



Parents Associations of Community and Comprehensive Schools

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P.A.C.C.S Newsletter

November 2010



I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Tommy Walsh on his appointment as President of NPCpp and extend my very best wishes as he takes up this new role. This is a wonderful

testimony to someone who has served PACCS so well and I have the fullest confidence that he will bring the same level of dedication and commitment which he has demonstrated with PACCS to this new role. Tommy has exemplified how vital it is that parents have a voice in their children's education. PACCS's loss is very much NPCpp's gain.

Pending the election of a new President at Conference, I have been elected as Acting President of PACCS and would like to take this opportunity to tell you about myself.

I live in Dublin with my husband and 2 children. I have been an active member of my local parents association in Palmerstown Community School for the past 11 years, including periods as secretary, chairperson and representative on the board of management. As a member of the PACCS national executive for 8 years, and vice president for 2 years, I have gained huge experience in dealing with issues that parents of students at second level regularly meet. I am currently the chairperson of PACCS Dublin Region and have been a member of the 'Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools' (ACCS) national executive for the past 5 years.

I have a particular interest in special needs which was instigated by the fact that my

daughter has dyslexia and is now copying well within the 3rd level education system. I have experienced at first hand some of the issues that arise for students with special needs and their parents as they move through our educational system. In 2008 I was heavily involved in the development of the PACCS leaflet 'Special Education Needs - *Important Information for Parents of Children with Special Needs at Second Level*'.

[www.paccs.ie/content/publish/special_needs/Special Education Needs Booklet 2](http://www.paccs.ie/content/publish/special_needs/Special_Education_Needs_Booklet_2)

Tommy is a hard act to follow so although nervous and a little overwhelmed with the responsibility of the position, I will endeavour to follow in his footsteps until a new President can be elected at conference. I know I have the continuing support of the executive and of course I have Tommy close by, as always ready and willing to lend a hand and show me the way.

Regards
Grace Mooney
President

St Colmcilles, Community School, Knocklyon

Mock interviews for 6th Year Students

The Parents' Association recently organised mock-interviews for 6th year students. This programme has been running for several years now and has proven very popular and successful with the pupils.

These interviews are designed primarily to provide students with some practical help and guidance in preparing for interviews (either for employment or to access 3rd level courses) and also includes some advice on CV layout and content

This involves a one-to-one interview of about 15 minutes' duration. Afterwards the interviewer provides some structured feedback to the



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student. The emphasis here is to be as constructive as possible. Students are also asked by the Career Guidance teacher to fill in a feedback form on their own personal experience of the process.

The feedback from students has been very positive and we hope to run this programme again next year.

Mount Temple Comprehensive School

As part of the IT team in the school we have been exploring different initiatives to increase the use of IT in the classroom and begin to address the ongoing problem of the weight of the school bag for pupils. Studies have found around 70 per cent of Irish schoolchildren may be damaging their spines by carrying schoolbags. For example, a heavy bag that's slung over one shoulder can, over the 12 years of schooling, cause chronic back problems that linger into adulthood. Risks include muscle strain, distortion of the natural 'S' curve of the spine and rounding of the shoulders. Parents can reduce the risk in many ways, such as buying the child an appropriately sized backpack and making sure the load isn't too heavy.

Schoolbag risk factors

Risk factors for spinal damage include:

- A schoolbag that weighs more than 10 per cent of the child's weight
- Holding the bag in one hand by its straps
- Carrying the bag over one shoulder
- An incorrectly packed backpack
- An incorrectly fitted backpack.

A leading American professor has warned that heavy schoolbags could lead to serious long-term problems, including chronic back pain.

According to Professor Mary Hickey of Northeastern University in Boston, children who use schoolbags often use them incorrectly and 'to their physical detriment'.

"Big bags can have a lasting physical impact on developing skeletal systems and posture", she said.

According to the National Parents Council, it continues to receive phone calls on this matter. However the Department of Education appears to have done little since the late 1990s, when the then-Minister for Education, Micheal Martin, established a working group to examine the issue.

Speaking to irishhealth.com, a spokesperson for the department said that following the publication of the report of the working group, it carried out an awareness campaign at primary and post-primary level. This included providing information leaflets and posters to schools highlighting the potential hazards of heavy schoolbags and outlining a range of local measures that 'could be adopted to alleviate the problem'.

These measures include leaving books in school overnight where possible.

However the spokesperson added that 'it is a matter for each individual school to choose those measures, which would be most suitable to its individual needs'. In other words, schools are under no obligation to ensure that schoolbags are of an acceptable weight. According to Professor Hickey, during the course of her studies on this topic, she has seen children carrying around 25lb backpacks. Such a weight can only be carried safely by a person who weighs at least 200lbs (just over 14 stone), she says.

"The most important thing for parents to know is that there are simple ways to prevent kids from permanently damaging their backs", she explains. Her recommendations include:

-Children should never carry a bag that weighs more than 10% of their body weight. "If your child is unable to stand up straight with the bag on, the load is too heavy."



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In cooperation with Gill and Macmillan this initiative is hoped to be the springboard to increasing the use of Flip Books across the curriculum in the school. Mount temple 1st year pupils will have the standard hard copy of book in school and use the online/downloadable version at home. So no more forgetting books for class or home hopefully making the learning process easier → Gill & Macmillan FlipBook – New Complete History

The digital version of the New Complete History textbook, known as a FlipBook, was shown at 1st year parents evening on Tuesday 28th of September by Tony Hetherington the Digital Development Manager of Gill & Macmillan.

FlipBook use is optional, and requires the students to have the use of a PC at home. Using an electronic version of the textbook at home means the student can leave their textbook in school and reduce the weight of their schoolbag.

There are two versions of the FlipBook, the online version can be used on any computer connected to the internet, and the download version is limited to one computer and does not require an internet connection while using the book.

The Flipbook will be provided to Mount Temple students on a three year license as the Junior Cert course lasts for three years. This license is provided at a special bundle price for Mount Temple first years. The reasons for the extra cost include the addition of multimedia content where appropriate, and as a digital product, the Flipbook is not zero rated for VAT like a textbook.

Ashbourne Community School

Congratulations to our Transition Year Student Sarah Lehane from Class Zeus who brought home two silver medals from the Taekwondo I.T.F. European Open Cup Competition which was held in Bratislava, Slovakia last week.

Sarah won silver in the individual (60 kg category) and also won silver in the team Junior Competition event.

Sarah trains in the IIMA centre in Ashbourne. Her trainer is Mr. Stephen Cooley (6th degree) who is the National sparring Coach.

She is now preparing to compete in the World Championships in New Zealand in March 2011.

CONGRATULATIONS SARAH FROM ALL AT ASHBOURNE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Ashbourne PTA AGM

Ashbourne PTA Annual General Meeting was held on 6th October 2010 and had a relatively good attendance of parents and guardians. Our Principal, Aine O Sullivan and our three Deputy Principals, Susan Duffy, Ciaran Stewart and Chris Purcell attended and each spoke on different aspects of school life in ACS.

Carole Trodden PRO for PACCS gave a short talk on PACCS

Our guest speaker was Liam Moggan from Coaching Ireland who gave an inspiring and entertaining talk on how to encourage learning both at home and at school. He had all his audience up and moving on the floor and even managed to cause the chosen few to “break some eggs” He left us with some little nuggets of wisdom, for example: WWW not only means World Wide Web but it also means What Went Well which can give us a better approach when facing some situations in our lives. Many thanks to all who attended and looking forward to a new school year together

Training for PTA

On Tuesday 9th November Grace Mooney, President of PACCS gave a talk to our PTA about PACCS and the role of Parent Teacher Associations. It was very interesting for us all, especially our new members to the PTA and we would like to thank Grace for taking the time out to come and speak to us



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Gort Community School

On Saturday 16th October we officially opened the Noone Building, a valuable addition to the school. It houses state of the art girls and boys changing rooms with showers, coach's and referees rooms and also a well equipped careers guidance room, a meditation room, and a music room.

Our parents association are now twittering away under the guidance of our chairperson and through this communicating info to parents on exams, school info, teen health, social networking and other items of interest to parents. Please do follow us on www.twitter.com/gortcs_parents you will also find a link and lots more information on our recently revamped website www.gortcs.com Don't be afraid to give it a try as it is a valuable source of information on all subjects. We also find having representation on PACCS and using their website another invaluable source.

In the present climate Parent's associations are very important, and we are really looking forward to the PACCS conference which comes to the west next March...

Moate Community School (MCS)

The new school year began in MCS with the arrival of five new staff members.

Moate Community School link with Moi Sorget Secondary School, Londiani, Kenya

We were delighted to be accepted and linked with Moi Sorget Secondary School, Tondiani, Kenya. Moi Sorget is a co-ed secondary school. An essential element of the link with Moi Sorget is teachers from MCS visiting the School in Kenya over the October break 2010.

Our school is supported by the Friends of Londiani Network who will organise events such as:

- Joint school display: Sept - Dec
- Webpage

- Reception for Kenyan teachers visiting Ireland in December 2010
- Network Newsletter: January 2011
- Student Forum & Millennium Development Goals event which will be held in March 2011

The teachers who are making the trip in October were given an introduction to Friends of Londiani and the work that they do in Kenya; Kenyan culture, local environment, education systems, health conditions, development education, Millennium Development Goals, what the partnership involves, etc.

Students honour Mr Duffy as Principal for 25 years

MCS is used to acknowledging the achievements of its students but on Wednesday 22nd September the tables were turned as the Student Council, Prefects, Mentors and Games Committee surprised Mr.

Duffy with a presentation to acknowledge the 25 years he has spent as Principal in the town of Moate. Richard Dooner (6th Year) and Jill Shortall (5th Year) spoke on behalf of the student body. The two students acknowledged the many sacrifices that Mr. Duffy has made over the years as Principal of firstly the Vocational School then Mercy College and finally Moate Community School.

New President of National Parents Council post primary (NPCpp)

Tommy Walshe is President of the National Parents Council post primary (NPCpp). His is one of 20 volunteers from all around Ireland who give freely of their time, to actively support parents and guardians in their parenting role, and show them how best to interact effectively with their children schools on the issues that impact on the education, development and general well-being of their children within the post-primary school.



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Parents Association

Our Parents' Association held its monthly meeting on October 6th last. High on the agenda was the information evening for parents on Junior Cycle Curriculum Review

The Mentors of 2010/2011 enjoyed very informative training programme with facilitator Carmel Daly, education co-ordinator with Foroige. The purpose of this programme was to help students enhance their effectiveness as Mentors.

Since September last the Mentors in MCS have supported and assisted first year students as they settle in to school. On the first day of term Mentors worked with first years. They prepared a range of activities for first years to encourage and facilitate the making of new friendships. Students participated in a series of events centred around arts, sports and class games.

Gallen Community School

It is with great delight that we wish to announce that the Irish Department in Gallen Community School have been awarded the GLEO Award for best practice in the promotion of spoken Irish. The award is sponsored by Foras na Gaeilge and the school will be awarded a trophy and a cheque for €3000 euro for the continual promotion of Irish within the school. The ceremony will take place on 12th May in the Davenport Hotel. The school was picked along with five others as illustrating best practice in the promotion of Irish in the country.

Is cúis atháis duinn i bPobalscoil na Gailinne gur bhuaigh Roinn na Gaeilge an comórtas GLEO Gaeilge Labharta Earnáil Oideachais, i mbliana. Tá an comórtas urraithe ág Forás na Gaeilge agus ciallaíonn sé go mbeidh Forás na Gaeilge ag bronnadh duais €3000 ar Roinn na Gaeilge sa scoil. Beidh an comóradh ar siúl ar an 12ú Bealtaine í mBaille Átha Cliath. Ní fhaigheann ach sé scoileanna sa tír an duais agus bronntar an duais ar scoileanna a

dhéanann éacht ar son na gaeilge sa seomra ranga.

Pobalscoil Rosmini, Drumcondra

Our School has a new Deputy Principal following the early retirement of Ms Catherine Gralton, Ms Philomena Cherry has been appointed as Deputy Principal. The Parents Association wishes Ms Gralton well in her retirement and Ms Cherry well in her new role within the school.

AGM: The Parents Association held its AGM on Monday, 8th November and has gained a number of new members.

Fundraising: The Parents' Association is holding a non-uniform day on Friday, 26th November. Funds will be used for the events run during the year for the students, e.g. Graduation, Awards Night and Transition Year Awards.

Pobalscoil Inbhear Scéine Kenmare

With two all Ireland titles under their belt, the sporting achievements of Pobalscoil Inbhear Scéine have been outstanding in 2009/2010. The senior boys brought the first all Ireland football title to the school and the Junior boys won the schools first all Ireland basketball title. The transition year together with M.E.P Brian Crowley and Senator Mark Daly unveiled a plaque on the site of the old post office in Kenmare to commemorate the important part Kenmare played in the 1916 rising.

East Glendalough School, Wicklow

This year saw a new record set in the Junior Certificate for EGS, with Jenny Power achieving 10 A's and Niamh McGettigan and Michael Riordan achieving 9 A's each. On the basis of his scores in science and maths, Michael went on to be selected by the State Examinations Commission to become the first EGS student to



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participate in the Irish round of the EU Science Olympiad which will be held on 27th November.

Our under 15's golf team were runners up in the Leinster U15 school's competition last year. This was a great achievement for a team only in its second year. One team member, Colin Woodroffe, played on the Leinster team which won the inaugural U15 Interprovincial event in Naas this year. To date this year, the senior team has won all four of their league matches and so qualify from their group for the matchplay stage.

Rugby is another blossoming sport in EGS with our Junior XV through to the final of the Junior Development Cup.

EGS parents' association can be found on twitter at twitter.com/EGSParents. We are finding it very useful to be able to share ideas and information back and forth with Gort Community School's parents association and PACCS through this medium and would love to see more schools "joining the conversation", as they say!

National Parents Council pp News

Currently NPCpp is endeavouring to:

- have an effective Parents Association in place in every school
- communicate with all parents and guardians of young people in post-primary education
- support parents and guardians in being active partners in education
- challenge parents and guardians to participate
- provide a structure through which parents and guardians can inform and influence policy development
- take an active role in influencing policy at a national level
- build strong partnerships with key education stakeholders

In 2009 NPCpp devised a Strategic Plan with the aim of directing its energies towards identifying strategy, with specific goals while delivering

progress with the objectives outlined within each strategy and/or goal.

STRATEGY 1: Effective Voice for Parents and Guardians

- GOAL 1: PROTECT THE RECOGNISED CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS AS THE PRIMARY AND NATURAL EDUCATOR OF THE CHILD
- GOAL 2: UTILISE NPCPP AND ITS CONSTITUENT BODIES AS A VEHICLE THROUGH WHICH PARENTS ASSOCIATIONS ARE MADE EFFECTIVE
- GOAL 3: TO ENSURE A CO-ORDINATED APPROACH TO ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS
- GOAL 4: USE THE COLLECTIVE STRENGTH OF ALL CONSTITUENT BODIES TO PROGRESS THE GOALS OF THE NPCPP AND THE SPECIALIST AREAS OF INTEREST OF EACH CONSTITUENT BODY

STRATEGY 2: Proactive Communication

- GOAL 1: MAXIMISE THE AWARENESS OF NPCPP WITHIN ALL RELEVANT STAKEHOLDER GROUPS
- GOAL 2: DEFINE AND COMMUNICATE THE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE NPCPP
- GOAL 3: DEFINE THE VARIOUS LINES OF COMMUNICATION ON ISSUES WITHIN THE REMIT OF NPCPP

STRATEGY 3: Policy Development

- GOAL 1: AGREE PROCESS BY WHICH TO DEVELOP THE POLICIES REQUIRED BY THE NPCPP



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STRATEGY 4: Service Development

Goal 1: MONITOR THE ONGOING VALUE OF NPCPP TO CONSTITUENT BODIES AND ENSURE THAT CONSTITUENT BODIES ARE STRENGTHENED BY THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN NPCPP

GOAL 2: DEFINE THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL REMIT OF NPCPP

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment



The Junior Cycle Developments consultation is coming to an end.

The consultation on Innovation and Identity: Ideas for a new junior cycle ended on Friday, 26th November 2010. Some of the ideas that came from parents are as follows:

- Greater communication channels need to be encouraged between primary and post-primary as to what is/will be expected of students and what type of learning they are/will be engaging with.
- There is a current mismatch between what happens in third level and what happens at second level – a modularised/semesterised system might help to address this mismatch
- Project-based work gives students confidence/increases their self-esteem and this is to be encouraged in any Junior Cycle developments.
- Large numbers of students have lost interest in junior cycle because it gets no real recognition.
- It is important to retain Junior Certificate examination (even at the approximate cost of €25 million). That its value should reflect the student's ability at the end of their years of education from pre-school,

primary, and Junior Cycle It is important that this exam is not “dumbed” down.

- The Junior Certificate should be both stand alone (if students leave formal education at this time) and part of progression to the Leaving Certificate cycles. (L.C.A, Leaving traditional and Vocational).
- The curriculum should be more life/practical based.
- It is very important that students are happy and comfortable with the whole school environment and need to feel involved in the learning process.
- It was thought that building up credits/record of achievements over the course of the three years would result in students having greater confidence to sit any final examinations in third year, similar to having sat the Group Cert prior to the Inter Cert

Project Maths

National roll-out of the changes began in September 2010, with the introduction of strands 1 and 2 in all schools. The changes will continue in September 2011 and 2012, until all five strands have been introduced in all schools.

First Leaving Cert results for Project Maths students

Congratulations to the Leaving Certificate students from the 24 schools who participated in the initial stage of Project Maths. Credit is due to these students and their teachers for being the pioneers in this new curriculum initiative in mathematics.

18.5% of candidates from the 24 schools took the higher level paper, compared to the 16% of the candidates nationally who did so. Almost 80% of the Project Maths candidates achieved an A, B, or C grade at higher level – slightly better than the overall national performance. A greater percentage of candidates from the 24 schools also achieved A, B and C grades at Ordinary level and Foundation level than the overall national performance. Well done to all!



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CL 63/2010 requirements for Garda vetting

The main purpose of circular 63/2010 is to update and clarify the requirements for Garda vetting as part of recruitment procedures for all teaching and non-teaching positions

Non-employees: such as volunteers, sports coaches, etc. who have, or may have, unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults must be vetted unless they have already been vetted within the previous 5 year period. This requirement to be vetted applies in respect of all such persons who have or may have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults and who, at the date of this circular or in the future, are engaged by the school in any such capacity. A non-exhaustive list of examples of persons to whom this section may apply include those involved in extracurricular activities, volunteers, sports coaches, external tutors or other persons engaged by the school to assist in and support school activities.

Vetting of these persons should, where possible, be done by the relevant sporting, voluntary or community organisation.

The PACCS executives for 2010 / 2011 are as follows

Dublin Region:

Grace Mooney	Catherine Riordan
Tom Harbison	Julie Kilroy
Teresa McSweeney	Teresa Byrne

Midwest Region:

Tommy Walshe	Marion Gilligan
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Western Region:

Catherine Sides	Leona McCormack
Catherine Cronin	

Southeast Region:

Margaret Molloy

Southern Region:

Antoinette Moynihan	Marie Buckley
Nora Irwin	Anne Duncan

Northeast Region:

Margaret Moore	Carole Trodden
Mary Curtis	Connie Carolan

Northwest Region:

We are still working on our Northwest Region. We have had some training and we are to have another meeting between New Year and our conference on the 4th and 5th March in the Clayton Hotel, Ballybrit, Galway.

Parents' Associations of Community & Comprehensive Schools – was formed in 1983 to act as one national organisation for the Parents' Associations of Community & Comprehensive Schools of the country. It was formally established on a national basis in October 1984. There are 92 Community and Comprehensive Schools in the country.

Membership is open to all Parents' Associations, Parents' Councils, Parents' Groups, Parent/Teacher Associations etc. of the Community and Comprehensive Schools which are so designated by the Department of Education.

PACCS Mission Statement

PACCS aim to provide a national association for parents in the community and comprehensive sector, to promote the role of parents as primary educators of their children by providing an effective voice in educational development, ensuring consultation with and representation on appropriate bodies, and providing an informative and advisory service for its members.