



Educate Together 2012 in review

CEO's commentary

2012 was an intense, challenging but historic year for Educate Together. It marked the 10th year of our full-time office and we looked back on what we had achieved in that time. 45 new schools, second-level and teacher education breakthroughs and the start of a process by which - once and for all - the huge human rights deficit in Irish education can be at last addressed.

It was also a year in which the organisation had to take stock of how these achievements now required new strategy, new approaches to income generation and new ways of working. One of the most frustrating aspects of the year was the unremitting efforts put into major gift fundraising and how difficult it turned out to be to turn these efforts into actual cash in the bank. The year was also a year in which huge opportunities opened up for Educate Together. No longer a minor sideline act, it moved decisively into the mainstream with an outstanding profile in its key target demographic of parents of school-going children. Now the pressure is on to deliver capacity in all areas of the country and to do so whilst maintaining all the fundamental qualities that have made Educate Together such a unique and quality brand in Irish education. In addition, opportunities are now emerging to build sustainable additional income from increasing interest from abroad, in particular from the UK, the US and Middle East.

Early in 2013, we are moving to an integrated new premises in the city centre. This will allow a series of changes in our management structures that will be implemented with our new 2020 strategy. The new approach will produce a leaner management structure and tighter team integration around project management. It will also allow the organisation to trim its expenditure to manage the 'fiscal cliff' impact when One Foundation financing comes to an end at end of 2013.

Overall, I am very inspired by what we achieved in 2012. It was an historic year, a real watershed in Educate Together's influence at home and abroad. As long as we stay focussed on our key objectives and secure our income streams, I am confident that 2013 will build on this success.

It's a great time to be alive and to be able to advance such ground-breaking work.

I would like to thank our member school communities for their support of the work of the national office over the past year and in particular, for the great work that continues to enhance the reputation of our movement.

Introduction

Educate Together ended 2012 having made major strides to the objectives identified in the 2009 strategic plan. This plan was reviewed and updated during the year.

Major progress was achieved in the following areas:

- Establishing new structures to support quality delivery of the Educate Together ethos at school level
- Consolidating its support with government and all party approval of its policies
- Opening of new schools in areas of population growth and diversity
- Starting a new process of transformation of denominational schools
- Increasing capacity of Educate Together's existing network
- Winning sanction for the first Educate Together second-level schools
- Establishing Educate Together as a real option for student teachers in colleges of education
- Enhancing Educate Together's profile in its core market of parents of school-going and pre-school children
- Building new income streams

At the same time, Educate Together maintained careful control over its expenditure as it faced considerable difficulties as it built up its new fundraising initiatives. The move of the national office into an integrated city centre location was planned to reduce operational and accommodation costs for the organisation into the future.



Ashbourne ETNS first day

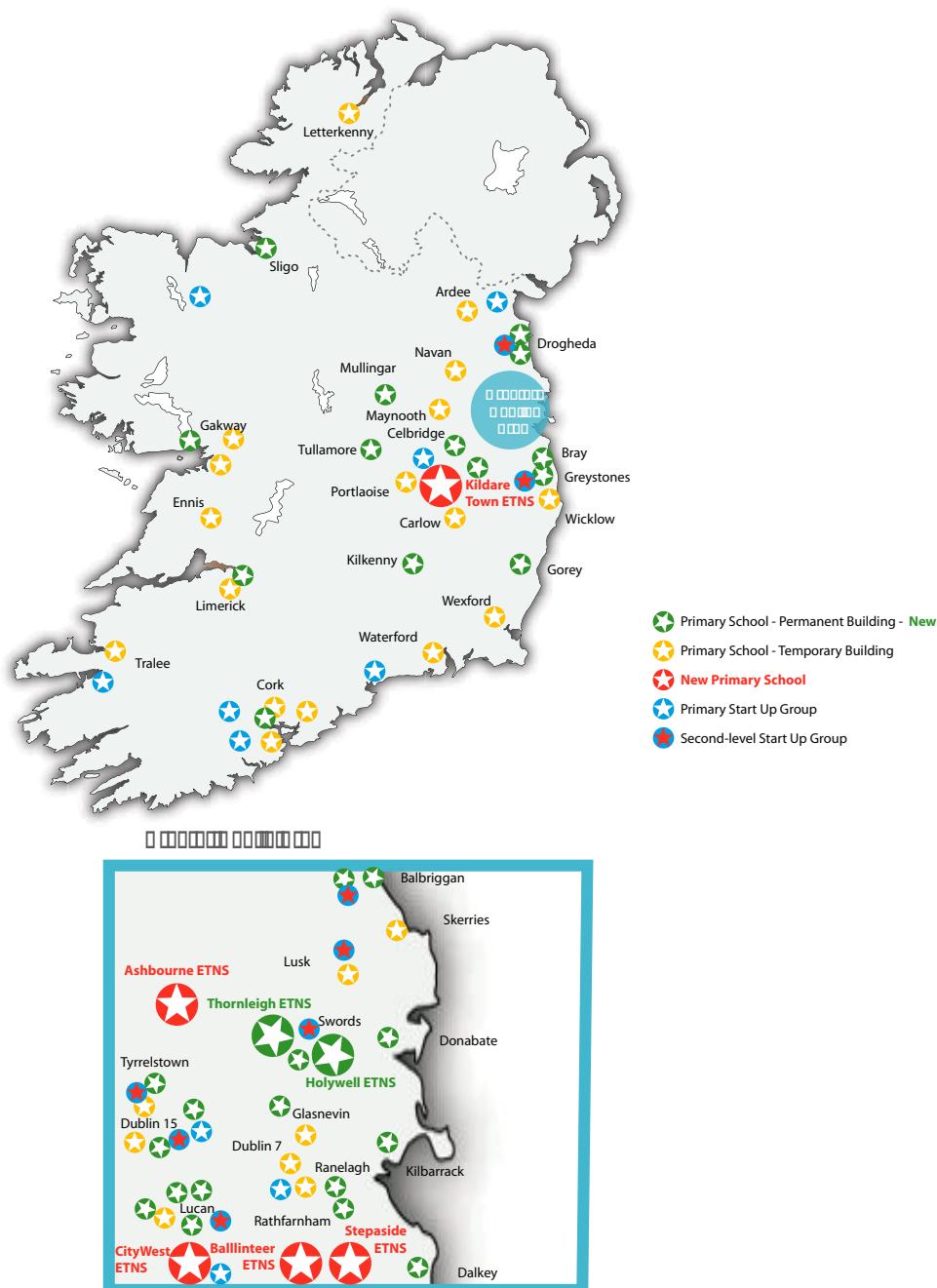


Stepaside ETNS first junior infants arrive

Operational activities

Opening of new schools in areas of population growth and diversity

Educate Together opened five new primary schools in 2012. These were in Ashbourne, Ballinteer, Citywest, Kildare Town and Stepaside. All five schools were opened at the request of the DES to meet projected increases in school going population in these areas. All the schools opened successfully, despite significant difficulties. These difficulties originated from delays in DES decision-making and in the lack of the normal input from DES technical staff in accommodation preparation. As a result, Educate Together had to do far more work on accommodation that has been the norm in previous years. All these schools are planned to grow to at least two-stream size (450 pupils) in the next eight years. The opening of the three schools in the south Dublin suburbs provide schools in an area in which we have had long-standing demand for parents which, up until now, we have been unable to meet. The new schools in Kildare Town and Ashbourne also address long-standing areas of demand.





Kildare town first day



Ballinteer ETNS first term



Citywest ETNS with visitors in December

Starting a new process of transformation of denominational schools

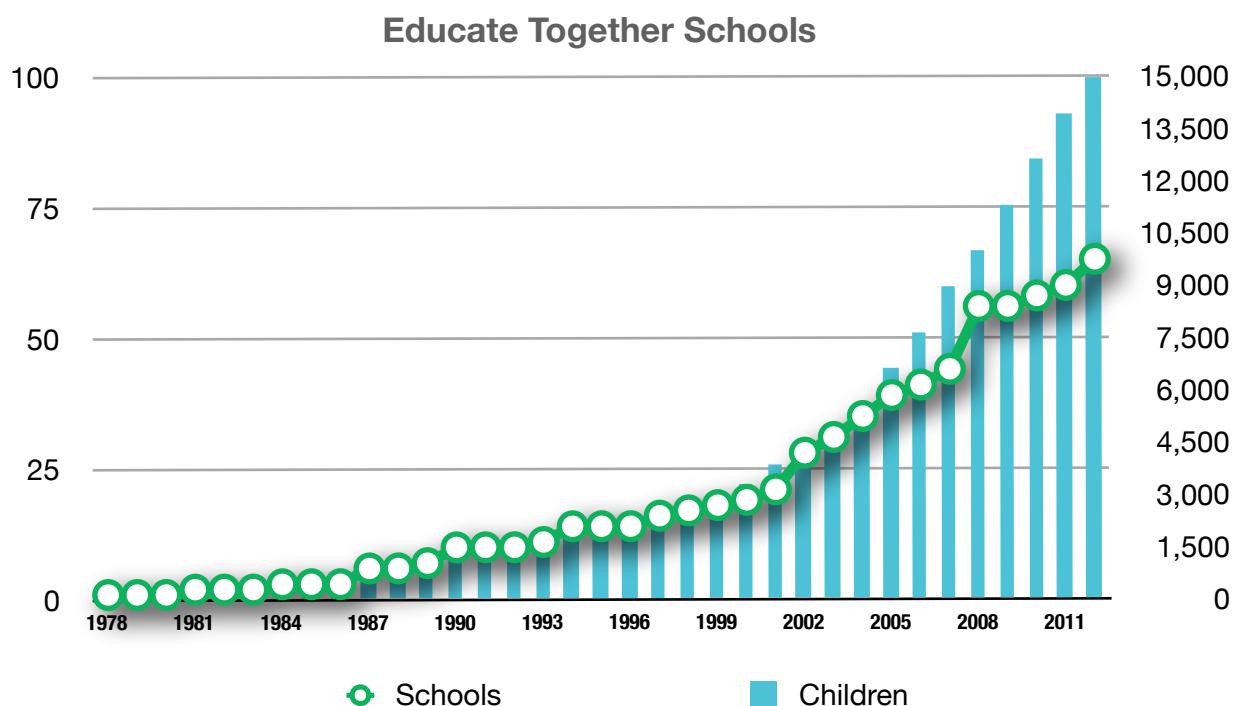
A highpoint of the year was the final publication of the Report on the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism. This report had been a key lobbying objective for Educate Together. It was critical for the process of 'transforms' or the re-assignment of the ethos of existing schools to meet the human rights of parents in localities. The 2009 plan had shown that Educate Together could never achieve its objective of "making multi-denominational education as available as any other" for parents in Ireland (making multi-denominational a real choice) unless a way could be found to change the patronage of existing schools in response to changing local parental demand. As a result, considerable lobbying, research and communications effort was put into firstly persuading the politicians that such a process was necessary, secondly making sure it was included in the programme for government, thirdly making sure it was a priority for the new Minister for Education and Skills and lastly, that when the process was being decided, Educate Together's experience and views were a key element in its conclusions.

A major achievement of our efforts was the central place of the survey of parental preferences in the final report of the Forum. This establishes a process that - for the very first time in Irish education - asks parents what type of school they want for the education of their children. Once established, this will become a standard government methodology and will - in our opinion - lead to the elimination of the human rights deficit in Irish education. This deficit has been a key driver for the work of Educate Together since its formation 35 years ago.

A pilot of the survey took place late in 2012 in five areas. In all five of these areas, the survey resulted in a formal recommendation from the Minister to the Catholic patrons that a school building should be made available for a new Educate Together school. This was an outstanding success for Educate Together's lobbying, market preparation and advocacy work. The survey is now being rolled out in 38 more areas.

Increasing capacity of Educate Together's existing network

Despite the constraints on the government coffers as a result of the economic crisis and the spending constraints imposed by the 'troika', Educate Together has been able to continue to progress school building and expansion projects. During 2012, the organisation has taken delivery of major buildings/extensions in Holywell (24 class rooms plus autism unit) and Thornleigh (8 classrooms). In addition, Educate Together organised new temporary accommodation for seven schools and the network increased its capacity by over 1,000 pupils to approximately 15,000 (or 35 additional classes).



The key element was the continued vigorous growth of the network. The movement is on-track to double its capacity during the past five years. Pictures that follow show the Thornleigh extension and the new 24 classroom plus autism unit delivered for Holywell, Swords.



Establishing the first Educate Together second-level schools

A second game-changing achievement for Educate Together in 2012 was the awarding of patronage of three new second-level schools to be opened in 2014. These three schools in Drogheda (Ballymakenny), Dublin 15 (Hansfield) and Lucan (Kishoge) will be the first Educate Together second-level schools and will break new ground in Irish education in methodology, governance and curriculum. They will also build security for the Educate Together primary network so that there will not be fear amongst parents that their children will not be able continue their education in the same ethos all the way to university. Extensive work was carried out to prepare the instruments of management of these schools, to negotiate with state bodies, and to research and develop curriculum, school and operational design for these schools. A successful Easter Project took place with students in the Spring which involved them in a team-based, interdisciplinary project based on the theme of 'Disaster'.

Establishing Educate Together as a real option for student teachers in colleges of education

The third game-changing achievement was a decisive breakthrough in teacher education. The successful commencement of the first Post Graduate Certificate in Ethical Education in St. Patrick's College with more than 15 students established Ethical Education and the Learn Together curriculum as a formal academic discipline for the very first time in Ireland. This, coupled with progress in the undergraduate teacher education courses in all colleges has made a lasting impact on teacher education in Ireland and will cement the place of Educate Together and its ethical curriculum as an authentic, established and respected option for teachers in Ireland.



Picture shows the President of St. Patrick's College, Daire Keogh and Paul Rowe signing the MOU for the Certificate course in the presence of participating students and lecturers.

Enhancing Educate Together's profile

During 2012, Educate Together made significant progress in building a positive image for itself and its schools amongst the Irish public. The target market segment is young adults in the child-bearing age group. Independent research demonstrated a continuously growing level of approval amongst this section and - in areas where there had been lower levels namely Munster - there was appreciable progress. In addition, major independent studies have begun to strongly endorse the Educate Together model. A completely new, re-engineered website with advanced content management tools was completed and deployed during the year and the organisation introduced the systematic use of Facebook pages for parent and general public engagement.

During the year, Educate Together appeared regularly in national media, both press, radio and TV and rolled out a new initiative to empower its regional officers to take a major role in local and regional media in areas targeted for new schools or re-assignments.

During the year, Educate Together commissioned the ESRI to conduct a review of all the available data on outcomes for Educate Together students and this concluded significant positive outcomes. Also Educate Together commissioned the School of Education Studies of DCU to evaluate the Learn Together curriculum. The initial findings of this study strongly vindicated the curriculum's efficacy in delivery of a rich, values-based learning experience for the children in our schools and to prepare them for a future in which they must live responsibly in a diverse and globalised society.

Building new income streams

During the year, Educate Together invested heavily in training for its key fundraising staff and worked to transform the attitude of the organisation towards income generation. The For Impact training was entered into enthusiastically and the entire major gift strategy and implementation was overhauled and improved. By the end of the year, the organisation has in place a proper system for processing potential major investors, leads and contacts. New marketing materials have been produced and 'engagement tools' developed. At the same time, innovations in community based fundraising have been implemented with on-line draws and a members raffle deployed at the end of the year. A legacy programme has been put in place. Whilst many of the these programmes have yet to conclusively yield substantial income, the organisation has now in place a fully formed multi-layer fundraising operation.

Co-incidentally, the organisation has built proper income models to support other activities and has derived income from on-line courses, course delivery in schools and colleges and consultancy activities.

A particular innovation in the year was to research the opportunities for deriving income from Educate Together's accumulated Intellectual Property (IP) through international activities. In this regard, at the end of the year, the board had received legal advice on establishing a related company in order to trade internationally and earn income to support core activities in Ireland.

Establishing new structures to support quality delivery of the Educate Together ethos at school level

During the year, significant strides have been made in Educate Together school support, ethos support and volunteering programmes. Intensive support has been given to schools with IR and governance difficulties, training courses have taken place and in particular the organisation's innovations in volunteer support and ethos self-evaluation has brought significant dividends. The ESET (Ethos Self Evaluation Tool) has been rolled out in an increasing number of schools and has won increasing approval from those who have used it. A further innovation was the development of on-line courses for members of boards of management.

Consolidating its support with government and all party approval of its policies

Considerable progress has been made consolidating political support for Educate Together during 2012. The CEO has taken the lead to continue the cross-party support for the aims of the organisation whilst maintaining excellent working relations with the new Minister and his team. This has resulted in significant support from key government back benchers such as Aodhan O Riordan and John Lyons in the Dáil, and Ivana Bacik in the Seánad. A key element of this political progress has been the clear support in political circles for the re-assignment campaigns and for Educate Together's work to open its first second-level schools.

(Photo shows group of TDs, Senators and supporters at the presentation to the houses of the Oireachtas of the case for the new Educate Together school for Portobello and Dublin 8)



Chairperson's Report

2012 was another successful year for Educate Together with some big successes in a number of areas. The big news was the announcement in July by the Minister that we are to open three Second Level Schools in September 2014 in Blanchardstown, Drogheda and Lucan. As part of our preparations for these openings we appointed Ruth Doggett as Second Level Programme Manager.

In the Primary Section we also had a major breakthrough with the Department carrying out pilot Parental Surveys in five areas to see what the demand for increased choice in school patronage was. Subsequent to these the Department carried out further surveys in 38 more areas in 2013 with Educate Together being the choice in the overwhelming majority of these. The process of engaging with the current patrons is now in progress.

On the school building front there was more good news as seven of our schools were told they would be getting new buildings during 2013. Several of these including Esker ETNS, Carrigaline ETNS and Gaelscoil an Ghoirt Álainn have been campaigning for several years and this news is a great relief to them.

The Memorandum of Understanding between Educate Together and St Patrick's College of Education in November was another major step forward for us. The memorandum is in regard to our joint postgraduate certificate course in Ethical and Multi-denominational Education and it is the first course of its kind.

The area where there is the greatest pressure, however, is that of finance. We are under huge pressure for funding to maintain the services that the office provides and to continue the magnificent work that has been done in expanding our primary network and breaking into second level. We are extremely grateful to our members for the support given and hope that this will continue.

Diarmaid Mac Aonghusa, Chairperson.



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