

Volunteer Role Description Patron Representative

Purpose of the role

- The Patron Representative role is a key position on an Educate Together School Board of Management.
- The overall context of the role and key activities of the Board are listed in the role description below.
- Be the specific point of contact for the National Office to inform the Board of specific events ie. The National Educate Together Fundraising Day
- To act as the communication person between the National Office of Educate Together and the Board of Management of the local school. Any information, memo's, requests and enquiries from the National Office must be promptly shared with the relevant parties in the school community.

In most (but not all) instances, a Patron Representative may be appointed Chairperson. This position plays a key role in the governance and management support of the school. The Chairperson ensures that the Board of Management functions properly, that all board members take part during meetings, that all relevant matters are discussed and that effective decisions are made and carried out. The Chairperson is formally appointed into the role by Educate Together.

Overall context of the Role

There are 8 members on the Board of Management of a National School. Two of these are staff members (the Principal and an elected teacher) two are parents elected by the Parent body and two are representatives of the Patron body, (Educate Together). When these 6 are in place they meet and agree to nominate two other members as Community representatives. Under the Education Act, the Board of Management must undertake to run the school according to the ethos determined by the Patron. *The Patron Representatives do not necessarily have any connection with the school community and it is important to recognise that new members bring fresh ideas, new thinking and new experiences!*

What you give

- Experience
- Time
- Commitment
- Support to school community
- Opinions and Ideas
- Acting collectively as management
- Learning Community

What you get

- Learning new skills
- Empowerment
- Knowledge of Education system
- Understanding of group dynamics
- Influence on national educational policy (through involvement with Educate Together)

Key Relationships

- The Principal of the school
- Other members of the school's Board of Management
- The Department of Education and Skills
- Leadership and Governance Development Team of Educate Together
- Regional Development Officer of Educate Together

Keys activities of the Board of Management

Essentially, the Board manages the school. Among other things:

- 1 It has responsibility for drawing up the school plan and for ensuring that it is implemented.
- 2 It appoints the Principal, the teachers and other staff and provides a direct line of support to the Principal
- 3 It must ensure that the school fulfills its functions as set out in the Education Act 1998.
- 4 It must promote contact between the school, the parents and the community and must facilitate and give all reasonable help to a parents' association in its formation and its activities.
- 5 It has overall responsibility for the school's finances. It is obliged to have comprehensive insurance cover for the school. It must keep proper accounts, which may be audited by the Department of Education and Skills and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General. Its annual accounts must be available to the patron and the school community.
- 6 The Child Centred aspect of the Educate Together Charter ensures that all decisions are taken with the best interests of the children in mind! More information about this charter is available in the 'What is an Educate Together School?' booklet, available for download on the Educate Together Website

Hours of work: Overall, approximately 8-10 hours per month

- The Patron Representative will attend the Board of Management meeting once a month. These meetings are usually up to two hours long.
- Occasionally there may be issues that need to be supported by the Patron Representative, which may include meetings outside of the monthly Board of Management meeting.
- The Patron Representative would be expected to read all reports in advance of Board of Management meetings - distributed 1-2 weeks before
- Depending on what role the Patron Representative may take on, on the Board of Management, there would be some work between meetings - e.g. as Chairperson they will need to be available to the Principal at least once a week, as Facilities Officer the Board member would liaise with companies wishing to rent school facilities for meetings/after school activities like music lessons etc.

Length of commitment: Four Years. Every Board of Management of every Primary School in Ireland, is reappointed and re-elected every 4 years. The next term of office begins December 2011

Support: The function and role of Board members is directed by the Rules as outlined by the Department of Education and Skills. As Patron Body, the Leadership and Governance Development team of Educate Together is also available to the Chairperson or other board members, to explore particular issues that may arise. Educate Together provides Board of Management training. This will shortly be available online to all Board members across the network of Educate Together Schools.

Place of work: The Board of Management meet in the local Educate Together National School

References and checks: Two references – Formal Interview – Garda Vetting

Skills

- Excellent Interpersonal Skills
- A competent decision maker
- Excellent English language skills, both written and verbal
- Ability to deal with conflict
- Positively engaged and motivated
- Open minded and easy to get along with
- Confidence to question
- Ability to build consensus
- Thorough and detail orientated (policy development / research etc..)
- Ability to not take things personally, or to let things be taken personally
- Good financial management skills and / or commercial awareness

Knowledge

- Knowledge of the general area in which the school is located
- A good understanding of the Educate Together ethos (or willingness to learn)
- Understanding of the Irish national school system, rules and regulations (or willingness to learn)

Experience

- Experience of Human Resource / General Business Management
- Experience of chairing Committees (not necessarily in a school context) however experience at Board of Management level would be an advantage

Personal qualities

- Personal and professional integrity
- Commitment to the Ethos of Educate Together
- Objective and Non Judgemental
- Strategic thinker

Benefits of Volunteering in this role

- All board members will receive Educate Together Board of Management Training
- An opportunity to engage leadership skill-set within a school governance setting
- Facilitating the continuing development of a school of excellence, within the Educate Together ethos
- A chance to expand professional networks through the other board members, the parent body and Educate Together.
- A chance to contribute to Educate Together National policy through the school's membership to the national office.

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To find out more information about this role, please contact Sarah Williams, Volunteer Officer on 01 429 2500 or e-mail volunteer@educatetogether.ie