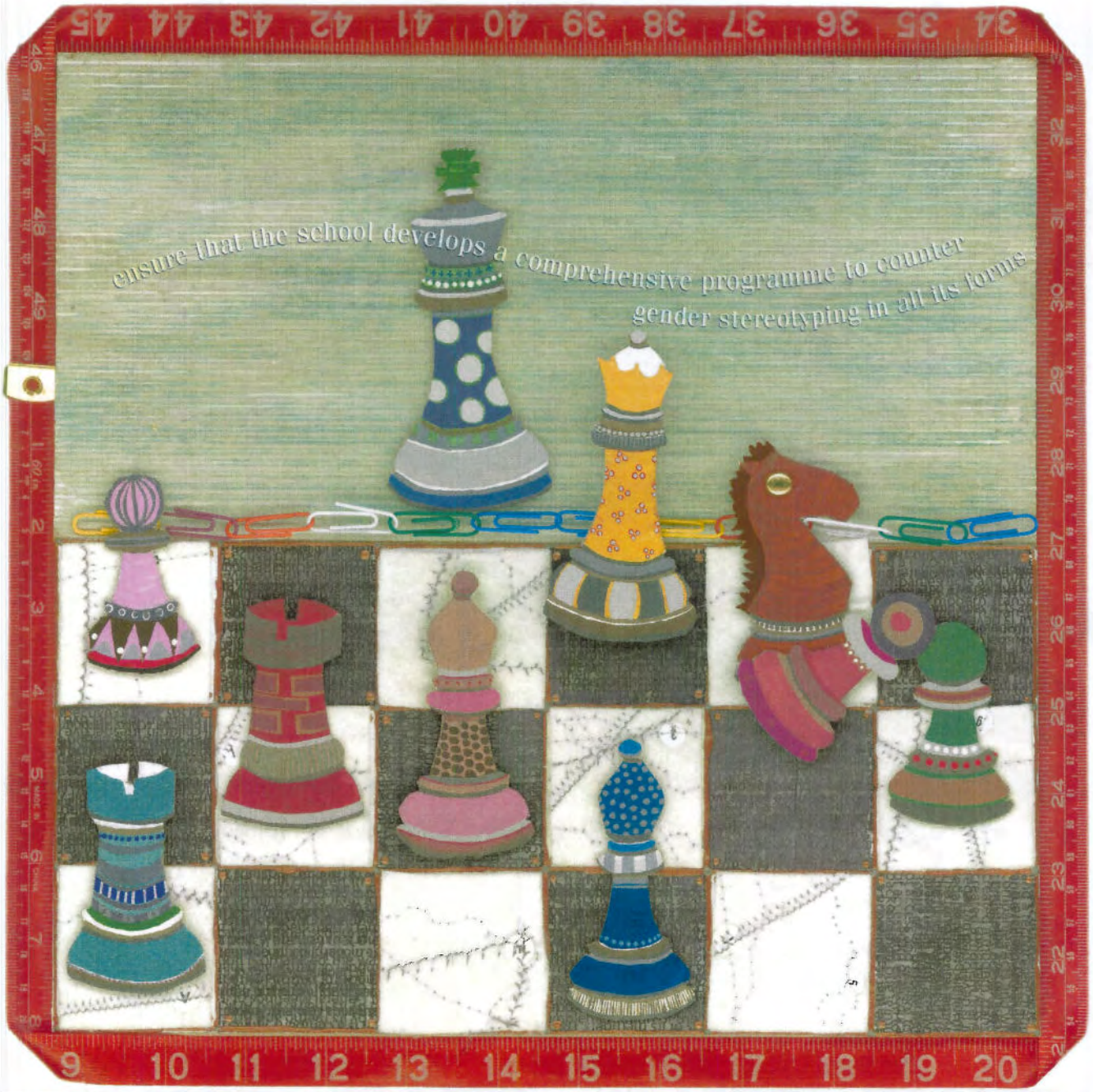
Educate Together

Annual Report of the Board of Directors

The report covers the period January 1st 2006 to December 31st 2006.



Letterkenny
Sligo
Ardee
Drogheda
Navan
Mullingar
Balbriggan
Galway
Dublin 15
Tullamore
Blessington
Wicklow Town
Ennis
Gorey
Kilkenny
Limerick
Tralee
Waterford
Cork
Existing Schools (Temporary Accommodation)
Existing Schools (Permanent Buildings)
New Schools 2006

Summary

2006 was a very challenging year for Educate Together, the organisation had to move forward with very limited resources. The main achievement of the year was to turn around the financial base of the organisation and prepare the organisation for another period of substantial growth. This required a difficult period of cost-cutting, a detailed review of all operations and the drawing up of a strategic plan for the next three years. This plan was presented to the membership at the General Members' Meeting in October. By the end of the year, the organisation was again in surplus and was in the position to start to re-fill national office positions that had been left vacant during the year.

Despite these challenges, the Educate Together network of schools continued to expand and thrive during the year. Two new schools - Blessington and Letterkenny - opened successfully in September and as the statistics show, our developing schools continued to grow strongly.

Despite being another year in which the State had significant resources to make real changes in education, 2006 was a year in which the stress on the Irish primary education system and its funding and regulatory framework increased dramatically. The demand for new schools, for new Educate Together schools, the failure of the State to plan for new and changing demands for schools, the continued chronic under-funding of primary education and the intensifying pressure on voluntary boards of management all contributed to this emerging situation.

The careful analysis of our operations that took place as part of the business planning process indicated that it was timely and necessary for Educate Together to address these systemic issues in Irish education, to have the courage to put the necessity for change firmly on the agenda and to campaign for a more workable system for opening new schools.

Decision on New Schools

At the same time, our review clearly showed that the organisation could no longer continue to open schools under the existing funding environment. This environment required that schools were prepared to spend long periods in inadequate temporary accommodation and in which the promoters of schools were expected to fund the entire school opening process. The organisation had to face the fact that since the year 2000, it had opened 23 schools, only one of which was in permanent accommodation. In 2006, no less than 26 or 63% of Educate Together schools had no permanent home. To continue to add more schools to this list, without the resources to employ the additional staff required to support these new communities would have been an irresponsible and reckless decision for the organisation. There is now an ever more obvious need for the State to take responsibility to provide buildings for new schools in a timely and prudent fashion.

It was as a result of these factors, that the Board of Educate Together took the decision that the organisation would not put forward applications to open new schools unless permanent accommodation was being provided. As a result of this decision, Educate Together was not able to put forward planned new school applications in Carlow, Carrigaline, Midleton and Dublin 13. Neither was it able to pursue the opening of the new Educate Together school already recognised for East Galway.

Membership Meetings

Attendances at national members' meetings continued to increase during the year. The national forum consultative meeting was hosted in March by Waterford ETNS. This meeting discussed the school support work of the national office and the on-going difficulties that schools were experiencing with temporary accommodation. A presentation was made by Dr. Sarah Fitzpatrick the Deputy Director of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment(NCCA). Our annual general meeting in May was hosted by the North Dublin National School Project, with a record attendance. The meeting was addressed by the Minister for Education and Science and featured a presentation to Ms. Florrie Armstrong for her courage and contribution as principal of the first Educate Together school in 1978. In October, the general members consultative meeting was held in Griffeen Valley ETNS. This meeting discussed the new business plan, new approaches to member participation and the campaign to bring about change in the new schools process. All the hosting school communities really made our members welcome and we thank them very much for their assistance and support.

Mary Aust, Margaret Boucher(Principal of Waterford ETNS), Sarah Fitz-patrick (NCCA) and David Denny at the Member's meeting in Waterford in Marcy 2006

Operational Review

As part of our fundraising efforts, we were offered the opportunity to engage in a detailed planning process during 2006. Our board enthusiastically agreed to this offer and a considerable amount of time was allocated to this purpose. The planning process involved extensive internal and external interviews, desk research, workshops and an almost forensic examination of our resources and operations.

By late September, the first public draft of the document was ready to be presented to our membership and was discussed at the October general members meeting. After this meeting, re-drafting occurred and the final document was ready for final approval by the board at the end of the year.

The plan contained a central judgement that Educate Together must consolidate and improve the services that it offers its existing schools and bring about a change in the system of opening new schools if it was to be able to expand to meet the scale of demand

Presentation of the Business Plan at the October General Members Meeting

The Business Plan Drafting Team. Eoghan Stack, Mary Aust, Paul Rowe, Diarmaid Ó Corrbuí, Deirdre Mortell, David Denny, Jane McCarthy Deirdre O'Donoghue and Jenny Horan.

for its schools throughout the country. The plan also set clear long, medium and short-term goals for the organisation, defined our organisation's mission, vision and values and the characteristics of the "Educate Together Model" of education. In particular, the plan sets 9 core objectives for the organisation for the next three years and a further 11 priority options which we can address when the necessary resources become available to us.

Drawing up this plan and bringing the operations of the organisation into disciplined and organised framework is one of the main achievements for Educate Together in 2006. We are very grateful to the funders who enabled this process to happen, to Prospectus Strategy Consultants who guided our work, to our partners in Irish education who contributed their views, to all those who attended workshops, to our international volunteers and the plan drafting team who managed the process and wrote the document. We are sure that the 2007 annual report will feature the results of this plan in many areas of our work.

New Schools in 2006

Letterkenny Educate Together National School

The first Educate Together school in Donegal, Letterkenny ETNS opened its doors on September 4th last. The school is located in temporary structures in Glencar, and started out with 35 children right up to 4th Class.

Due to the acknowledged need for additional school places and in order to meet the demands for diversity of provision in Letterkenny, the Department of Education & Science is actively seeking to acquire a permanent site for the school.

Children from many different cultural, religious and educational backgrounds attend Letterkenny ETNS and the school has been working hard to acknowledge and celebrate this diversity.

The school has developed an excellent profile in Letterkenny, and has participated in many local events/competitions and activities.

We wish Maire Lynam, Principal, and Barbara Curran, teacher, as well as all the hard-working Board of Management members and the entire school community, all the best into the future.

Blessington Educate Together National School

Blessington ETNS opened its doors on September 4th, with 40 children. The school is located in a lovely school building beside the Blessington Lakes which was previously occupied by Tigh na nOg Montessori school. It is planned that the Department of Education & Science will develop this site to enable the school to expand and develop to meet the demands of the area. The school is attracting families from as far as Naas and Tallaght, who wish their children to be educated in an Educate Together school. We wish Principal Rosemary Lynch, teacher Adele McGurk and all the hard working team in Blessington ETNS, every success in building an excellent Educate Together school.

Accommodation and Building in 2006

It is disappointing to record that no Educate Together school moved into a new building in 2006. The only school with an active building project remained Castleknock ETNS. Despite the obvious needs in areas of rapid housing growth, the Department of Education and Science was unable to respond to the growing list of Educate Together schools in temporary accommodation. Longest on the waiting list is Gaelscoil an Ghoirt Aláinn which is still in a maze of prefabs. The school opened in 1993. By the end of the year more than half (4,020) of the 7,400

First day of Letterkenny Educate Together National School September 2006

Brian Cowen officially opening the Tullamore Educate Together National School

pupils attending schools in the Educate Together network attended school in temporary buildings. Many of the most recent schools, in fact 80% of all new Educate Together national schools opened since 2000 are located in areas of rapid housing growth in which the need for a new school building has been known since the date of signature of planning permission for new housing estates. This situation is unacceptable and the fact that this has continued during a time of buoyant economic growth is a poor reflection on our economic priorities. A particularly worrying development in 2006 has been the effort by the DES to shoe-horn ever larger schools onto sites originally allocated to 16 classroom developments. In our opinion, it militates against good educational practice and will contribute to poor community environments for many years to come.

Second Level Opportunities

During the year, Educate Together was offered a private grant to support its efforts to open a second-level school. This grant could enable a significant level of work on a pilot project in this area over the next three years. However, the Board was mindful of the substantial issues it must tackle before moving on this project. The board commissioned an initial feasibility study on these issues. This initial study was conducted by the School of Education Studies in Trinity College Dublin and was submitted in September. The study identified a number of significant legal, ethos and operational issues that required further examination and the Board commissioned a further study which is scheduled for completion in mid-2007 before the matter is considered further.

At the same time, Educate Together was approached by Vocational Education Committees to become involved in second-level developments in Donabate and Kerry.

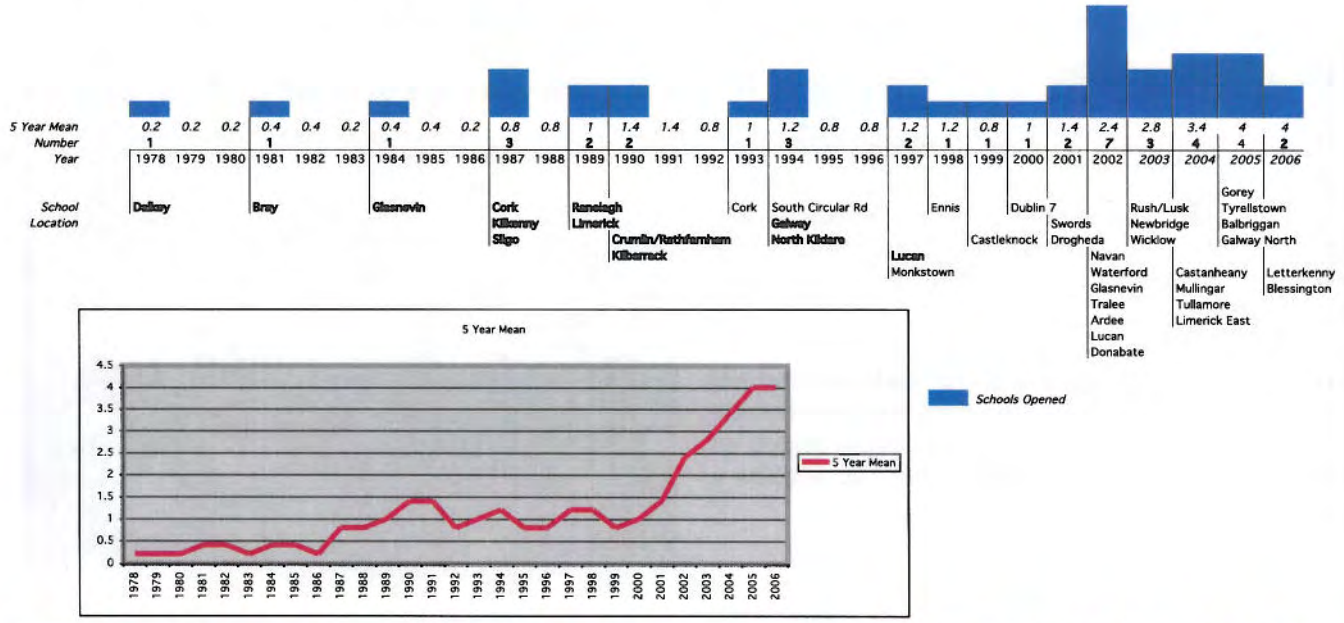
Ethical Education Curriculum

Successful in-service programmes, needs analysis survey and summer courses on the Learn Together Ethical Education Curriculum were held during 2006. These activities were led by Chris Lennon and Frieda McGovern. Educate Together received valuable assistance from the Department of Foreign Affairs for in support of the development education element of this programme. A small number of lectures also took place in colleges of teacher education for third year students.

School Support

School support services continued to be provided by the National Office during the year. Training courses for boards of management of new schools, for school

School Openings Educate Together Sector 1978 - 2007



Educate Together School Sector 2005 - 2006 (All figures as of 30th September 2006)

School	rep	Opened	Years Operational	Mainstream Teachers- Inc. Principal	Change from last year	Principal	Total Teaching Posts	Total Non-Teaching Staff	Total of All Staff	Change from last year	Pupils	Change from last year	Total Classes	Accommodation	Building Type	
Dalkey School Project	✔	1978	28	10	1	A	13.5	8.5	22	3.5	235	-4	8	Permanent	New purpose-built school	EA
Bray School Project	✔	1981	25	10	1	A	13	5.5	18	3.5	237	-2	8	Permanent	New purpose-built school	EA
North Dublin National School Project	✔	1984	22	9	0	A	10.5	6	17	6	221	2	8	Permanent	New purpose-built school	EA
Cork School Project	✔	1987	19	9	0	A	11.5	1.5	13	-1	215	-5	8	Permanent	Reused school building	EA
Sligo School Project	✔	1987	19	7	1	A	12	3.5	16	2.5	121	5	8	Permanent	Reused school building	EA
Kilkenny School Project	✔	1987	19	10	1	A	13	2	15	0	241	8	8	Permanent	New purpose-built school	EA
Limerick School Project	✔	1989	17	9.5	0.5	A	12	3	15	2	214	1	8	Permanent	Reused school building	EA
North Bay EducateTogether N.S.	✔	1990	16	11	1	A	17	8	25	4.5	235	-3	8	Permanent	Reused school building	EA
Ranelagh Multi-Denominational School	✔	1990	16	10	1	A	13.5	6	20	3.5	241	-3	8	Permanent	New purpose-built school	EA
Rathfarnham Educate Together N.S.	✘	1990	16	9	0	A	13.5	5	19	0	225	6	8	Permanent	Reused school building	EA
Gaelscoil an Ghoirt Alainn	✔	1993	13	11	-1	A	13.5	2.5	16	0	289	15	10	Temporary	Prefabs	RHG
Galway Educate Together N.S.	✔	1994	12	9	0	A	15	7.5	23	2.5	235	0	8	Permanent	New purpose-built school	RHG
North Kildare Educate Together School	✔	1994	12	9	0	A	13.5	6	20	4	243	-9	8	Permanent	New purpose-built school	RHG
Griffith Barracks Multi-Denominational School	✔	1994	12	9	0	A	13	6.5	20	2.5	211	-6	8	Temporary	Reused alternative building & prefabs	EA
Monkstown Educate Together N.S.	✔	1997	9	9	0	A	13.5	10	24	3	227	-3	8	Temporary	Prefabs	EA
Lucan Educate Together N.S.	✔	1997	9	17	-2	A	23.5	11	35	1	443	-10	17	Permanent	New purpose-built school	RHG
Ennis Educate Together N.S.	✔	1998	8	7	4	A	13.5	2	16	2	155	68	6	Temporary	Prefabs	MHG
Castleknock Educate Together N.S.	✔	1999	7	14	1	A	22	9	31	4	381	45	12	Temporary	Prefabs - Building Project in Train	RHG
Dublin 7 Educate Together N.S.	✔	2000	6	8	0	A	11	1	12	-5	218	14	8	Temporary	Reused alternative building	EA
Le Chéile Educate Together N.S.	✔	2001	5	11	1	A	14	4	18	1	283	36	9	Temporary	Prefabs	RHG
Swords Educate Together N.S.	✔	2001	5	11	2	A	16	5	21	5.5	273	52	9	Temporary	Prefabs	RHG
Waterford Educate Together N.S.	✔	2002	4	5	0	T	9	3.5	13	5.5	135	32	5	Temporary	Newly renovated alternative building	RHG
Navan Educate Together N.S.	✔	2002	4	3	0	T	5.5	7	13	2	63	10	3	Temporary	Newly renovated alternative building	RHG
Tralee Educate Together N.S.	✔	2002	4	6	1	A	10	4.5	15	4.5	117	17	5	Temporary	Reused alternative building	RHG
Donabate Portrane Educate Together N.S.	✔	2002	4	11	3	A	13	5	18	4.5	276	81	8	Temporary	Prefabs	RHG
Glasnevin Educate Together N.S.	✔	2002	4	7	2	A	11.5	6	18	4.5	161	37	5	Temporary	Prefabs	EA
Griffeen Valley Educate Together N.S.	✘	2002	4	12	1	A	18	10	28	6.5	321	107	10	Permanent	New purpose-built school	RHG
Ardee Educate Together N.S.	✔	2002	4	3	1	T	4	1.5	5.5	2.5	64	12	2	Temporary	Reused school building & prefabs	MHG
Rush and Lusk Educate Together N.S.	✔	2003	3	5	2	T	6.5	1.5	8	3	99	34	3	Temporary	Reused alternative buildings 2 sites	RHG
Newbridge Educate Together N.S.	✔	2003	3	5	1	T	8	2	10	4	126	37	4	Temporary	Prefabs	MHG
Wicklow Educate Together N.S.	✔	2003	3	5	1	T	6	1.5	7.5	1	122	35	4	Temporary	Reused alternative building	RHG
Castaheany Educate Together N.S.	✔	2004	2	10	3	A	13	5	18	7	244	74	6	Temporary	Prefabs	RHG
Limerick City East Educate Together N.S.	✔	2004	2	2	0	T	3	1.5	4.5	2	35	11	2	Temporary	Rugby Club	RHG
Mullingar Educate Together N.S.	✔	2004	2	6	3	A	11	0	11	5	114	78	3	Temporary	Prefabs	RHG
Tullamore Educate Together N.S.	✘	2004	2	3	1	T	4	2.5	6.5	3.5	53	36	2	Temporary	Prefabs	RHG
Gorey ETNS	✔	2005	1	3	1	T	4.5	3.5	8	5.5	73	47	2	Temporary	Reused alternative building	RHG
Tyrellstown ETNS	✘	2005	1	8	4	A	14	1.5	16	9.5	212	121	4	Temporary	Prefabs	RHG
Balbriggan ETNS	✔	2005	1	7	4	A	11.5	2.5	14	8	158	105	3	Temporary	Reused alternative building	RHG
Galway North ETNS	✔	2005	1	3	1	T	4.5	1.5	6	2.5	61	32	2	Temporary	Reused alternative building	RHG
Letterkenny ETNS	✔	2006	0	2	2	T	3	2	5	5	36	36	2	Temporary	New purpose-built school/prefab	RHG
Tigh na-Og Educate Together N.S.	✘	2006	0	2	2	T	3	2	5		32	32	3	Temporary	Permanent building - not big enough	RHG
		41	344	317.5	45	29	461	178	639	131	7645	1181	261	66%		
				288.5												

Increase in Schools	2	Ratio of Junior Infants to Sixth Class	2.23	
Increase in Classes	32	Schools with Permanent Accommodation	14	
Increase in Pupils	1,014	Schools without Permanent Accommodation	27	66%
Increase in Teachers	76	Schools with Current Building Project	1	

community development and on recruitment took place. Our school support service reported increasing levels of difficulty encountered by boards in relation to funding, to employment issues and managing an increasingly difficult regulatory environment. The National Office continued to press the DES to provide funding for board of management training courses. In December, the DES finally decided to agree to this and sought records of all training carried out by the organisation since January 2003 with the view of grant aiding these programmes through the education centres.

Mary Harney officially opening the Gorey Educate Together National School

Emergency support for schools in difficulty continues to be a serious commitment undertaken by the organisation. During the year, two schools received support in the form of staff officers standing in as chairpersons of boards for a limited period. By the end of the year, all staff officers had been able to withdraw from these roles.

Funding and Fundraising

The organisation was very pleased to receive the 120,000 revised grant from the DES in June. This grant is in relation to our management support function and was announced by the Minister in response to our successful campaign in December 2005. Unfortunately, by the end of 2006, none of the other measures announced at that time had been implemented. Educate Together does not receive grants for opening new schools required by the community, for its curriculum development work and the grant received for management support is inadequate. Our records show that State grants amount to less than half of the level required to properly resource our existing level of activity, let alone allow for proper expansion of these services.

Educate Together was successful in attracting grants for the development education element of our ethical curriculum from Irish Aid (formally

Joan Burton at the official opening of Tyrellstown Educate Together National School

Development Cooperation Ireland – a section of the Department of Foreign Affairs). This help has been invaluable in supporting our in-service programme for teachers and we are very appreciative to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and his staff in Irish Aid for this assistance.

Private fundraising continued to be main source of our income in 2006. Due to financial constraints we were unable to replace our Foundation Officer post during the year and responsibility for the fundraising programme was taken up by other staff members. By year-end, a total of 265,000 had been raised which had brought the organisation back into a rather more stable financial situation at least for the first half of 2007.

In September, the Board directed the CEO to start the process of recruiting a senior fundraiser for the organisation. The advertisements for this post were published in the weeks before the end of this report period.

Relationships with other partners and external bodies

During the year, we have maintained excellent working relations with our partners in primary education. We have attended annual meetings of the CPSMA, Gaelscoileanna and INTO. When we reached our decision on new schools, we had very friendly and helpful discussions with all our partners. We also developed excellent relations with various second-level bodies and attended the annual meeting of the Irish Vocational Education Association(IVEA).

Our relations with the Department of Education and Science remain challenging. We have been particularly disappointed at the lack of progress for our members over issues of accommodation and buildings, however our working relations with other sections of the Department have been very positive and helpful. We are aware of the pressures staff in the Department are under and are hopeful that these issues will improve in 2007.

Educate Together's Case in the Public Domain

Whilst 2006 was a year in which we had no staff committed to our communications work, our case and the profile of our network continued to rise. A monthly average of 40 mentions of Educate Together in the printed media was achieved during the year. The majority of this was very positive mention of successful events in Educate Together schools.

A high point of the success of our case internationally was the United Nations Committee on the Convention

Deirdre Mangaoang

on the Rights of the Child and the Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe who both strongly endorsed our case for State action to promote the availability of multi-denominational schools in Ireland.

Office Changes

During the year, we said "good bye" to Deirdre Managaoang, our Team Assistant and Research Officer. Dee made a very important contribution to our work over three years. Quite apart from her calm support of all the national officers and diligence in the office, Dee maintained excellent relations with our schools and in particular did invaluable work to support our advocacy work at home and abroad. We wish her the very best in the next stage of her career in the Irish Red Cross.

We are delighted to welcome Louise Daly who has joined as Dee's replacement and who is already making a serious contribution to the work of the office.

During the year also, we have welcomed the voluntary

AGM 2006 at North Dublin National School Project

David Denny, Chairperson, Mary Hanafin T.D. Minister for Education and Science, Paul Rowe, CEO, Florrie Armstrong, Debbie Paul and Siobán O'Brien Green at the Presentation to Florrie at the 2006 AGM.

assistance of Catherine O'Brien (ex-chairperson) who assists the office three days a week and who has been an important support for all the office during a year in which we have managed to retain and develop levels of service whilst having a reduction in full-time staff of 20%.

In the summer of 2006, we were helped by two US volunteers, Alex Harris and Brian Feurst of McKenna University, California. These volunteers carried out internal interviews and desk research for our business plan process.

Conclusion

This annual report outlines a fraction of the actions and activities of our organisation during 2006. It is a tribute to the dedication of our staff, and our volunteers, that this activity took place at the same time as a major strategic review of the organisation and our future direction. For many years we have been a small organisation that in attempting to do many many things, have often succeeded in punching above our weight – due in no small measure to the quality of our work and the passion of our representatives.

Our planning work this year represents a more mature awareness that while we cannot do everything, we have identified the most important goals we wish to achieve and we will focus uncompromisingly on achieving them. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once remarked that a goal without a plan is just a wish. The business we are about is too important to be left to wishes. As a sector we aim, above all, to contribute to positive change for children in Ireland. 2006 marked a significant step forward towards our goal, and the board of directors of Educate Together are happy to commend this report on the year's work to our members.

The directors would like to pay particular tribute to the current and former staff of Educate Together who have brought the organisation successfully through many challenges. We are also very conscious that the most important work of all takes place in the classroom and we would like to thank our professional staff together with the support and administrative staff and the volunteers who selflessly give of their time for committees, extra-curricular activities, and all the other invisible elements that make our schools what they are. It is our privilege to support your work.

David Denny
Chairperson

Receive the Latest News from Educate Together Direct to your Desktop!

Educate Together is going through a phase of rapid and exciting development. We are campaigning for significant system change in Irish education and delivering services which impact on the quality of education provided in our schools. We regularly publish newsletters, news alerts and other information through email. You may subscribe to our newsletter, which is a free email service by sending a simple message to:-

subscribe-eten@educatetogether.ie

Archives of previous newsletters and extensive information on the sector can be seen at our website:-

http://www.educatetogether.ie

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