



**P-ACCS Presentation to
PACCS Conference 2011**

“Boards of Management & Parents’ Associations”



**How can we best work
together!**

C & C schools

Levels of Responsibility

- Trustee/Patrons
- Board of Management
- Executive (Principal & School Staff)



Role of Boards (Mind-Map)



The Board of Management ..

- Has employer responsibility
- Is the final authority on discipline
- Is responsible for all finances
- Is responsible for accountability on resources
- Must comply with legislation & regulation

BOM in C & C School



What's different for us?

- Accountable directly to the DES & Patrons
- BOM is local and autonomous
- Comprehensive Curriculum & Inclusivity
- Open to all in the 'Community'
- Has the benefit of a State Indemnity
- Parents on Boards from Day 1

Parental Involvement



Irish Constitution

Education - Article 42

1. The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.

Education Act 1998



Section 26 relates to Parents' Association

The parents of students of a recognised school may establish, and maintain from among their number, a parents' association for that school and membership of that association shall be open to all parents of students of that school

Education Act 1998



A parents' association shall promote the interests of the students in a school in co-operation with the board, principal, teachers and students of a school and for that purpose may –

- Advise the Principal or the board on any matter relating to the school and the principal or board, as the case may be, shall have regard to any such advice, and adopt a programme of activities which will promote the involvement of parents, in consultation with the Principal, in the operation of the school

Objectives of Parents' Association

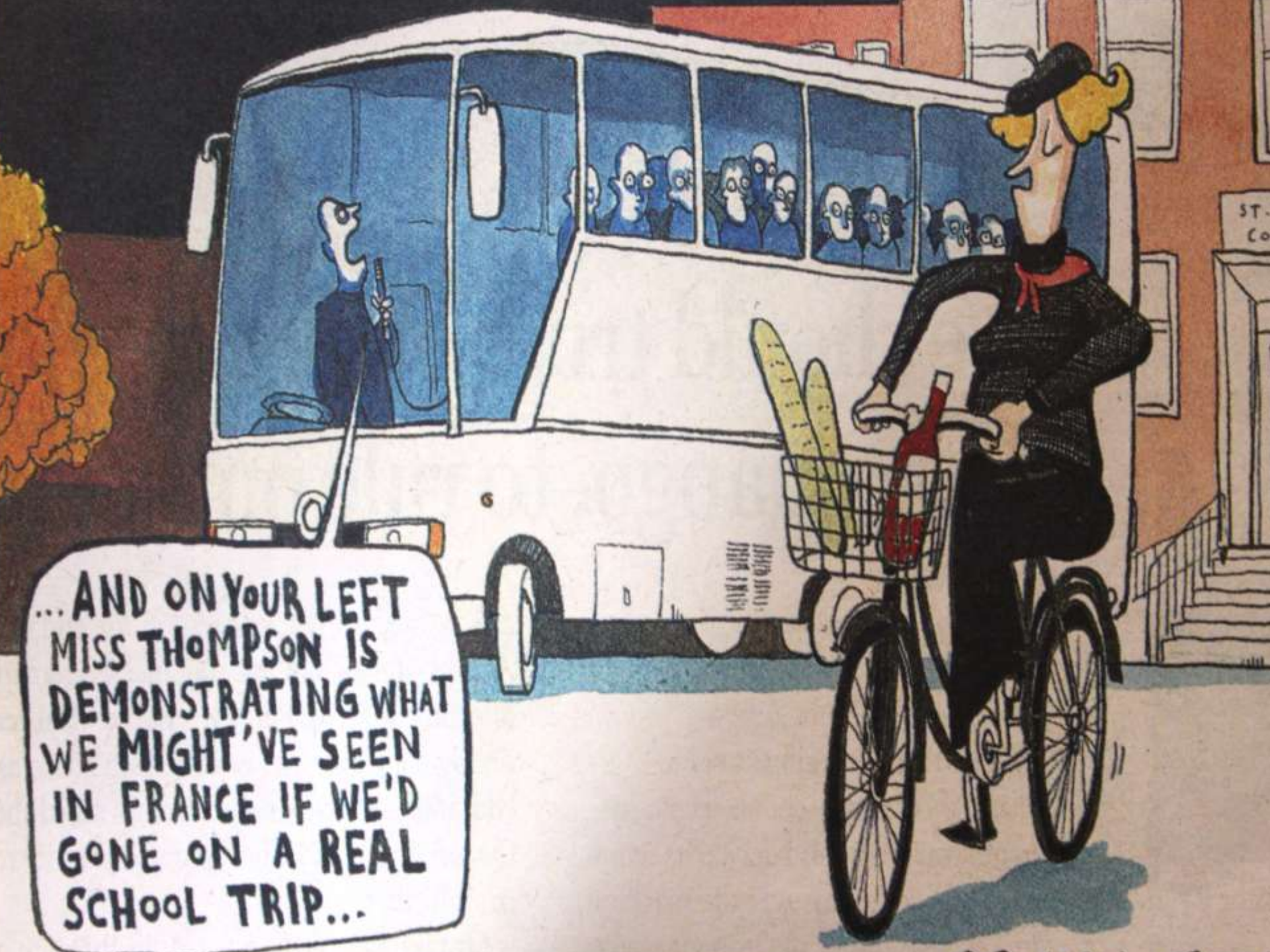


- to make parents aware of their role (rights and duties) in regard to the school – school processes
- to inform parents about the school education of their children and to inform schools about parents' expectations in that regard
- to develop an active partnership within the education community and to ensure that parents are represented and participate at all levels of the educational system
- to assist parents to acquire the skills which their role demands
- to seek to be consulted, and to participate at all levels in the decision-making processes which affect their children.

Role of Parents' Association



- Appear to have a powerful position legally
- But how enforceable is it?
- Board of Management is the statutory entity
- BOM has elected Parent nominees- voice already represented
- What does 'Partnership' mean at local and national level?
- Who exerts power?
- e.g. DES set up out of school P/T meetings but union directives prevented them happening in 2010/11
- What can parents do?
- Fundraising???



... AND ON YOUR LEFT
MISS THOMPSON IS
DEMONSTRATING WHAT
WE MIGHT'VE SEEN
IN FRANCE IF WE'D
GONE ON A REAL
SCHOOL TRIP...

What the ESRI tell us: “Behind the Scenes”



- Parents believe in and value the benefits of post-primary schooling
- Choice of school affects educational experience and later life-chances
- Active school choice is common with a multiplicity of factors taken into account
- Parents are the main source of advice for students in respect of subject/programme choice and what to do after school
- Informal parental involvement through discussion of educational decisions helps exam performance

Behind the Scenes – Parental Report Card



- Broad satisfaction with schooling and with the range of subjects on offer at junior and senior cycle
- Positive about benefits to social and personal development, relationships with others and self-confidence
- Parents more dissatisfied with number of JC subjects, when there is limited range of options or streaming is practiced
- Less positive about students being prepared for the world of work, life-skills and computer skills
- 25% would like improved career guidance, more provision

Behind the Scenes – Parental Contact



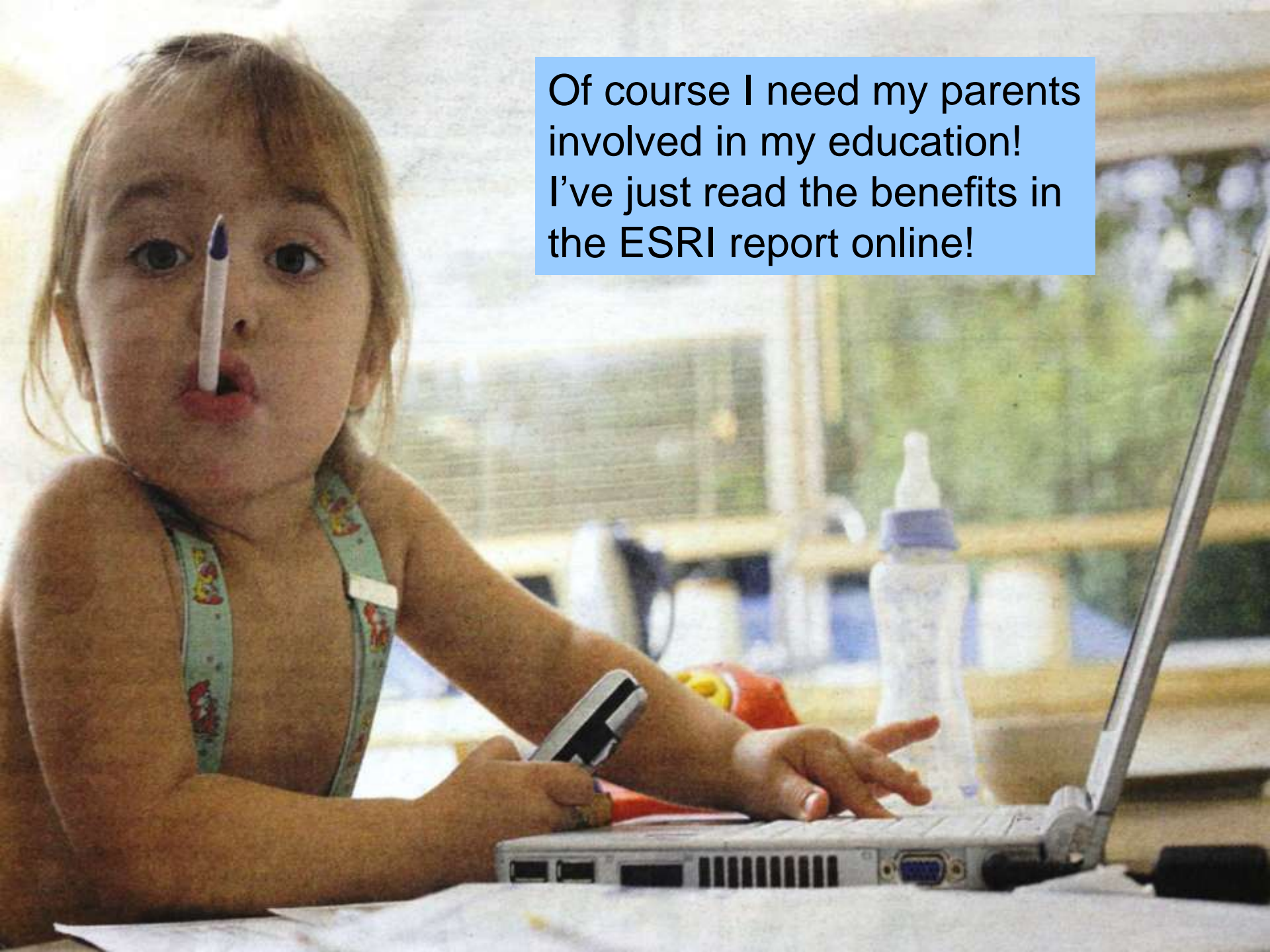
- Contact with parents varies across schools – some have well developed structures
- Contact is mainly at transition points, 1st year, 3rd year
- Would welcome more detailed information – especially on how subject choice could determine later life choices
- Not all sources of information are equally useful
- Less well educated parents rely more on informal contact from their child or teacher
- Formal information sessions could usefully be supplemented by more informal opportunities to discuss options

Behind the Scenes – Parental Involvement



- Parents feel involved in their child's education and school life
- Involved formally – PA, BOM, direct contact
- Involved informally – decision making, homework, discussion
- High level of informal contact but less in formal
- This leads to more passive, reactive role – receiver of information
- Involvement in PA much less common and greater for more highly-educated parents
- Barriers include time constraints but also schools themselves
- Some schools and teachers less welcoming, some parents own negative educational experiences are also barriers

Of course I need my parents involved in my education!
I've just read the benefits in the ESRI report online!



Complexities at school



“Schools are complex, contradictory and sometimes incoherent organisations. They are legendarily difficult to capture and explain. Working in them, leading them - they wear you out, they wear you down; they can uplift you beyond belief, and uplift others to achievements that they and you did not believe possible.”

Anne Looney, CEO of the NCCA.



Common Challenges



- 'Complex' relationships with Principal
- Lack of parental involvement
- 'Cosy' school
- Parents on PA with their own personal agenda
- Difficulty on both sides establishing 'role boundary'
- Parents' Association rubberstamps BOM decisions
- Overemphasis on fund-raising or policy development
- Poor communication from Board of Management
- Difficult to establish 'appropriate' role for PA
- Lack of 'real' contact with teachers



Students must be first consideration



Issues for effective PA



- Establish effective lines of communication with Board, Principal and Teachers
- Feed into and hear from the Board of Management
- Political power-broker or supportive sub-committee?
- Spend time defining your own role
- Establish priorities – can't do everything
- Ensure an effective and appropriate voice in determining policy
- Establish ways of supporting student success and achievement

Conflict Resolution



- **Can't force change but ..**
- **Establish what the problem is**
- **Work through existing processes**
- **Be honest and upfront**
- **Look to informal, mediated solutions**
- **Work/Training to ensure permanent solutions**

Partnership nationally



- Parents representatives on national committees deciding policy and practices
- One voice among more well established (and well resourced) management, union and DES entities.
- How effective is that one voice? Is there one voice?
- Niche roles established – e.g. Student Help Line
- Difficulty in retaining continuity (e.g. ACCS)
- Recent strategy document from NPC tries to remedy such difficulties –greater professionalisation
- Where will the resources come from?

Advent of PPEF



- Forum with representatives from unions, management, professional and parent interests – initiated by NPCpp
- Great idea and some very good work done
- But can one constituent body have a veto?
- Are PPEF initiatives watered down because of this?
- Time for parents to move onto next level for partnership?
- Must have strong voice, PPEF consultative or consensual?

P + ACCS = PACCS?



- Is the relationship too comfortable?
- Do we need to be less informal?
- What would a more structured model look like?
- What does ACCS think of PACCS?
- What does PACCS think of ACCS?
- Can we work on 3 specifics to report on for next year?



kins' view...

on't do it Boss, we
ow the Parents'
ssociation is giving you
ef, I'll get onto
A CCS and see if we
n get them off your
ck!



Parkins 2010