

Conference 2010 - Anner Hotel and Tipperary Institute of Education

Secretary's Report

Good Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome once again to the Anner Hotel and Tipperary Institute, Thurles for our 26th Annual Conference. The Theme this year is 'Embracing the Future'. This theme we feel is very suitable as when the Executive began to plan for this Conference way back last May or June we felt that we were heading into a 2nd quarter century and PACCS being ever positive were looking forward and ready to embrace the future. We have been very fortunate in our friends and supporters over the years and none more so than our past members, many of whom are with us again this year. I am sure I will be forgiven for making special mention of Eileen Aiken who was kind enough to agree to open Conference this year. Eileen was one of our founder members and I will ask you for her forgiveness for the fact that it was Eileen who first introduced me to PACCS many years ago. I have long forgiven her and I hope you will also. There were just 56 schools at that time and today we have almost doubled that number but as one who has been involved with PACCS for many years, I can say that the enthusiasm has not waned and our Conferences are still as relevant to our parents as they were in the early years. As I have said, welcome to you all but in particular I would like to welcome those of you who are attending Conference for the first time. You may be new to our sector or you may be new on a Parent Association. Whatever the reason you are most welcome and I hope you will find the weekend both educational and enjoyable. Since our Conference here last year the Executive has met eight times. We have been in contact with the relevant partners throughout the year and indeed we have representatives from all with us this week-end.

The following officers were elected our first meeting in April. Grace Mooney, Vice President, Margaret Molloy – Treasurer, Marion Gilligan - Vice Treasurer, and Teresa McSweeney – Honorary Secretary, Carole Trodden PRO and Marie Buckley, Assistant PRO . Tommy Walshe, Teresa McSweeney, Margaret Molloy and Carole Trodden were nominated during the year to serve on NPCpp. Teresa has since resigned as Honorary Treasurer of NPCpp. Breda Hanley has replaced her as a PACCS nominee. We had some new members join our Executive last year and as usual they have all worked together to represent you very ably over the past year.

One of our members who joined us last year resigned during the year for personal reasons. We thank Donal Smyth of the Dublin Region for his input during his time on the Executive and wish him well. Each year by the nature of things we lose some members but for whatever reason the new people who join PACCS continue to be of the highest caliber and it is a pleasure to work on such a team and I have had that honour for the past number of years as the Honorary General Secretary. And last but by no means least, I am sure our President, Tommy Walshe, who was re-elected by Conference last year thought that he was going to be let go without mention but this is not the case. He has been an excellent President and I am sure the rest of the Executive will join with me in thanking him.

PACCS members have represented NPCpp on a number of committees Teresa McSweeney was Treasurer of NPCpp until her resignation. She also represented NPCpp on ISSU. Carole Trodden replaced her on this committee. Tommy Walshe is a member of the Working Group of the review of the Department's Child Protection Guidelines for Schools and the NCCA sub-committee for Senior Cycle Physical Education. You the delegates decide PACCS policy at Conference by the motions that have been proposed discussed and passed. Submissions and letters are sent to the relevant areas of the Department, the Minister, the Government, the National Parents' Council-Post Primary, ACCS and teacher Unions. We also respond to issues as they arise throughout the year.

The Regions continue to be an area which is definitely a work in progress and while there has been some progress there is certainly a lot more to be done. This year we have continued to make a particular effort to get the Regions working more effectively and while some Regions are running very well, others definitely need support.

After Conference last year, the Executive decided to offer training to parents on a Regional basis and this has been done in all Regions. I am sure any of you who have attended the sessions will agree that it is very worthwhile and very useful not just for the information but also for the contact during the year. In this we need to thank our President, Tommy. He attended all the meetings and gave a presentation at them. We have also had help from our members on ACCS and here I would like to add our thanks to Grace Mooney, our Vice President.

Each year I stress the importance of Regional meetings being held regularly and this year is no exception. A wide range of topics is covered and they are very important to PACCS as it is through these meetings that information can flow between parents and the National Executive and vice versa.

They are also a platform where concerns of parents can be aired between Conferences.

Our members continued to visit local parent' associations and Regional meetings wherever and whenever requested and I would like to remind you that we only visit when invited but we welcome invitations to your Annual General Meetings or local school meetings. This is another area that is not just costly in finance; it is also difficult to get the time, as all of us have to hold down day jobs. I would therefore, ask, that if you would like a member of the Executive to attend one of your meeting that you give us time to make the necessary arrangements. Once again I must mention that Tommy has driven the length and breadth of the country attending meetings and addressing parents.

Each year the majority of calls we receive from parents is seeking advise on how to deal with the situation they find themselves in when their child was facing suspension or expulsion and the last year the calls have not only continued to come but they seem to have increased in volume. Our information leaflet is still relevant and still available and we hope it will be of help to you. During the past year the issue of bullying seems to have increased and of course we have to be very vigilant with regard to this as all parties to this need help.

Since Conference 2009 we have been involved in the usual meetings and negotiations on your behalf and of course there is no one here who is not aware of the cutbacks. The PPEF (Post Primary Education Forum) has been very active in this area. This forum was founded in 2007 and at its inception was there to further the views of Post Primary parents with the other educational partners on relevant issues. There are reports of all our meetings in your handbook.

Last year, thanks to our President, our Website has been revamped and if you are not a regular visitor, I would encourage you to become one as it is being updated regularly. Again as we have said before we would be delighted to hear your views on this and if you have any information which you feel should be posted on it please send it to us. The email address is info@paccs.ie and the website is www.paccs.ie .

Once again, I would like to thank you for your attendance here this weekend. We appreciate that it is not easy to get time out of your busy lives but we feel that you will leave here feeling refreshed after our discussions and deliberations. We hope and trust that we will have a pleasant and fruitful weekend. The timetable is full but we hope that you will also find some time to enjoy your stay here in Thurles.

I will finish as always by wishing all our students every success in their studies and examinations later in the year.

Connie Carolan, Hon. General Secretary - 5th March 2010.