

**Keynote Address to Conference 2005 – Eleanor Petrie, President, National Parents’ Council – post primary.**

Eleanor opened her address by asking the delegates to imagine an education system where none of the educators are trained....

Where training is a sign of weakness....

There is no curriculum, but the amount to be learned is vast, and it assumes that everyone knows what it is...

There is no assessment, but if people fail the penalties are severe.

Now this is not any old education system, but the foundation of every course, job, profession in the country....and it is of course, the family. Learning begins at home and you have a job for life.

So, how can parents continue to support their children’s education? Let’s look at educational development:-

**19<sup>th</sup> Century educational imaginary:**

1. Schools prepare students for their fixed station in life.
2. Intelligence in mono-dimensional, fixed and innate
3. Schools of each type are similar and interchangeable
4. School is culturally homogeneous – by class, ethnicity, gender, and religion – high social capital.
5. Schooling limited for the majority
6. School is a place with clear rigid boundaries
7. Roles are sharply defined and segregated
8. Schools and teachers are autonomous units

9. Education is producer-led
10. School is designed and organised like a factory.

So we have School, Teachers and children on one side and Parents on the other side.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century educational imaginary:**

- Students' identities and destinies are fluid
- Multiple intelligences are plastic and learnable
- Schools are culturally heterogeneous
- Schools are diverse and not interchangeable
- Education is lifelong, formal and informal
- Education is unconstrained by time and place
- Roles are blurred and overlapping
- Schools and teachers are embedded in complex, interconnected networks
- Education is user-led (but who exactly are they?)
- Schools are designed for personalized learning

*Personalising Learning - Personalised Learning demands that every aspect of teaching and support is designed around a pupil's needs – David Miliband – September 2003.*

Personalisation is a modification of customization and mass production has in the case of services given way to mass customization. What are the implications for education?

### **Innovation – definition**

- The exploitation of a new idea that adds value to a product, process or service
- A change creating a new dimension of performance (Peter Drucker)
- Learning to do things differently in order to do them better

**How involved are you in working with your child to help him or her achieve their personal best in every aspect of their lives?**

### **Assessment for learning:**

- Linguistic
- Musical
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Logical – Mathematical
- Spatial
- Naturalist
- Body – kinesthetic

**Personalising teaching and learning is realised through nine interconnected 'gateways' and all of them demand leadership.**

- Student voice
- Learning
- Learning to learn
- New technologies
- Curriculum
- Advice and guidance
- Mentoring
- Workforce
- Organisation

**What kind of future are we preparing them for?**

Between birth and school leaving children spend 15% of their waking hours in school with 5% spent on breaks and moving around between classes.

It makes sense that schools should see us as a resource. We have to help teachers to remove the imaginary barrier. Teaching is a hard job, parenting is a hard job but working together will make it easier and there is strength in unity.

If teachers see parents with problems it is short hop to parents are problems. The role of the school is to enhance and extend the learning that takes place at home.

Schools need to see partnership with parents as equally important as teaching children.

### **A checklist for your parents' association/council:**

- ✓ What's working well?
- ✓ What could we improve a little?
- ✓ How would you want to see family involvement in your school 3 years from now?
- ✓ What's happening now that should change and what should continue?
- ✓ What could be done to improve communication?
- ✓ What costs are associated with the improvements you want?
- ✓ How will you evaluate the results of your efforts?
- ✓ What opportunities will you arrange for teachers, parents and students to share information, successes you achieved in order to strengthen partnership?

### **Do parents know what your objectives are?**

Communication is the key – Newsletters etc.,

### **The six standards of parental involvement:-**

1. Volunteering – Goal: Recruit and organise parent help and support
2. Parenting – Goal: Help families establish home environments to support children as students
3. Communicating – Goal: Design more effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications
4. Learning at Home – Goal: Provide ideas to families about how to help students at home
5. Decision Making – Goal: Include parents in school decisions – it is law

6. Collaborating with Community – Goal: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programmes, family practices and student learning and development.

**What about National:** NPCpp has always acted as a conduit to national education provision – a way to have each parents voice heard.

We do feed back information – but is it getting through? Frankly what's in it for you? We need to provide a resource for every school and individual parents.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century:**

We've imagined the future for education and our own children...

Now we need to imagine a new NPC (pp)

Learning from the past and building for the future...

*The future is already here: it is not just distributed very well. William Gibson.*

**Parenting is the most important job you will ever do!**

**Never forget the AAAHH factor!!!**