



It is with great honour that I greet you all as President of NPCpp.

The big setback this year has been the inclusion of guidance counsellors in the school allocation. Unfortunately this has had a major impact on guidance counselling in schools. Several schools have suffered severely from this but the big loser is the student. The work of the guidance counsellor is so important as they are the one person to whom a student can speak to and seek advice in confidence.

Also, there have been many Parent Association training meetings around the country which have proved to be very successful and which are on-going.

We are also arranging the dates for the new junior cycle information evenings for parents in conjunction with the NCCA. We are now awaiting further details on this important matter.

We all know that this country is going through an economic and financial crisis. The cost to parents of sending children to school is proving a major burden and NPCpp will be urging the Minister of Education and Skills to please take this factor into account in the upcoming budget.

Finally, I would like to thank you the parents for your enormous support on the ground and I hope as President that I will get to meet with more parents around the country. NPCpp will as always, endeavour to work on behalf of parents, to bring your concerns to the relevant bodies.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

**Don Myers,
President, NPCpp**

National Parents' Council Post Primary Affiliation Programme

NPCpp is pleased to announce the implementation of the new **Affiliation Programme** of all Post Primary schools to the National Parents' Council Post Primary. After many years of research, exploratory meetings, consultations with our partners in education and a strategic review, the new programme was launched in October 2012. An affiliation form was posted to every school nationwide, which was addressed to the Chairperson of the Board of Management for their attention. We are delighted to announce that we have had an overwhelming positive response to date.

NPCpp represent **all** parents of post primary pupils on a national level and with the successful establishment of the Affiliation Programme, NPCpp will now have the resources to finally establish a permanent Secretariat. This Secretariat will be accountable to the NPCpp Executive and Board of Directors. The Secretariat will promote the educational interests and values of NPCpp and will be involved in a collaborative process with the other partners in education as outlined in the Education Act 1998. As the national profile of NPCpp increases, more and more demands are being made on our Directors who are acting in a voluntary role. It is imperative that NPCpp have the means to put the Secretariat in place in order to fulfil our future role in supporting and promoting the well-being of parents, guardians and pupils on

the many national boards and committees.

NPCpp will concentrate on a development programme that will include:

- having an effective, trained, parents' association in every school
- assisting parents as the primary educator of the child
- playing an active role in influencing policy at a national level
- communicating with parents on any changes that happen in education
- developing the NPCpp as one of the most significant partners in education with approximately 500,000 parents and 360,000 pupils.

The permanent Secretariat will concentrate on developing policies and working with the Department of Education and Skills and other partners in areas such as:

- the pupil teacher ratio
- guidance provision in schools
- special Needs
- child Protection Guidelines
- school transport
- school ethos
- school books, eBooks etc.
- formal submissions to the Department of Education and Skills and other agencies involved in education
- liaising with and supporting the five constituent bodies
- developing additional training programmes

This will now be the only affiliation fee payable

NPCpp would like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Education and Skills and all the stakeholders for their valued support throughout the year.

The National Parents' Council Post Primary Conference 2012

The NPCpp Conference 2012 took place in the Athlone Sheraton Hotel on Friday 12th and Saturday 13th of October.

We were joined by members of parent associations, parents and guardians from around the country as well as our partners in education i.e. Dept. of Education & Skills (DES), the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), the State Examination Commission (SEC), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) the school management bodies - Joint Managerial Body (JMB), the Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools (ACCS), Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) and the Teachers Unions.

NPCpp encourage parents, guardians and parent association representatives to attend and we feel that in attending the conference, that they will benefit in many different ways from the information garnered over the conference weekend. It is a forum for gathering information but also for sharing. It is also the opportunity to connect with other schools and gain an insight into their experiences in the school environment.



Simon Grehan

Our first guest speaker on Friday evening was Simon Grehan from the Safer Internet Ireland Awareness Centre PDST – Technology in Learning. Simon spoke about the internet, Cyberbullying, the growing use and the pros and cons of technology in the home and in our schools. This is an issue that is important to many parents of young adults and younger children and everyone had the opportunity to put their questions to Simon in the

questions and answers session which followed.



Tommy Walshe

This was followed by Tommy Walshe, Director of NPCpp, who presented an introduction to the NPCpp Parent Association Training Programme, this was well received, extremely informative and gave our delegates the opportunity to learn more about how to be an effective parent association working on behalf of their children and their school. There were so many interesting questions from the floor but sadly we ran out of time and we had to bring it to an end. If you are interested in Parent Association Training for your school please email training@npcpp.ie for more details.



Secretary General, Department of Education & Skills, Mr Seán Ó Foghlú.

The Conference was opened on Saturday by NPCpp President Mr Don Myers. This was followed by our keynote speaker the Secretary General of the Department of Education & Skills Mr Seán Ó Foghlú. The Secretary General spoke on the Education & Training Budget 2012, the Programme of reform across all levels of the Education and Training Sector which can be summarised in four key themes:

- Providing learning for life
- Ensuring quality and relevance
- Supporting inclusion and diversity

- Developing the right systems and infrastructure

He also spoke on Reform of Maths in second level schools, the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, the new Framework for Junior Cycle, the Reform of Teacher Education, School Patronage and other issues of relevance to parents such as erosion of school year as a result of school planning, Education Passport – transfer from primary to post-primary, Consultation on school books scheme, E-books - working with industry to develop common standards, Uniforms – engagement by parents with schools and the Anti - Bullying Forum and Working Group.



Brigit Teevan and Don Myers

Following on, Brigit Teevan spoke on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) – A Parents' Perspective. Brigit has been a facilitator of RSE programmes for over seven years, during this time she has seen changes in adolescents sexuality with regard to attitudes and behaviour and the role parents play in young people's developing beliefs and attitudes to sex and relationships.



Clive Byrne

Clive Byrne, Director of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) gave an insight into the role of NAPD and how they and our other partners in education work to ensure the best possible education for our young adults in the post primary sector. Clive gave a refreshing account of the positives and negatives of today's education system.

Workshops: As always we had three Workshops on offer and our visitors had the chance to attend two of the three.

We had a varied and wide-ranging choice on offer this year:

- **Dr Fergus Heffernan, “Surviving Your Adolescents” How to Manage and Let go of your 13-18 Year Olds.**
Adolescence is a time of massive multiple change. Some of these teen changes take years, while others seem to occur almost overnight. Some changes are exciting while others may be bewildering or even upsetting for teens and parents alike. Fergus took on the unenviable task of educating parents on how to tackle the situations as they arise. This was achieved through the medium of humour and good common sense.
- **Monica Monaghan, National Anti-Bullying Coalition (NABC) – Bullying Behaviour in the School Setting.**
“Worryingly, it seems that the issue of bullying is alarmingly prevalent amongst young people living in Ireland, and is playing a very significant role in defining the difficult transition from youth into adulthood”. With this in mind we had a bullying workshop for the second year in a row and again it was extremely well attended.
- **Ashling Flynn, Mental Health Officer at Belong To – supporting Lesbian Gay Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) young people in our schools.**
Aisling spoke about the great work that her organisation puts in place and gave advice and ideas on how to create positive understanding of LGBT young people and their issues at home and in the school setting.

The workshops were very well attended and the feedback afterwards was exceedingly positive. NPCpp endeavours to offer workshops on the relevant issues of the day in relation to the mental and physical health, wellbeing and education of our young adults. If you would like to propose ideas for the workshops for next year’s conference in

Kilkenny, we would be happy to hear from you at conference@npcpp.ie



Dr Anne Looney

Later in the afternoon Dr Anne Looney, CEO of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) brought parents up to date regarding the new Framework for the Junior Cycle, beyond 2014. Dr Looney spoke on the features involved such as:

- Greater autonomy and flexibility for schools
- Focus on skills
- No less than 8 subjects, no more than 10
- Short courses
- New system of assessment and reporting.

There will be a limit to the number of subjects and short courses that will be included for certification purposes. Most students will include from **eight to ten full subjects** or their equivalent.

There will be a maximum of four short courses (each one equivalent to half a subject) which can be included. This means that most students will take one or other of the following combinations:

7 or 8 subjects + 2 short courses

or

6 subjects + 4 short courses

8 or 9 subjects + 2 short courses

or

7 subjects + 4 short courses

9 subjects or 10 subjects + 2 short courses

or

8 subjects + 4 short courses

In conjunction with the NCCA, NPCpp will be carrying out Information Evenings in relation to the new Framework for the Junior Cycle nationwide in 2013, if you would like to participate, please email npcpp@eircom.net for the list

of dates and venues. If you would like further information regarding the new Framework for the Junior Cycle go to www.ncca.ie

The final session of the conference was the Open Forum: this comprised of the School Management Bodies (JMB and ACCS), NAPD, the State Examination Commission, Dept. of Education and Skills, the TUI and the NCCA. This was a great opportunity for parents and parent association’s representatives to put their views, questions and concerns to the panel. The questions put forward were wide ranging, from issues with viewing scripts post Leaving Certificate to the length of time it takes for results to be updated which can lead to students missing out attending college in the given year and have to wait for the following year to start. There were also questions in relation to Special Needs students and the Junior and Leaving Certificate exams, questions regarding the impending reform of the Junior Certificate and many other topical themes.



L-R Don Myers, Tom Deegan, Principal Officer - DES, Aidan Farrell CEO, State Examination Commission, Dr Anne Looney CEO NCCA, John MacGabhann Gen. Sec. TUI, Ciaran Flynn, Gen. Sec ACCS and Ferdia Kelly Gen. Sec, JMB



Date for your Diary

To all Parent Associations,
Parents and Guardians of
Pupils attending Post Primary
Schools

National Parents' Council
Post Primary
Conference 2013
Kilkenny Ormonde Hotel
8th and 9th of November
2013.

The National Parents' Council Post Primary Helpline 2012

The Leaving Certificate Helpline is organised annually by National Parents Council Post Primary (NPCpp). It is supported by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), Eircom and Independent Newspapers and members of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) provide advice and support to parents and students during the helpline.



Launch of the Leaving Cert Helpline 2012

Mr Gerry Flynn - President IGC, Jackie O'Callaghan - PRO NPCpp, Lisa Comerford - Head of Brand and Communications Eircom and Katherine Donnelly - Irish Independent.

The Leaving Cert Helpline 2012 was as always the culmination of months of planning. The planning starts as far back as January or February with a series of meetings with sponsors, as well as the Institute of Guidance Counsellors.

In the planning stage, we are at all times aware of the need for a voice on the phone in a time of distress for students and parents and in that vein we try to plan the hours for the helpline to maximise the availability of the expertise of the Guidance Counsellors. We are very aware of the availability of information on the Internet, which provides so much information online and at the touch of a button but despite all the information out there the need for "human contact" is very obvious and it is what drives our determination to provide the service as we do.

This year brought an even greater demand for the service. The Helpline was launched on August 13th at the Marino Institute of Education. The lines were opened from 8.00am on August 15th, for 6 days in total. Parents and students availed of the service. In total 1,393 calls were received from

parents and 535 from students. Over the 6 days there were 1,962 calls. The counsellors answered in the region of 4,106 queries in total.

As with all things being provided now, the cost of the helpline is a huge factor and one which without the generosity of our sponsors, Irish Independent, Eircom and the Department of Education and Skills, we would be unable to fund. To all of the people involved at that end, we say a huge **Thank You**



Tom Deegan, Principal Officer, Department of Education & Skills and Brian Howard, IGC, taking a call at Leaving Cert Helpline 2012

Lessons in 'Everything Digital' for Adults

(iPad, Laptop, digital camera, etc)

Help us to introduce and run courses in your school (training and support provided)

Six schools in Wicklow run a programme supported by a Parents' Council member (e.g. Colaiste Chraobh Abhann, Dominican College and Gaelcholaiste na Mara, Arklow).

Benefits of courses are as follows:

Adults (Learners): We feel confident in our use of the 'mobile' now. We can text and we now receive texts from others who did not text us before. We are also making and receiving more calls. The net effect is that we feel more 'in-touch'. Our confidence has been boosted by learning to master the mobile. We enjoyed the engagement with the girls/boys. They are lovely young adults and so knowledgeable and patient.

TY Students (Tutors): We thought that we would feel awkward in the company of adults but we discovered that they are really interesting people and there are some great 'characters'. Now, we know how adults learn and the importance, to them, of 'doing' what they learn and then repeating it in order to remember. Adults

made notes which helped them practice between lessons. Some adults learnt a huge amount. We enjoy being 'the teacher' and sharing our technical/IT skills. Yes - the learning can be slow and patience is needed, but it's not a problem - we enjoy the challenge - it was one of the best modules of our Transition Year.

Principals/TY Co-Ordinators: Remarkably, this programme does not add workload to school staff. These courses are a greater success than we expected. We should have had a programme like this years ago. The intergenerational contact of our students with adults is hugely developmental for teenagers. The Transition Year concept is that life also requires non-academic skills. This programme develops the interpersonal skills of our 15-year-old boys/girls. This programme builds bridges with the local community. We want this programme to continue and spread.

Parents: This module of Transition Year was a maturing experience for our teenager. Our child has learned a valuable understanding of adults and older people in our community and by knowing one adult well (the Learner) can begin to understand how other adults think, learn and live. The experience has given our child an understanding and appreciation for community spirit and an early-in-life opportunity to 'give something back'.

Join our growing team of Mentors and let's make this Wicklow success an all-Ireland success story.

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Open: Monday - Friday,

10.00 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.