



This time of year brings its own pressures on Parents and this year even more so. Nevertheless our schools and colleges are buzzing with activity as our children pursue their education and development. We Parents endorse the good work being carried out in educating our children and look forward to playing our part in supporting our school communities in the coming year.

Ni neart go cur le cheile.
Buiochas agus beannachtaí na nollag daoibh.

Regards,
Jim Moore, President
National Parents Council pp

Why a Parents' Association/Council?

A Parents' Association/Council may be defined as a group of parents/guardians whose main concern is the educational development and welfare of their children while they attend a school/college. It is the structure through which parents/guardians in a school can work together for the best education for their children. All parents/legal guardians of students attending the school shall be automatically members of the Parents' Association/Council. However, a Parents' Association/Council does not interfere in the day-to-day organisation of the school/college, nor allow itself to be used as a forum

for complaints or problems relating to individual schools. A Parents' Association/Council is a means of involving parents/guardians more fully in the life of the school and of strengthening lines of communication between home and school.

The Objectives of a Parents' Association/Council are normally seen as (not exhaustive list):

- The advancement of the moral, mental, social and cultural well being of the students of the school and of the community generally,
- The fostering of good relations between parents, teachers, students and the school authorities,
- The election of parents' nominees to the Board of Management,
- To ensure that parents/guardians are aware of their rights and responsibilities in regard to the education of their children,
- To liaise and communicate with school management on expectations of both parents/guardians and school as it relates to the education of their children,
- To promote and encourage a real active partnership within the school community while ensuring that parents are active participants at all levels of the process of the education of their children,
- To promote cooperation and understanding between home and school,
- To create a greater understanding of the child and his/her needs, and so help to improve the quality of his/her general development,
- To assist parents/guardians in acquiring the skills which their role demands,
- To ensure that parents/guardians are consulted

with, listened to and, actively participate in decision making processes which impact and affect the education of their children, and

- Be a voice and support for parents/guardians in the education of their children.

Constitution:

The Parents' Association/Council operates from the terms of a constitution. Copies of draft constitutions for A Parents Association/Council may be obtained from NPCpp (see www.npcpp.ie). The Parents Association/Council should be an elected body, its members being elected by the parents/guardians of the children attending the school/college.

An Active Parents' Association/Council can assist parents/guardians in many ways including the following:

Getting to know your school

- Arrange coffee/social events focused at de-mystifying barriers to parental involvement
- Encourage and promote greater awareness and understanding your school/college, it's curriculum, support services/structures and extra-curricular activity programmes
- Arrange coffee mornings/evenings to provide opportunities for parents/guardians to meet and exchange good practice

Newsletter

- Publish a Parents Association/Council Newsletter and circulate to all parents/guardians at regular intervals updating them on positive initiatives, guidance articles (CAO, subject options, transition year curriculum etc),

student success, important upcoming events and dates in the school calendar, extra-curricular activities at the school, parent/teacher meetings, study skills, annual school calendar etc.

- Newsletter should encourage a two-way flow of information between school and home
- Circulate copies of the NPCpp Newsletter to the membership

Information

- Encourage the development of a school website which is inclusive of a specific parents/guardians section which may be easily accessed by parents/guardian
- Develop and arrange information talks/lectures, discussion groups, and meetings on topics of general interest addressing the following topics (list not exhaustive):

- Homework & study skills
- Retreats
- Careers exhibitions
- Speakers from within parent body
- Parenting
- Religion and teenagers
- Student enrolment procedures
- Curriculum: subject options, career guidance, Transition Year Option, State examinations, CAO & 3rd level student options
- Healthy eating
- Television viewing
- Internet (dangers & helpful assistance)
- Road safety
- Transition from primary school to a new post-primary school (change)
- Adolescence
- Medical: swine flu, MRSA, measles, mental health
- School graduation ceremonies

Home- School Partnership

- Encourage the development of projects planned jointly by parents/Guardians, teachers/school management

- Encourage any activity which is conducive to strengthening home-school links, and to promoting a deeper appreciation among parents/guardians, and students on the role of the school, or which provides practical support for the school and its work
- Providing information and promoting awareness in parents/guardians regarding relevant developments in education

- Book week: visits to public library, arrange visits by authors/librarian/poet, encourage reading skills
- Sale of second hand school books
- Organise a school book lending scheme
- Arrange evening talks for parents/guardians
- Sports/Activity for all day
- Charity events: non-uniform day, daffodil/poppy day,
- Develop with the whole school community a garden of remembrance and/or theme garden
- Table quiz, debates, public speaking events
- Review school policies: e.g. Code of Discipline, Admissions Policy, Critical Incidents, Complaints procedures, Codes of Practice for managing allegations of bullying, harassment and/or sexual harassment of a student/teacher against a student etc
- Organise social events for parents/guardians & students e.g. Debs.
- Support at Parent/Teacher meetings
- Support and/or coach students in specified extra-curricular activities
- Volunteering to travel with a teacher(s) on buses travelling from school to organised events e.g. play (drama), sports event, musical recital, careers exhibition, factory visit, etc

Activity Support

- Assist with particular student extra-curricular sporting, recreational, social or cultural activity involving students at the school
- Arrange for volunteers from parent body to provide additional services at the school e.g. nurse (1st aid), librarian, coaching, English as a foreign language,
- Involve past – pupils to become involved in school programme enhancement activities
- Provide beneficial work experiences opportunities for TYO, LCVP and LCA students
- Fund-raising for a specific school project

Who can assist parents/guardians with the development of a Parents' Association/Council at local school level?

- **COMPASS** - Co-operation of Minority Religion & Protestant Parents Association www.compasspa.ie / Ms. Patricia O'Malley 087 7807809.
- **CSPA** - The National Congress of Catholic Schools Parent Associations www.cspa.ie/ Mr. Tom Lillis 0868261797.
- **FEDCBS** - Fed. of Parent Councils in Christian Bros. & other Catholic Secondary Schools www.fedcbs.ie / Mr. Gerard O'Hara 087 4135506.
- **NPAVSCC** - National Parents' Association for Vocational Schools and Community Colleges www.npavsc.ie /Ms. Rose Tully 086 2608073.
- **NPCpp** – National Parents Council post-primary www.npcpp.ie at telephone No: 01- 8302740.
- **PACCS** – Parents' Associations of Community & Comprehensive Schools www.paccs.ie/ Ms. Connie Carolan 087 2350489.

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(Attention Deficit
Hyperactivity Disorder)
Carmichael Centre for
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Post Primary Education Forum (PPEF)

PPEF is a forum involving the NPCpp, management associations and teacher unions in the post-primary education sector. The Forum provides an ongoing opportunity for all of the named parties to address common issues and to establish a shared viewpoint on priorities for the future development of the second-level education sector. The Forum meets regularly to discuss major issues of mutual concern and from time to time, makes agreed public statements and representations to the appropriate authorities on important aspects of second-level education in Ireland. The membership of the PPEF Forum includes representatives of the following education partners: NPCpp, Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools (ACCS), Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI), Joint Managerial Body (JMB), Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA), National Association of Principals & Deputy Principals (NAPD) and the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) NPCpp is represented at the PPEF meetings by Jim Moore (President), Paul Beddy (Director) and Tom Lillis (Director).

The PPEF seeks to:

- Offer an informed and consensus view on key issues in post-primary education.
- Heighten Government and public awareness of key issues and secure public support for high priority investment in post-primary and further education.
- Establish mutually-agreed overall approaches to policy on key issues and,

- Identify priority areas for development and investment in education.

PPEF continues to work and lobby for sustained investment in post-primary education. NPCpp believes that this is a critical time in education, when we should be consolidating what is effective and worthwhile about our post-primary education system, building on and further enhancing the potential of our young people, our communities and the future of our society by seriously investing in education. PPEF believes that there are many areas that would benefit from an increase in the education budget, and we identify the following equally important priority areas for significantly improved investment:

- Improvement in the pupil teacher ratio so as to reduce class sizes thereby improving the educational chances of our students and widening the scope to offer students more subject choice.
- Implementation in full, of the *Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools, 2006*, to support schools and parents in fostering positive student behaviour.
- An augmented budget for Information Communications Technology (ICT) to be included in the National Development Plan. This budget must include provision for training of **all** teachers in the use of ICT in the classroom.
- An improvement in the allocation of teaching hours to schools for Learning Support (Remedial Education).
- Adequate resources to support students with Special Educational Needs in mainstream post-primary schools before the final rollout of the EPSEN Act.
- Strategic investment in the development of inter-cultural education in our schools.
- The development of a properly resourced national ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Strategy.

- Enhancement and development of schemes to deal with educational disadvantage.

The PPEF calls for greater investment in post-primary education in Ireland. Currently this country shares bottom place in a ranking of 30 OECD countries of annual spend per second level student relative to our country's wealth. Investment in education is precisely that; "investment". The OECD report *Education at a Glance, 2007*, stressed the economic benefits of education, benefits that accrue both to the individual student and to the economy as a whole. It points out also the many indirect benefits of investment in education such as "better health, more social cohesion and more informed and effective citizens".

PPEF meets Oireachtas Joint Committee

The Post-Primary Education Forum appeared before the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science on Thursday, October 22nd, to discuss the effects of the changes in education spending and the importance of protecting investment in education.



L to R: Mr Michael Moriarty(IVEA), Mr Clive Byrne(NAPD), Diarmuid de Paor(ASTI), Ciarán Flynn(ACCS), Mr Paul Beddy(NPCpp), Ms. Deirdre Keogh(IVEA), Mr Noel Merrick(JMB), Mr Michael Redmond(JMB), Mr Declan Glynn(TUI), Mr Don Ryan(TUI), Mr Jim Moore(NPCpp)

Mr. Jim Moore, President NPCpp outlined the rationale behind the PPEF in his address to a press Conference on November 12th 2007, as follows: "Underpinning our education system is the level of investment undertaken by the State, and this is the most important issue of concern to everyone involved in education. Unprecedented economic growth has witnessed increases in educational spending, but the

allocation of funds is well short of our expectations. We would see this forum as having the dual role of (a) supporting the Minister's efforts to increase the overall budgetary allocation to education and (b) highlighting priorities in education."

The PPEF sought this meeting with the Oireachtas Committee in order to influence the politicians of all parties as to the importance of investment in education whether in times of recession or not.

Representing PPEF at the Oireachtas Joint Committee meeting were: Mr. Jim Moore (President NPCpp), Mr. Paul Beddy (Director NPCp), Ms. Deirdre Keogh (Development Officer IVEA), Mr. Diarmuid DePaor (Deputy General Secretary ASTI), Mr. Noel Merrick (President, JMB/AMCSS), Mr. Ciarán Flynn (General Secretary ACCS), Mr. Declan Glynn (Assistant General Secretary, TUI) and supported by observers Mr. Clive Byrne (Director NAPD), Mr. Ferdia Kelly (General Secretary JMB/AMCSS), Mr. Don Ryan (President TUI), Mr. Peter McMnamin (General Secretary TUI), Ms. Gemma Tuffy, (Press Officer ASTI) and Mr. Michael Moriarty (General Secretary IVEA).

The Chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science, Deputy Paul Gogarty, TD, stated:

"Given the current economic climate, members of the Joint Committee will be interested in getting the PPEF's views on how we can deliver better standards of education with the public finances much more constrained than in the past."

The meeting took place at 10 a.m. in Committee Room 2, Leinster House on Thursday, 22nd October.

The meeting began with an introduction by Mr. Paul Beddy, NPCpp outlining the importance of the PPEF, its genesis and the fact that the organisation has been lobbying for increased funding for education. This was followed by a presentation on behalf of the PPEF by Jim Moore. The full text of Jim's presentation is available on the NPCpp website at [HYPERLINK "http://www.npcpp.ie"](http://www.npcpp.ie) under PPEF.

He outlined the effects of the cuts as determined by school surveys conducted by 4 of the partners. This showed larger loss of subjects and loss of programmes. The agreed figure of 900 teacher losses was emphasised, while acknowledging the positives in the new agreement for government, which at best would restore 100 in a year.

Following on the introduction the PPEF were very positively welcomed by the Chairperson, Deputy Gogarty and there followed questions and discussions with the following members of the committee: Dail Deputies Ruairi Quinn, Brian Hayes, Frank Feighan, John O'Mahoney and Senator Cecilia Keaveney. The discussions ranged over the effects of all the cuts and the moratorium on the operation of schools. The overall level of funding of education in Ireland by comparison with other OECD countries, the neglect of ICT in schools and the need for investment in this area were all discussed in detail. The cost of school transport and the effect of Budget 2009 on extracurricular areas and on minority subjects, including the Sciences and Music were all aired.

NPCpp is currently addressing the following issues at its recent

Executive meetings:

Education Cuts
Budget Dec. 2009: implications
School Book Grants
Teacher Strikes
NPCpp Strategic Review
Training for Parent's Associations
Student Health Issues
PPEF
NPCpp Representation on National Committees
25 Years of NPCpp

Parents Unhappy about Industrial Action by Teachers.

As teachers stayed away from classrooms on 24/11/09 parents felt that they and the students were being used as unwelcome pawns in a battle between unions and the government.

Mr Paul Beddy, CSPA, said that "on a one-to-one basis parents have

nothing but admiration for the work and dedication of teachers. But he condemned yesterday's action and the withdrawal from parent-teacher meetings. He argues that unions are treating parents as soft targets, but are shooting themselves in the foot. This is just stupid posturing by the unions. They are adding fuel to the perception in the national psyche of teachers as constant complainers when they have a better and fairer deal than most."

Mr Tommy Walshe, PACCS is upset "the teachers are taking their action when so many other workers are under financial pressure"

Ms. Eleanor Petrie, COMPASS stated "that parents had stood shoulder to shoulder with teachers on many issues. I am very disappointed that the unions are refusing to hold parent-teacher meetings at a time suitable for parents given the support we have given them. Many workers are struggling to hold on to their jobs, and simply cannot afford to have meetings during the day time."

Ms. Rose Tully, NPCpp said: "We believe that these actions will not achieve anything for those involved. It will create an unsympathetic climate among the general public especially among people who have been unfortunate to lose their jobs in recent times."

Parental concern now exists over the possible industrial action by teachers that may develop arising from the Government December 2009 Budget and its implications for the education of our students.

National Parents Council pp

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