



Educate Together Second-Level Project

Educate Together Second-level News - Vol. 1, Issue 11 – June 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 “proposals for the development and roll-out of models for primary and secondary schools”. The Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA, the representative body of the 33 VECs) was also invited on the day to do the same.

In his presentation Paul Rowe, CEO of Educate Together, 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 a half later, with applications submitted on behalf of groups in Waterford, Gorey and Lucan, Educate Together is still awaiting reply.

Michael Moriarty, CEO of the IVEA outlined the VEC 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.

Early in the debate Paul Gogarty (Greens) highlighted that ‘there have been some allegations of hostility in the VEC movement towards Educate Together as a second level model’, 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’. When asked if the IVEA had a policy on the recognition of Educate Together as a patron of second-level schools Pat O’Connor, CEO of Co Dublin VEC, said that the association had no formal position.

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 group saw this as an opportunity to come together to provide a new co-operative model.

Seán Ó Fearghaíl (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, in reply to some of the questions 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, Second-level Project Manager for Educate Together, pointed out later on in the discussion that Educate Together have quite a different understanding of ethos to 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 schools 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' adding 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 Irish Times article [here](#)

And you can view the entire Joint Committee debate here – [here](#)

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 comprehensive blueprint is both visionary and realistic... (It) 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

- Nationally: The postcard campaign has been joined with enthusiasm by both Educate Together National Schools and Second Level Start-Up Groups. The campaign was covered in the local Waterford and West Dublin newspapers. You can read the articles [here](#) & [here](#).
- Parents, pupils and teachers in Glasnevin also stepped up their second-level campaign and during a visit to the school by Minister Pat Carey (FF) and Senator Ivana Bacik (Lab) the Principal Attracta Hayden explained to them the need for establishing Educate Together Secondary Schools. Senator Bacik said there was an urgent need for Educate Together secondary schools. The visit was covered by the Northside People newspaper. Read it [Here](#)
- Waterford: Second-level 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: Second-level start up group had a meeting with the Minister for Education & Science, Batt O'Keeffe TD at which they put forward their own case along with the case for Educate Together's recognition as a Second Level Patron.

- Drogheda: Second-level start up group recently established with parents from Le Cheile ETNS and Aston Village ETNS. At the moment they are considering an application at second level for the North Drogheda area.
- North City: Second-level start up group based on 3 schools, D7ETNS, Glasnevin ETNS and the NDMSP. Group has been very active in the postcard campaign, and will examine the possibility of an application in the Phibsborough / Glasnevin area.
- Swords: The Swords second-level start up group campaign has been relaunched following a public meeting held in May. Very good support locally.

(Updates – Educate Together Regional Development Officers)

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 Centrepark, Oak Drive
Dublin 12
- * Or call us on +353 1 4292500 for other alternatives.

