

POLICY  
OF  
NATIONAL PARENTS  
ASSOCIATION  
OF  
VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS  
AND  
COMMUNITY COLLEGES

March 2005



The constitution of the National Parents Association for Vocational Schools and Community Colleges clearly defines what the aims and objectives of the Association are. All members are advised to study them and become familiar with them.

NPAVSCC is a democratic, tolerant, multi-denominational, and inclusive organisation. Its chief aim is to foster, promote and preserve the role of parents as the prime educators of their children, as stated in Bunreacht na hEireann. All its efforts are directed at the welfare of the pupils in our schools and colleges through the support and guidance of their parents at local and national level. The supreme governing body of the organisation is its National Congress. Resolutions passed at the AGM automatically become the policy of the Association. They bind and guide the operations of the Officers and National Executive Committee. Resolutions may only be amended or deleted at another AGM.

This Policy Document is a distillation of the meanings, aims, and objectives of several dozen resolutions that have been passed at and since the 1994 Congress. More recent ones take precedence over older ones where there's a clash of meaning or purpose. The document is updated annually after each AGM. The National Executive Committee, or Standing Orders Committee, or the Officers, may decide to re-arrange the sections, or even the layout of the whole document, from time to time. Originally every adopted resolution was recorded and printed. But with the passing of time and the increasing number of such resolutions it was decided by the Officers to rationalise the document. However, the intrinsic import of the resolutions remains unchanged. Education issues usually fall into one of two categories. They may be immediate, like the proposed amendment to the 1930 Vocational Education Act, now happily

accomplished, the disruption caused by the ASTI industrial action, which began in November 2000, or the need to train parents serving on Boards of Management. These immediate issues are usually resolved within a period of a few years. The other issues are long term, on-going ones. They include parental concerns about funding, discipline, transport, examinations, loss of pupil/teacher contact time, suspensions and expulsions etc. These remain important considerations for decades. Indeed some of them will remain issues of fundamental concern for the Partners in Education (Parents, Teachers, Management, and Department of Education & Science) as long as schools exist. Consequently, they will present some aspect of themselves at every AGM. Arising from that, it will be necessary to amend, adapt, modify, and update any policy document on an ongoing basis. The following document represents the policies and concerns of today's parents. While remaining true to the decisions of several Congresses, it is meant to be adaptable rather than written in stone.

1. (N.P.A.V.S.C.C.)

The operations of the Association are governed by its constitution. These are the defined objectives of the Association, and the National Executive Committee are bound to implement them as far as possible.

**Objectives:**

1. To organise all parents of pupils attending Vocational Schools and Community Colleges through the formation of Parents Associations in each of these schools.
2. To represent, at national level, the views and interests of the parents of pupils attending Vocational Schools and Community Colleges.
3. To co-operate and negotiate with all relevant bodies in securing the best possible educational and other services for the pupils attending Vocational Schools and Community Colleges.
4. To consult and liaise with, make representations to, and, where appropriate, seek representation on, such local, regional, national, and international bodies as are deemed relevant to the objectives of the Association.
5. To promote the greater involvement of Parents in partnership with Management, Teachers, and Students in the education system, having respect for these Partners.
6. To obtain statutory representation for the Association in school management at all levels.
7. To foster, in every way possible, our social and cultural values, as well as academic aims.

Furthermore, as a constituent member of the National Parents Council, postprimary, Ltd., the Association is closely linked to the European Parents Association. EPA has

promulgated the "Rights and Duties of Parents in Europe". They are also an expression of the philosophy and aims of our Association. Hence, they too are included in this Policy Document.

### **RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF PARENTS IN EUROPE.**

- Parents have the right to raise their children without discrimination on the grounds of the colour of their skin, their ethnic background, nationality, beliefs, or economic position. Parents have the duty to raise their children towards a sense of responsibility to each other and for a humane world.
- Parents have the right to recognition to their primacy as educators of their children. Parents have a duty to raise children in a responsible way, and not to neglect them.
- Parents have the right to full access to the formal education system for their children on the basis of their needs, talents, and merits. Parents have the duty to commit themselves as partners in education to the school of their children.
- Parents have the right of access to all information at educational institutions, which concerns their children. Parents have the duty to give to their children's schools all information relevant for the attainment of the educational goals on which they work together.
- Parents have the right to make a choice for the education, which is closest to their convictions and to the values they hold dear in raising their children. Parents have the duty to make well-informed and conscientious choices about the education their children should receive.
- Parents have the right to respect from the formal education system for the spiritual and cultural background of the education they give their children. Parents have the duty to raise their children to respect and accept other people and their convictions.
- Parents have the right to exert influence on the policy which their children's school implements. Parents have the duty to be personally committed to their children's schools as a vital part of the local community.
- Parents and their associations have the right to be consulted actively about the policy of public authorities in education at all levels. Parents have the duty to maintain domestic representative organisations at all levels to represent themselves and their interests.
- Parents have the right to public material assistance to take away financial impediments to the access to education for their children. Parents have the duty to give both time and personal commitment to their children and their school to support its efforts-in attaining educational goals.
- Parents have the right to high quality educational provisions from the responsible public authorities. Parents have the duty to help each other to improve their skills as prime educators and partners in the home-school relationship.

## **2. RELATIONS WITH THE OTHER PARTNERS IN EDUCATION.**

NPAVSCC recognise that there are many organisations and agencies that are associated, either directly or indirectly, with the education and welfare of our children. The Association will endeavour to establish and maintain a co-operative and close working relationship with them in the best interests of our pupils. Foremost among our partners are the Partners in Education". These are:

The Department of Education and Science, (DES)

The Managers, represented by the Irish Vocational Education Association, (IVEA)

The Teachers, represented by their Unions:

\* Teachers Union of Ireland, (TUI)

\* Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland, (ASTI)

We also work actively with fellow parent organisations under the umbrella of the National Parents' Council, post-primary, Ltd., (NPC, p-p, Ltd.).

The Association is also willing and happy to co-operate with other Government Departments, the Universities and other third level Institutes, the U.S.! and other student bodies, the Gardai, the medical profession, the media, voluntary bodies, and sporting, cultural, and recreational clubs and organisations.

(a) From the DES we determinedly seek full and practical recognition of the role of parents/guardians in the education system.

(b) Where necessary we demand training to enable parents/guardians to fulfil their role.

(c) We request that the In-career Development Unit of the DES allocates a budget of not less than €635 to the Board of Management of every Vocational School and Community College for parent training and education, to include curriculum changes and career guidance.

(d) We demand direct involvement in the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) process.

(e) We demand that the DES provide direct annual funding to each of the Constituent Bodies of the National Parents' Council, postprimary, Ltd.

(f) We urge the IVEA to provide all members of Boards of Management in the Vocational Education sector with both adequate training and a handbook outlining the functions of the Boards and the duties and responsibilities of the members.

(g) We request the NPC, p-p, Ltd. to allocate funding on an annual basis to all its Constituent Bodies to ensure the proper long-term viability of those bodies in a changing educational structure.

## **3. THE ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING OF EDUCATION.**

It is an over-riding concern of NPAVSCC that all parents/guardians should be able to play a full and active role in the education of their children, and in the operations of their children's schools. We recognise that even in good times the DES budget is limited - far too limited in the view of this Association. We are most anxious that the funding be spent to the best possible advantage, and that the maximum amount of money be spent in the classrooms - rather than in offices and administration

## **A. ADMINISTRATION.**

### **i). Management.**

- a) We demand that the 1930 Vocational Education Act be amended to provide statutory representation for parents on Vocational Education Committees.
- b) We request the Minister for Education and Science to introduce agreed procedures for the election of parents to Boards of Management.

### **ii). School Building.**

We have a number of unresolved issues and concerns in this area. It is the chief capital expenditure section of the DES, and in many respects seems immune and insulated from parental input and advice. Consequently, we:

- a) Propose that Parents Associations, in conjunction with the BOM, should be allowed an input into the design, planning, and layout of new school buildings.
- b) Urge the DES to compile and publish annually a list of all capital projects underway or planned.
- c) Request that all schools/colleges be able to easily determine their place on the DES's priority list of projects.
- d) Deplore the severe cutbacks in capital funding for the Schools Building Programme in the December 2002 Budget.
- e) Reject the proposals outlined by the Minister on 2200 January 2003.
- f) Demand that the cutbacks be rescinded so that all necessary buildings and repairs are completed within four years.

### **iii). Discipline.**

1. We call on the Minister for Education and Science to make it mandatory for Principals and Boards of Management to take into consideration the views and wishes of parents when drafting Codes of Discipline.
2. We call on the DES to determine the number and frequency by which suspension and/or expulsion is used as a form of discipline.

### **iv). Appeals.**

This Association:

- a) Welcomes the establishment of the Appeals Procedure and Panel under the terms of Section 29 of the Education Act.
- b) Deplores the absence of a parent on the Panel.
- c) Advises the DES to produce an explanatory leaflet on the scope and operation of the panel.
- d) Urge principals to distribute the leaflet to the families of the pupils in their schools / colleges annually.

### **V). Pupils Concerns.**

- 1) We propose to the Minister for Education and Science that a major code of practice for work experience is drawn up by the DES in consultation with the relevant parties.
- 2) We request the DES to initiate procedures to co-ordinate the many early school leaving projects now established and operating around the country.
- 3) We ask the Minister to review the present points system for entrance to third level education and to replace it with a fixed number of points required for each course.

Where demand exceeds the availability of courses, entry to those courses to require an entrance exam and suitability tests.

4) We propose that all institutes of third level education award the same number of points for the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

**vi) Enrolment.**

1. This Association proposes that questions pertaining to "parent's occupation" be omitted from post primary schools entrances forms.

**vii) Ancillary staff. "**

1. We ask that extra clerical assistance be provided in schools in line with the increasing workload of administration.

**viii) Special Needs Assistants~**

We propose that Post Primary School principals have the freedom to deploy SNAs to duties and activities outside the classroom.

**B. FUNDING.**

**i) For Human Resources.**

1. Funding should be allocated to promote special training for parents for parents elected to Boards of Management in order for them to fulfil their roles to their maximum ability.

2. We call on the DES to provide adequate, and necessary, funding for:

- (a) New courses for teachers who need to update their skills,
- (b) To employ additional staff so there is no loss of teaching hours as a result of the PCW.

3. We urge the DES to make adequate funding available to those Schools/Colleges that need it, to pay teacher/supervisors of evening study at an appropriate rate.

**ii) For material resources.**

1. NPAVSCC calls on the Minister for Education and Science to increase the maintenance grant for Vocational Schools and Community Colleges by thirty per cent forthwith.

2. We also call on him to ensure that:

- (a) All school buildings be brought up to an acceptable standard,
- (b) Every second level school's accommodation should be upgraded by the addition of a fully equipped canteen with adequate seating area
- (c) That the necessary funding necessary for all upgrading be readily provided,
- (d) All school budgets be exempt from VAT,
- (e) All schools are exempt from refuse charges.
- (f) To grant adequate funding so that all science laboratories in second level schools are upgraded to year 2000 standards.

**iii) For Requisites**

1) NPAVSCC request the Minister for Education & Science to further increase the finance available for School Book Schemes making Vocational School grants equitable with all other post-primary School Book Grants.

2) We demand that he pay a per capita grant of €70for each of the next four years to all Vocational Schools and Community Colleges for the purpose of purchasing ICT equipment.

3) We further request him to allocate additional, adequate, dedicated funding to schools to:

- (a) Cover the costs of project based examinations, e.g. Materials Technology Wood, Materials Technology Metal etc. (Junior Cert.),
- (b) Purchase the necessary Career Guidance texts, tests, and materials,
- (c) Cover the increasing cost of running State Examinations in the "practical subject area".

**iv) For Fuel.**

4. We ask the DES to make extra funding available to cover the very big increase in heating oil costs.

**v) For extra curricular activities**

- a. We propose that the DES adequately finance all extra curricular activities undertaken by Vocational Schools and Community Colleges.
- b. Congress demands that grants be made available to all students who are selected to represent Ireland in sporting, scientific, cultural, civic or any other extra curricular competitions or activities.

**vi) Grants.**

5. We request the Ministers for Finance and for Education and Science to increase the School Capitation Grant annually.

**vii) Profits**

We demand that the profits generated through Adult Education classes be returned to the school of origin as stated in DES Circular 46/00.

**viii) Examination fees.**

- 1. We demand that the Minister for Education and Science immediately abolish Junior Certificate examination fees as a first step to the abolition of all school exam fees and that any funding given to VECs to alleviate Junior Certificate fees be relocated to alleviate Leaving Certificate ones.
- 2. We demand that Junior and Leaving Certificate test papers should be supplied free of charge from the DES to students as part of their examination process.

**ix) Third level fees.**

NPAVSCC demands that the Minister for Education and Science:

- [a] Increase third level grants to a more realistic level and to increase the qualification threshold.
- [b] That grant applications be based on net income.
- [c] That parents of students who do not qualify for grants for third level education should be allowed to claim tax credits of €6,350 or more to help ease the burden of educating their children
- [d] That Child Benefit payments are extended to age 22 for all those in full time

#### **4. TEACHER EDUCATION AND INSERVICE.**

The quality and quantity of teachers, as well as their professional education and continuing in-service, is of great importance and concern to NPAVSCC. While the Association recognises the need for and is strongly in favour of in-service and the updating of teachers' skills, it also objects to the loss of class teaching time due to teacher absences on such courses as they are presently arranged. We're convinced too that more effort should be put into improving teachers interpersonal and communication skills along with classroom management strategies.

##### **(i) Inservice.**

NPAVSCC call on the Minister and DES:

[a] To ensure that all teachers receive adequate inservice education for both current and new programmes. (Such inservice training, and the assessment of the programmes, must be operated in such a manner as to cause minimum disruption to students.)

[b] To provide inservice training to teachers in classroom management and control.

[c] That from 1st September 2001, all inservice courses be held during the first week of September.

(d) To adequately compensate teachers for attending courses outside of school hours in order that the problems associated with teachers being absent during school term are alleviated.

(e) To facilitate school principals to employ temporary substitutes where inservice training deprives the school of teachers. We object strongly to our children losing classes in this situation

(f) To have all oral and practical examinations completed during the first week in May, which would be a non-pupil/teacher contact period.

##### **(ii) Substitute cover.**

Delegates at successive Congresses continue to call on the Association to pursue vigorously its policy on substitute cover, and strive to eliminate the all too frequent free classes.

NPAVSCC call on the Minister for Education and Science and the DES to:

(a) Ensure that substitute cover is provided for all teachers that are absent due to illness, even for one or two days, so that our children will not be left untaught or unsupervised due to teacher absences.

(b) Implement a more satisfactory means of filling temporary vacancies for teachers on sick or maternity leave, especially at Leaving Certificate level.

(c) Allow permanent teachers, at the appropriate rate of pay, to substitute for absent colleagues.

##### **(iii) Temporary teachers.**

NPAVSCC strongly objects to the high proportion of part-time and non-permanent teachers, which greatly affects the quality and continuity of our children's education, in schools where amalgamation is imminent.

##### **(iv) Pupil Teacher Ratio.**

We call on the DES to lower the pupil teacher ratio, so that schools with falling

pupil numbers may retain existing staff.

**(v) Posts of responsibility.**

We call on the Minister to sanction the appointment of an "A" Post of Responsibility for Planning, Operation, and Co-ordination of Adult Education in all schools and colleges providing this service. (This "A" Post is to be in addition to the normal allocation of Posts of Responsibility under the "Points System".)

**(vi) Teaching time.**

NPAVSCC must continue to fight for:

- (a) The recovery of teaching hours lost due to the implementation of the PCW agreement,
- (b) An increase in staffing in all VEC schools and colleges for the appointment of Assistant Principals, in order to provide an adequate curriculum and service to our children,
- (c) An improved PTR to offset the loss of teaching time,
- (d) The holding of referenda and all elections on Saturdays to both avoid the unnecessary closure of schools and to encourage all those eligible to vote to do so.

## **5. CURRICULAR MATTERS.**

NPAVSCC recognise that the teachers play a different but equal role in the scholastic education of our children. While the content of the formal school curriculum is determined by the DES and is implemented in the classrooms by the professional teachers, nevertheless parents cannot be excluded from either its design or implementation. To do so would be a denial of their constitutional rights as the primary educators of their own children. In particular parents are determined that their children shall have the best formal education possible. It must be of an acceptably high standard, modern, and of such a nature as to fit young adults to play a useful role in society. It must develop their skills, increase their knowledge, and form acceptable attitudes in them. It must also enable them to live and function as happy, self-fulfilled, productive members of society. Particular attention shall be paid to those pupils with special needs to enable them to reach their full potential.

**(i) Staffing.**

1. NPAVSCC demand that a teacher is employed for each fifteen pupils or part thereof, with effect from 1 September 2001.

**(ii) P.E.**

Congress demands that:

- (a) The DES give due prominence to the importance of physical education to the person in the design of the curriculum
- (b) All students have access to adequate sports and recreation facilities at school,
- (c) That adequate funding is made available to provide such facilities.

**(iii) I.C.T.**

1. We request the DES to give Computer Skills full examination status to fulfil the demands of all third level courses.

**(iv) Arts.**

1. We request the DES to have Music and Drama, as part of every school's curriculum.

**(v) Science.**

1. The Association calls on the Minister for Education and Science to have Science as a core Junior Certificate subject.

**(vi) SPHE.**

We ask that Social, Personal, and Health education, including substance misuse prevention, should be a timetable subject in all second level schools.

**(vii) Irish.**

We call on the Minister for Education & Science and his Department to re-consider the position of having Irish as a compulsory subject at senior level.

**(viii) Driver Education**

Parents demand that driver education be introduced as part of the Leaving Certificate cycle.

**(ix) Remedial services.**

NPAVSCC deplore the present inadequate provision of remedial services and demand:

[a] The services of remedial teachers be available to all students that need them,

[b] The maximum number of students to a remedial teacher be 5: 1"

[c] The Minister assess the proportion of pupils to be helped by remedial teachers, and then assess the provision of remedial teachers for those students,

[d] DES allocates a full time ex-quota remedial teacher to all schools, due to the major differences in educational special needs that exist between schools.

**(x) Career guidance.**

1. All schools should have access to a Career Guidance teacher. One Guidance Councillor should be appointed for every 200 pupils.

**(xi) Psychological services.**

At succeeding Congresses this Association has been bound to continue to pursue vigorously its oft-stated policy to secure adequate psychological services for all second level pupils. We note with approval the increasing number of psychologists appointed to the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS).

1) All schools should have easier access to Psychological Services. We also ask the Minister to provide adequate psychological assessment to help children with behavioural difficulties.

2) We call on the Schools Psychological Services to increase the number of psychologists dealing with testing for dyslexia immediately.

3) We insist that all psychological assessments be done within three months of referral for such assessments.

4) We demand that psychological intervention take place as soon as possible in the child's education.

**(xii) Home/School/Community Liaison.**

We urgently demand that the DES extend the HSCL Programme to all schools, regardless of designation, and that home/school/community liaison co-ordinators be appointed in all VEC schools and colleges.

**(xiii) School attendance.**

1. We call on the Minister for Education and Science to appoint School Attendance Officers in all second level schools.

**(xiv) Special needs.**

We strongly advise the DES to establish a post-primary Special Education Section. We seek:

1. An automatic and smoother transfer from primary to post-primary of the services allocated to Special Needs Pupils in primary school.

2. Provision to be made in stand-alone schools for the education of students with special needs to enable them to access education in their own locality.

3. We also demand that the Special Education Section of the DES deal promptly with requests for resources for special needs pupils.

4. We call on the Minister for Education and Science to publish the findings of the Task Force on Dyslexia in order that:

a) Parents are aware of the recommendations

b) Parents are informed of when the recommendations are to be implemented.

**(xv) TYO.**

1. Transition Year must be an available option for all students.

(xvi) Fire safety.

1. We call on the DES to incorporate fire safety education through SPHE or civics. .

2. Parents also demand that the DES

(a) Publish safety guidelines for teachers and pupils in all practical and technological classes,

(b) Insist that those guidelines are included in the Safety Statement of every School and College, and are fully implemented.

**(xvii) Change.**

1. Changes made to the curriculum should be finalised in good time so that all textbooks are available at the beginning of each course.

**(xiii) Examinations.**

1. We strongly request the DES to review the timetable for the first week of the Leaving Certificate Examination in order that it may be planned in a more equitable manner, which would lessen the pressure for all students in trying to cope with the large number of subjects crammed into the first week.

**(xix) Oral examinations.**

1. We call on the DES to hold oral and practical examinations during the first week in May, which would be a non-pupil/teacher contact period.

**(xxi) School-based assessment.**

This Association must, and will, examine with care any possible future proposal to introduce school-based assessment at the certificate examinations. While recognising the potential value of continuous assessment we note the negative implications for students. Those negatives will arise when the energies of teachers will be diverted from-teaching pupils to the onerous, time-consuming duties necessarily attaching to the work of assessment. That aspect of the proposals must be fully investigated. Consequently, our support will be withheld until a thorough study is carried out on all aspects of such assessment, and a report made on them to the satisfaction of parents.

**(xxii) Senior Cycle Review.**

This Association:

- (a) Supports the review of the Senior Cycle and the publication of the consultative paper on the issue.
- (b) Insists that parents are involved in the process.
- (c) Demands that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) circulate information about the ongoing work of the Review Body to all the Education Partners, especially to parent groups at all levels.

**(xxiii). Examinations Board.**

This Association:

- 1. Welcomes the establishment of the State Examinations Board.
- 2. Deplores the lack of parental representation on it.
- 3. Reiterates its policy that all state examinations be corrected only by properly qualified, practising teachers.

## **6. STUDENT WELFARE AND AFFAIRS**

NPAVSCC hold it to be a self-evident truth that parents/guardians are profoundly interested in the holistic welfare and advancement of their children. This applies to the formal curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and also to the young people's social and recreational life and activities. Thus, parents have very real concerns about drug abuse and availability, school transport, the weight of schoolbags, examinations, mental and physical health & safety, pupils' progress, and their environment in general.

### **(i) Student Councils.**

1. We call upon the Minister for Education and Science to make it a statutory duty on Principals and Boards of management to promote the setting up of Student Councils.

### **(ii) Issuing of certificates.**

We call upon the Minister and DES to:

- (a) Give students the option of having their examination results posted to their homes
- (b) Ensure that Junior Certificate results are issued prior to the resumption of classes in September, thus facilitating students in making their subject choices for the Leaving Certificate
- (c) Ensure that the Leaving Certificate Applied task results are issued to students within thirty days of their assessment, in keeping with the underlying principles of the programme.
- (d) Ensure that the Junior and Leaving Certificates are issued to students by December in the year of examination.
- (e) Reverse the decision to annotate the Certificates of students with specific learning difficulties, including Dyslexia, who avail of arrangements, such as answering .on tape or availing of the services of a reader or a scribe.

### **(iii) Counselling.**

NPAVSCC demand that:

- [a] All second level schools, regardless of size, have a full-time ex-quota career guidance counsellor,
- [b] Each student be given adequate attention and guidance in their decision making processes,
- [c] Trained counsellors are available to. all students to. enable them deal with the stresses associated with the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations, and also at times of personal crises.

### **(iv) Drug abuse.**

We call an the Government to:

- [a] Take the, initiative to set up a community campaign to address the problem of underage drinking,
- [b] Introduce a national tamper-proof ID system.

[c] That the Association's National Executive, conduct a thorough review of the Association's policies on drugs, drink, and bullying to reassess their relevance and effectiveness, and to raise these issues with the relevant Government departments and statutory bodies.

**(v) Bullying.**

1. We demand that the DES immediately targets resources towards the special anti-bullying programme currently located in Trinity College, and that training be made available in each of the twenty two. Education Centres nation wide, so that a cohort of teachers from every school/college can attend.

**(vi) Weight of school bags.**

This is a perennial problem and major source of concern for parents. They are dissatisfied with the failure of everybody concerned, to address the issue in a practical and meaningful way. As a beginning to the solution of the problem parents want:

[a] The weight of school bags/books to be examined by the Health and Safety Authority,

[b] The Minister to introduce legislation to ensure that school students should not be expected to carry/lift bags, that weigh heavier than what industrial workers are allowed to lift.

**(vii) Provision and weight of textbooks.**

a) NPAVSCC call on the relevant Government minister to conduct a full investigation into the monopoly by second level school text publishers, and their apparent disregard for the financial hardship imposed on parents by their random introduction of minor changes to texts, which necessitate the purchase of entire new books.

b) We request the DES to enter into discussions with publishers to alleviate the financial strain placed on families due to the constant changing of text books.

c) We call on the Minister for Education and Science to ensure that the designs of the Irish and English text books are adapted so that they need not be published every two years.

d) We also request the minister to make it obligatory for second level school text publishers to produce, or arrange for the production of, audiotapes of texts to facilitate pupils with learning difficulties.

e) As parents continually express concern at the weight of school books:

1. We call on the DES to liaise with schools and publishers to ensure that books are produced covering just one year of a course.

2. The weight of the Physics text books in particular should be addressed.

3. In order to reduce the problem of the weight of school books every student should be provided with a locker and have facilities for homework and study on school premises.

4. The use of laptops should be investigated, along with the possibility of the DES providing a subsidy towards the cost of such laptops.

### **(viii) School transport.**

This hardy annual at Congress is a cause of much anger and dissatisfaction to parents. The important aspects of this issue are overcrowding, delays, safety, and the age of buses. Consequently:

1. NPAVSCC call on the Minister to address as a matter of urgency the over crowding on school transport.
2. We demand of Bus Eireann that, in the interest of safety, the present system of three students to two seats be changed immediately to one student per seat
3. That all seats have safety belts.
4. We demand that the Government give immediate effect in Irish law to Directive 30/2000 from the EU, which provides for the random roadside testing of commercial vehicles, including school buses and coaches.
5. We demand that all school buses have a supervisor.
6. We also demand that all school transport vehicles over twenty years age be taken out of service.
7. We propose that all school buses would have a means of communicating with the school and/or emergency services. This would mean that the driver would not have to leave the bus in the case of an accident, breakdown, or other emergency, leaving the children unsupervised.
8. We demand of the Government that transport be provide free of charge to all pupils qualifying for the school bus scheme. In particular we urge that those pupils who have their own medical cards be always given free transport.
9. We request the DES to look at redrafting the catchment areas for the school transport system to take account of school closures and amalgamations over the last number of years.
10. We urge the DES and Bus Eireann to review the school bus routes every three years, and also to ensure that pupils do not spend an inordinate amount of time travelling or waiting before and after classes.
11. We also urge both those parties to use maximum flexibility in determining school bus routes and that those routes be reviewed every three years, to take account of changing demographic circumstances and the wishes of parents.
12. We request that the Association's National Executive make regular, insistent, and urgent representations to the DES regarding an immediate review of the second level school bus catchment areas.
- 13 We demand that the law banning smoking on school transport be fully implemented.

### **(ix) Justice issues.**

In the interests of justice and fairness, NPAVSCC ask:

1. That the Minister give special consideration to students who suffer family bereavement during the Leaving Certificate exam time, by being allowed to sit the missing examinations within a later set time.
2. That student's on work experience for PLC courses should be treated with fairness and justice, in keeping with the rules laid down by the Department of Labour for the employment of young people.

**(x) Health and safety.**

The parents we represent demand that:

- a) Dust extractors be fitted into all practical subject areas of all VEC schools and colleges
- b) Dust extraction systems be incorporated in all new school/college designs in practical subject areas
- c) All schools/colleges should have a Safety Awareness Day.

**(xi) Security.**

In consultation with management, teachers, and parents, we propose that close circuit television (CCTV) be introduced into selected classrooms in selected schools/colleges on a trial basis, to safeguard further the rights of teachers and pupils and to enhance discipline.

**(xii) Exam supervision.**

We demand that each DES examination centre have an organising superintendent for state examinations and that he be given adequate support personnel for supervising the students during the exam times.

**(xiii) Marking of exam scripts.**

This Association is adamant that only fully qualified, experienced, practising teachers correct exam scripts in the spheres of their expertise. No other markers/ correctors are acceptable.

**(xiv) Transfers.**

The Association demands that:

- [a] Special Needs Assistants should automatically transfer with the pupils concerned from Primary to Post Primary Schools.
- [b] Exemption from Irish should automatically transfer with the pupils concerned from Primary to Post Primary Schools.

**(xv) Suicide.**

NPAVSCC requests the DES to take immediate steps to implement an effective, determined, and public programme in second level schools to mitigate against the crisis of suicide among teenagers and young adults.

**(xvi) Equality.**

This Association is committed to equality of treatment and opportunity of all our children, regardless of their sex. Consequently:

- [a]. We endorse the right of female students to wear school uniform trousers.
- [b]. We call on the DES to investigate why fewer male than female student are progressing to third level education.

**(xvii). National Education Welfare Board.**

We call on the Minister for Education and Science to immediately establish the National Education Welfare Board as described in the 2000 Education (Welfare) Act and to fund and staff it adequately.

**7. INTERNAL N.P.A.V.S.C.C. AFFAIRS.**

Between Congresses the day-to-day running of the Association is the responsibility of the Officers. They shall pay due attention to the advice and guidance of the National Executive Committee. The rights and duties of the Officers, the National Executive Committee, and Sub Committees are laid down in the Association's Constitution and Bylaws. All decisions and operations must always be in accordance with the Constitution and in keeping with the decisions of Congress.

**(i) Affiliation Fee**

Congress has decided that for the present time, the annual affiliation fee shall be 30c per pupil, with a minimum affiliation of €50 for smaller Vocational Schools and Community Colleges (175 pupils or less) and with a maximum of 1300 for larger ones.

**(ii) National Executive Duty**

Congress has instructed the National Executive of NPAVSCC to look at and revise their structure with a view to giving significant authority to County Parent Associations.

**(iii) Officer Board**

The Officers of the Association shall be:

President  
Vice President  
Secretary  
Assistant Secretary  
Treasurer  
Assistant Treasurer  
Public Relations Officer

**(iv) Election of Officers**

Delegates to the Annual Congress are advised to be mindful of the desirability of having a gender balance and a geographical spread of Officers.

**(v) Constraints**

Officers of NPAVSCC shall not hold Officerships in NPCpp, Ltd.  
Nominees for Officership must have child in the system.