



Educate Together Second-Level Project

Educate Together Second-level News - Vol. 1, Issue 10 – April 2009

Political Support for Patronage Campaign Grows

The proposal by Educate Together to become a patron body for secondary schools was discussed by the Joint Committee on Education and Science on April 9th. Considerable support was voiced by committee members for Educate Together's entry to second-level.

During the meeting, officials were asked what the reasons were for the delay in responding to Educate Together's application. The Department representative stated that "Traditionally, the VEC sector has been the provider of multid denominational post-primary education. The application by Educate Together for recognition as a patron body at second level raises many issues concerning the provision of multid denominational education at post-primary level" However, they did not elaborate on what these issues might be, even when pressed by Deputies.

During the debate the Chair of the Committee, Deputy Paul Gogarty (Green) suggested that there was nothing to lose in piloting an Educate Together second level school, and that this would establish if there was a difference between the Educate Together model and the VEC model.

Deputy Brian Hayes (FG) spoke of parents' right to choose the model of education that they see fit for their child as stated in Article 42 of the Constitution. He asked Department officials if they were concerned that could potentially face a challenge from parents for blocking their right of educational choice and wondered if the Department had sought a legal opinion on the patronage issue. Department officials reported that legal opinion had been sought but had not yet been received.

Senator Fidelma Healy-Eames (FG) asked Department officials if they had carried out any research in the area, saying that: "The way students learn and move around the classroom (in Educate Together schools), the absence of uniforms and how parents inform practices are radically different to the more structured models

that apply in church based and VEC schools at secondary level.”

Deputy Ruairi Quinn (Labour), towards the end of the debate, highlighted the fact that, *'the officials in their capacity as professional civil servants are not aware of any administrative or operational reason that would mitigate against patronage.'* He also made reference to the biography of the late Dr. Paddy Hillery pointing out that it revealed that, *'the decision on multid denominational education at primary level was political at the end of the day.'*

Educate Together has been asked to present on our model for second-level at the Joint Committee on Education and Science on May 20th. The Irish Vocational Education Association have also been invited to discuss their model at primary and to share their views of Educate Together at second level on the same day.

You can view the entire Joint Committee debate of April 9th **here** - <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/DDebate.aspx?F=EDJ20090409.XML&Ex=All&Page=2>

Educate Together at Second-level 'a Priority' for the Labour Party

The Labour Party conference took place at the end of March and we were delighted to hear Ruairi Quinn TD, Labour's spokesperson on Education, stating that one the party's five priorities for primary and secondary education is to **'Develop diversity of choice at secondary level by recognising Educate Together as a Secondary School Patron'**. **This announcement was well-received by delegates at the conference.**

Student Voice Research Project

During May the pilot phase of the Student Voice Research project will take place involving past pupils from two Educate Together National Schools. The project aims to explore past pupils' perspectives on the idea of Educate Together second-level schools, as well as how they see the Educate Together core values developing in an Educate Together second-level context.

Postcard Campaign

Following on from the meeting of the different local start-up groups from around the country, a postcard campaign will take place throughout the week of May 11th in all Educate Together national schools and local communities.

People who sign the postcard in support of Educate Together's application to be a patron at second-level can send it on to their local TDs, Councillors, MEPs and Senators, asking them to support:

- **The Rights of Families**

The 10,000 primary pupils attending the 56 Educate Together national schools have a right to continue their education within the unique Educate Together ethos.

- **Equality**

The Educate Together model of education empowers young people to strive for a more equal, cohesive and prosperous society.

- **Excellence**

At second-level the potential of Educate Together's learner-centred and democratic approach can be fully realised.

As part of the campaign an information leaflet has been designed that outlines some of the reasons why Educate Together should be at second-level and details some of the distinct features of the Educate Together equality-based model of education at post primary. You can view the leaflet **here**.

IMPORTANT: You can also support the campaign by downloading an A4 black & white version of the postcard **here**. Then post it to your local representatives. You can find contact addresses on the various political party websites for your local reps.

New Second-level Start-up Group in Drogheda

Parents in Drogheda have started campaigning for an Educate Together second-level school. There are three Educate Together National School in the area - Aston Village Educate Together National School, Le Chéile Educate Together National School and Ardee Educate Together National School.

A public meeting was held in Aston Village Educate Together National School, on Thursday, April 23rd, to establish a committee to campaign for an Educate Together second-level school in the north east. Parents of children already in the Educate Together schools said they are determined to fight for their children's right to continue their education within the same ethos. Gerry McKeivitt, Educate Together Regional Development Officer for the area, bought people up to speed with the second-level project nationally. A committee was formed on the night and they have already begun organising the postcard campaign locally. We wish them the best of luck and we will keep you informed of their progress.

New Second-level Start-up Group in Cork

We are also delighted to see the advancement up of a new start-up group in Cork. Members of the Parents Association of Cork School Project, led by Clíodhna Moynihan Downes and Louise Delaney have been active for some time.

Following discussion at their recent AGM as well as meetings with Niall Wall, Regional Development Officer for the area, the group are hosting a meeting in the Cork School Project on Thursday April 30th. The hope for the event is to gather more support and involvement from the many individuals who have expressed an interest in an Educate Together Second-Level school for the southern capital. Representatives from the national office will be making a presentation on the second-level project.

We wish them the best of luck and we will keep you informed of their progress.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:



Don't forget to support the women in the National Office who are running the FLORA mini marathon on June 1st to raise money for our 'Learn Together' Ethical Curriculum In-Service Training.

Catholic and Protestant programmes are funded by the State, however other denominations and Educate Together have to independently source monies to fund these programmes. All money raised will go towards "Learn Together" Ethical Curriculum Training in 2009. This will sponsor ethical curriculum training for new Educate Together Schools, train trainers and establish resources and courses for all Educate Together Schools.

So dig depth, click here and sponsor on-line today!

That's all for now. Don't forget to visit the second-level rooms in the forum and get chatting! www.educatetogetherforum.ie

Educate Together Second-level Project

Project Manager: Emer Nowlan

Education Officer: Fiona Richardson

Email: secondlevel@educatetogether.ie

Web:

http://www.educatetogether.ie/2_campaigns/secondlevelet.html

Educate Together Second-level News is published by Educate Together, the national representative organisation for multi-denominational education in Ireland. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the policy of Educate Together unless expressly stated. Any non-commercial organisation is free to copy the contents of this newsletter as long as the source is attributed.

Make a donation to Educate Together

We need you to help us make our vision for the future of Irish education become a reality.

Your support can help us provide more schools which will guarantee equality for children of all cultures, religions and social backgrounds, fostering interaction and understanding, and ensuring that Ireland's future generations are best prepared for the 21st Century.

Ways to make a donation

- * Donate online at www.educatetogether.ie
- * Send a cheque to Educate Together, H8a Centrepoint, Oak Drive, Dublin 12
- * Or call us on +353 1 4292500 for other alternatives.

