



Educate Together Second-Level Project

Educate Together Second-level News - Vol. 1, Issue 11 – May 2009

Recognition of Educate Together as a Patron at Second-level Widely Supported

On May 20th Educate Together was invited to make a presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Education and Science, on our model at primary and the development of Educate Together model at second level. The Irish Vocational Education Association were also invited on the day to discuss their roll-out of the new community school models at primary and their provision at second level.

In his presentation Paul Rowe drew attention to the fact that it was December 2007 when Educate Together first contacted the Minister drawing her attention to the growing demand for Educate Together second level schools and stating Educate Together's intention to apply to be recognised as a patron at second-level. But a year and three months later with several applications submitted on behalf of groups in Waterford, Gorey and Lucan, Educate Together is awaiting reply.

The VEC outlined their model and the benefit the vocational sector brings to the Irish schooling system.

After both presentations members of the committee raised other issues and directed questions to both sides.

Paul Gogarty (Greens) highlighted that 'there have been some allegations of hostility in the VEC movement towards Educate Together as a second level model' and later in the debate asked t. While Ruairí Quinn (Labour) stated that 'there is a perception, confirmed by the utterances I heard today from the table, that on the ground the IVEA is effectively blocking the recognition of Educate Together from becoming a patron. This is being done for the best of reasons because it believes that, given the restricted resources and the quality of the outcomes, it can provide what that organisation is seeking. However, with all due respect, that is not the IVEA's right to so do. Educate Together has rights under Article 42 of the Constitution and therefore that decision is not to be made by competing educational providers'.

John O'Mahoney (Fine Gael) asked the VEC if they objected to an Educate Together pilot school in the Lucan area and Fidelma Healy Eames (Fine Gael) wondered if either groups saw this as an opportunity to come together to provide a new co-operative model.

Seán Ó Feargháil (Fianna Fáil) raised the issue of accountability in the two models and Ulick Burke (Fine Gael) raised the question of an overlap of provision.

Pat O'Connor the CEO of County Dublin VEC in reply to some of the question posed stated that 'regards the ethos in new non-designated community colleges let us cut to the chase, when we discuss ethos, we are talking about the teaching of religion as well as participation in the school and the school's involvement in the community. In recent years the Department has provided schools with an exam subject in religion and we offer that in the school and that is the programme that students follow...' Emer Nowlan pointed out later on in the discussion that Educate Together have quite a different understanding of ethos as that put forward by Pat O'Connor.

Sean Ashe CEO for Kildare VEC in his response to questions posed stated that over 130 students from Educate Together primary school attended VEC schools in North Kildare 'without any problem, issue or difficulty whatsoever.' While Carol Hanney CEO Dún Laoghaire VEC, stated that the VEC was 'adaptable and diverse'.

Emer Nowlan in her response to comments and questions raised pointed out to the committee that '94% have said they want to choose an Educate Together second-level school and that these parents have VEC schools available to them but they are telling us that is not the model they want'. Paul Rowe raised the point that 'there are only habitual and cultural barriers, not administrative, legislative, operational or financial ones, to Educate Together operating a second level school' and outlined what would be some of the distinct elements of the Educate Together model at second-level.

Closing the debate Paul Gogarty the Chair of the committee, said that in terms of recognising Educate Together as a patron at second-level that 'the anecdotal evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of it, notwithstanding the tremendous role of the VECs and the welcome given by members for the VECs at primary level'.

The debate was covered in the Irish Times the following day by Sean Flynn. In his article he states that:

'The campaign by the multi- denominational school group Educate Together to expand into second level received a boost yesterday when its submission was warmly received by members of the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science'. You can read the full article here -

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2009/0521/1224247041007.html>

And you can view the entire Joint Committee debate **here** -

<http://debates.oireachtas.ie/DDebate.aspx?F=EDJ20090520.xml&Node=H2#H2>

Launch of Blueprint

On June 19th in the Morrison Hotel at 4.30pm *'Taking the Next Step', A Blueprint for Educate Together Second-level Schools* will take place. The blueprint brings the vision, mission, values and commitments of Educate Together, as laid down in its 1990 Educate Together charter, into the context of second-level education in Ireland. The four core principles of Educate Together – multi-denominational, co-educational, learner-centred and democratically run – as implemented in a second level context are explored in the document under four key areas of: *Curriculum, Teaching & Learning The Ethical Curriculum Leadership, Management & Structure and The Built Environment*.

Áine Hyland in the foreword to the document states:

' this blueprint provides a compelling case for [such] recognition' and that 'there is no excuse any more for the Department's prevarication'.

We are very grateful to all of those who have contributed their time and energy over the past fourteen months – working groups, local start-up groups, participants at General Members Meetings and the members of the Advisory Panel, and we look forward to continued debate and discussion as the Educate Together model at second-level develops into the future.

Second-level Start-up Groups - Updates

Ireland South (Niall Wall)

There is a lot of activity in the region at present - some highlights:

- The postcard campaign has been joined with enthusiasm by both Educate Together National Schools and Second Level Start-Up Groups.
- Waterford Start-Up Group made contact with all the members of the Oireachtas Joint Committee of Education and Science in advance of the Educate Together briefing, taking the opportunity to make their own submission.
- Gorey start up Group had a meeting with the Minister for Education & Science, Batt O Keefe TD at which they put forward their own case along with the case for Educate Together's recognition as a Second Level Patron..

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

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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.

