

Minutes of PACCS 25th Annual Conference which was held in Tipperary Institute, Nenagh Road, Thurles, on 6th & 7th March, 2009.

Theme: 'PACCS - 25 years on'

The twenty fifth annual Conference of PACCS which was held in Tipperary Institute was officially opened by Mary Mullarkey, President of ACCS. She congratulated PACCS on marking a quarter of a century of involvement in Irish Education. She also congratulated our founders for their foresight in establishing PACCS and commended the delegates on giving up their weekend to be present at the Conference. She referred to the changes which Ireland was going through, particularly in the 70s. We saw the free education and the shift in economic concentration and finally in 1973 Ireland became a member of the European Community. Membership precipitated the enactment of a substantial body of legislation which in turn had huge implications for Irish society and the education system. The marriage bar in the civil service was removed and this in turn removed the formal barriers to equality and began the feminization of the teaching and other professions. But as Ireland started into the 80s, the early optimism of the 70s was giving way to the harsh, hair shirt economics. This was accompanied by the rise in interest rates, costs being introduced for school transport and a rise in pupil/teacher ratio. There were also cuts in Career Guidance, Remedial Education and Learning Support. We were told we were living beyond our means and the songs of immigration were gaining a new currency as our highly educated were heading for London, Boston and New York because they could not get jobs at home. In the early eighties the important role played by parents in the home and education was not recognised. It was as yet uncharted territory. The establishment of PACCS challenged that deficit and it became a conduit for pursuing parental interests as the primary educators. PACCS assumed a role as a strong cohesive, coherent voice, representing the views of parents in Irish education. She referred to the Education Act, ACCS and the Boards of Management and in particular the challenges facing parents. When speaking on the priorities for parents she quoted Shaw who said 'Life is no brief candle – to me it's a splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment and I want it to burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations'. In conclusion she quoted from a speech by Bill Gates to students in an American High school.

1. Life is not fair – get used to it.
2. If you mess up it is not your parents fault, so don't whine about your mistakes – learn from them.
3. Flipping Hamburgers is not beneath you. Your grandparents had a different word for that – they called it opportunity
- .4. Before you were born your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills and listening to you talk about how cool you are. The

minutes of Conference 2008 were read by Connie Carolan, after which they were proposed for adoption by Carole Trodden and seconded by Grace Mooney. John Murphy, Auditor then introduced the Accounts for the year ending December, 2008. They were proposed for adoption by Carole Trodden and seconded by Breda Hanley. Connie Carolan then read the Secretary's Report.

Grace Mooney introduced Tommy Walshe, President of PACCS who addressed the Conference. He outlined the effects the Education cuts would have on our schools in the area of class sizes, free books, post-primary grants, funding for Traveller children, pupil/teacher ratio, examination fees and computers in schools. He also referred to the non implementation of the special needs act, the funding for disadvantaged being slashed and the numbers of teachers being reduced. He gave examples of how the cuts are likely to affect schools. The Friday evening session concluded.

On Saturday morning the conference was opened by Moya Breen, Tipperary Institute.

Professor O'Catháin, President of Athlone Institute of Education then addressed the delegates and observers. He spoke of his own background in Education. He outlined the courses and opportunities for students in the Athlone Institute. He gave a breakdown of the percentages of students entering the professions from the Institutes in Ireland. He said at this time we had two choices, either invest in Education or cut education. John Lonergan then delivered the keynote address. He said that we must create positivity by nurturing. He said it was amazing how things could change in twelve months. If anybody had said this would happen twelve months ago, nobody would have believed it. This idea of recession would have been laughed at by our parents, we have gotten used to things that to them would have been unimaginable. And just as we were getting set to enjoy them the cycle turned and now we need to encourage people how to work and make a living and while it is going to be a challenging time there are always other opportunities. He likened this to playing cards and we must always play the hand dealt to us. Accept the person warts and all. He went on to say we must look for the potential in other human beings and sometimes this potential will come out by chance and the great satisfaction you can get by finding this potential and nurturing it. We must operate as a family, where everyone is equally important, we are there to serve and work with what we get. We must try to get the best out of people. Life is a great educator and the longer we live the more we realise how little we know. Those who know it all and dismiss others are sad. We must never judge others but must struggle to judge ourselves. If we are healthy we should be happy and he quoted a Chinese saying of what we need to be happy:

1. Something in life to work for
2. Something to dream for

3. To have somebody to love.

He said that the most primary cry of the human being is to be loved.

He concluded his address with the saying: I alone must do it but I cannot do it alone.

After the coffee break the Conference was addressed by Dr. James Griffin, Tipperary Institute on the cost benefits of attending college locally. He outlined the significant monthly saving that can be achieved by attending college locally together with the other benefits such as remaining within own community and friends,

The morning session of workshops followed.

a. Internet / BEBO – Margie O’Riordan

b. Drugs Awareness – Tony Stafford

c. PACCS/ACCS into the future – Liam Ryder

Jim Moore, President of NPCpp then addressed conference. He spoke of the volunteerism required in the parent movement. He also spoke of the PPEF, the vision of NPCpp and the actions of the council in representing parents. He spoke of the affects of Budget 08 and where NPCpp plan to go from here. He concluded by saying that the question to all in education is ‘What about Parents?’

Shane Scanlon, Education Officer, NCCA then introduced Project Maths, He covered the background, developing the proposals, key skills, the aim of mathematics programme, the syllabus learning outcomes, teaching and learning and phasing in the developments. At the end of his presentation, he took questions from the floor.

The afternoon session of workshops were given after lunch. While a and c were repeated,

Workshop b was give by Patricia Quigley on ‘Guidance towards Third Level’.

The final speaker was Ann Looney, C.E.O NCCA. She covered the topics: The quality of relationships and values, more flexibility and choices, the quality of networks, talking/language which would be playing to our strengths. She also spoke of working on the weaknesses.

The incoming Executive was then ratified:

Dublin:

Teresa McSweeney – Rosmini

Angela Lennon – Palmerstown

Grace Mooney – Palmerstown

Donal Smyth - Cabinteely

Mid West:

Ann Leamy – Cashel

Catherine Sides – Gort

Leona McCormack – Gort

Tommy Walshe – Moate

Marion Gilligan – Gallen

West: To be decided

South East:

Margaret Molloy – Gorey

North East:

Margaret Moore – Ashbourne

Carole Trodden - Ashbourne

Southern:

Antoinette Moynihan – Kenmare

Marie Buckley – Ballincollig

Rose Hegarty – Castletownbere

North West: To be decided

Tommy Walshe was elected president for the coming year. He was proposed by Teresa McSweeney and seconded by Grace Mooney.

Standing Orders were proposed for adoption by Carole Trodden and seconded by Leona McCormack.

Standing Orders Committee: John Murphy, Jim Moore and Pat Herlihy.

The tellers – Kay Herlihy and Pat Murphy

The motions which had been submitted were taken. There were 14 motions. Thirteen were carried and one defeated. Twenty four schools were represented.

Open Forum was the final item on the timetable. Joe Moran, ASTI, Jim Moore, NPCpp, Liam Ryder, ACCS and Aidan Farrell, State Examinations Commission were on the panel. Relevant questions were taken from the floor. The Forum was chaired by Humphrey O’Riordan.

The conference concluded and PACCS were joined by their guests in the Anner Hotel for the Conference Banquet. Music and dancing followed.

Proposed: _____ Seconded: _____

Signed: _____ Dated: _____