Up" has been endorsed and supported by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals and NPCpp. Copies can be ordered directly from NPCpp.



Frances Shearer National Co-ordinator, RSE. Support Service, Department of Education and Skills and Tommy Walshe



Senator Ronan Mullen with Vice President of NPCpp, Mr. David Hegarty



Mr. Johannes Theiner, President European Parents' Association (EPA)



Mr. Tommy Walshe, President of NPCpp addressing the Conference



Mr. Johannes Theiner, Mr. Martin Haney, Assistant General Secretary, Department of Education and Skills, Minister of State for Training and Skills, Ciarán Cannon, T.D and Mr. Tommy Walshe at the Gala Dinner



Moate Community School Choir
The choir from Moate Community School very kindly performed for our guests at the Gala Conference dinner. They were superb and indeed received a standing ovation.

National Parents Council Post Primary

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