

NPAVSCC 24th Annual Conference

February 28th 2009

‘Planning ahead?’

Address by John Gibbons, President NPAVSCC

Distinguished guests, Parents and Friends in education I am delighted to be addressing you today as we hold our 24th Annual Conference here in Tralee, Co. Kerry. I want to especially thank Chris and her group for the work put into the organisation of this event. They have been a great help to the executive in doing this work locally for us.

This year I took over the role of President mid way through the year due to the election of Jim Moore as President of NPCpp. Been elected President of NPCpp was a great achievement for Jim, a long serving member of our organisation. His position came at one of the most eventful times for the organisation due to the education cutbacks announced in the Budget 2009. Jim has earlier dealt with the challenges facing parents from the NPCpp point of view and I hope to set out a plan that the incoming executive will carry forward. While it has been a ‘short term’ for me it has been eventful as we tried to pursue our objectives at local and national level focussing on important issues for Parents and include;

- Developing an Anti Bullying poster for second level schools and highlighting parents issues and roles at national level and with our Partners in Education.
- Expanding our communications with parents and increasing affiliations
- Planning ahead for the upcoming VEC elections and developing parents roles with school management and on VEC’s.

As a Parents Representative body we have been consistent in the pursuit of improving education for our children. In the last year we have seen the continued growth and our involvement in “The Post Primary Education Forum”, PPEF. Through this body actions were organised for the campaign for the changes to the Education Budget announced in October last. The PPEF has succeeded in bringing together Parents, Management Bodies

and Teachers Unions in the post-primary sector to address common issues and to establish a shared viewpoint on priorities for the future development of second-level education. This Forum can now be used to lobby for greater investment in post-primary education given that we share bottom place in a ranking of 30 OECD countries of annual spend per second level student relative to our country's wealth.

I share the hope of many that the present failure to adequately fund the second level education system by the DES can be quickly reversed and allow all our schools to deal with the educational needs of all students to equip them for a challenging time ahead with their careers.

On your behalf we have also continued to develop a close relationship with NPCpp and to have the NPC pp President and PRO here today as members of our organisation demonstrates the strong position vocational education holds within the National Parents' body.

We also wish to note the progress in the continuation of the school building programme with new schools and facilities being upgraded. Many new school buildings are being rolled out under the PPP scheme and a number of new building works are well advanced or at the planning stage in spite of the current economic issues.

At National level we are very conscious of the scourge of bullying in our schools and colleges and to raise awareness of this issue we established a working group made up of representatives from Parents, IVEA Standing Council, CEO Association and School Principals to develop a poster to go out to all VEC schools in the coming months. We hope this poster will provoke a debate about bullying and even try to encourage the student body to think of the effects of bullying on the victims. Here is a preview of the poster which is almost complete. [This is Partnership in Education at work](#). The group has done good work in this most difficult area and should be commended for this. Again thanks to all involved in the preparation of this poster.

Also in schools and colleges integration still poses challenges for us as a Parents Organisation. Engaging parents whose first language is not English must be addressed.

This year NPAVSCC, as one of five parent's representative bodies on NPC pp have tried to advance the development of an agreed 3 year strategic plan for NPCpp. It is intended to secure a strong, well resourced National Parents Council. However almost two years have passed now without sanction for financial approval from the DES.

The Parents Organisation needs this support from the DES and the government on this proposal as a matter of urgency.

NPAVSCC through NPCpp continues to support students and parents at examination time with the Helpline. Guidance Counsellors play an active role in this service. Again this is principally a voluntary initiative led by members of our organisation who must be thanked for their roles in this area. Last year, a large volume of enquiries were handled and we hope this initiative will be repeated in 2009.

In the Vocational Sector we take every opportunity to raise our voices through our representatives' country wide on our VEC's. This year 2009 sees the election of Parents rep's to the VEC. We must strive to fill all parents' positions Male and Female on all of the County and City VECS' this time. Since 2004 Parents Reps have become more familiar with their roles. Our one day conference each autumn has focussed on their issues and a good debate and exchange of views has been occurring at these one day seminars. We have met with the DES to ensure that election guidance is issued in time so that members seeking re-election or new members coming through are adequately informed. Generally, parents' representation on VECs has been a positive experience in our first term under the new legislation. The IVEA has passed a motion at the 2008 AGM to develop a "memorandum of understanding" with our organisation that includes

- Recognition for a national association of parents/guardians
- To further develop the links between our two organisations.

VEC's deserve congratulations for their efforts in embracing change and working closer with the Parents body.

We as a National Parents body will continue to raise issues.

We must now set a clear role for this organisation going forward and I make this presentation here today so that the incoming executive can run with this if the wish for the coming year. This proposal should compliment the strategic plan been developed for NPCpp.

I propose that we prepare for the future by developing a strategy that will clearly outline our role and so that the Executive can work within a clear framework going forward. The Education Act gave us as parents' rights and we must now take up our responsibilities under the legislation and work for the benefit of all students in our schools and colleges.

Developing Strategy

In developing the NPAVSCC Strategy and implementing it, NPAVSCC will continue to be alert to significant issues which may arise from its national profile, including:

- the adoption of NPCpp policy and guidelines where practicable;
- the regional distribution of meetings and the implications of this for internal communications;
- the need for funding to carry out policy research work and other duties on behalf of our members.
- the need to continue to get strong upward input from School Associations.

Organisation

- NPAVSCC is managed by a Voluntary Executive Officer Board and has no permanent staff. It has four Directors on NPCpp and as such has an input into policy and actions of NPCpp in connection with the Department of the Education and Science,.

NPAVSCC Mission

NPAVSCC mission is to support parents of children in the Vocational Educational Sector to achieve the best advantage from the Educational System for their children, with a high level of involvement in policy making and implementation gives us the opportunity for fulfilling objectives, in a culture of continuous improvement through partnership and negotiation.

NPAVSCC VISION

NPAVSCC vision is of a high performance organization, which provides a positive involvement in education, where NPAVSCC is integrally linked with education policy/planning development.

<p align="center">Class A Better funding regime role under the Education Acts</p>	<p align="center">Class B Linking NPAVSCC with Vocational Educational Planning</p>	<p align="center">Class C Internal/External Communications</p>	<p align="center">Class D Positive approach to the Education practices within our Schools</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set out clear funding requirements for our organization. • Identify and report on the key NPAVSCC activities undertaken that require extra funding • Make the organization perform effectively and overcome difficulties. • Ensure that the Officer board is seen to add value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new policy as the core vehicle for ensuring that all parent’s representatives perform at optimum level. • Continue to devolve NPAVSCC organization and links to IVEA, Teacher Unions and DES. • Insist on parental input at the developmental stages of legislation, planning and curriculum change well in advance of decision making at local or national level. • Ensure the election to all VEC’s of high class members to drive our policy’s. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep parents informed of the benefits of membership of NPAVSCC. • Keep formal/informal internal communications open and direct, allowing information to flow down, up and across the organization. • Equip parents with the knowledge and skills required. • Continue to develop electronic communications. Make more use of our Web information page and Email Information System. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize prevention & intervention strategies in School Policy and programme’s. Promote good policy within the organization. • Resolve student school issues as speedily as possible, at the lowest appropriate level. • Promote the benefits and sense of common identity that participation in sports & extra curricular activities can bring.

Our principal objective is to support the parents in the local school and I hope that a clear strategy for the future will see our affiliation numbers increasing. It is vital that we communicate, inform and support our members when ever and where ever we can.

VISION without ACTION is just DREAMING

In conclusion, delegates I ask you to ensure that we continue to do all in our power to support and to challenge our partners in education in the provision of the best possible education for our children. Also to remind delegates that next year we are entering our 25th year in existence and this milestone should be suitable honoured at our next annual congress.

Thank You