



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS

May I send my best wishes to all those attending the virtual launch of *Professor Áine Hyland's A Brave New Vision for education in Ireland: The Dalkey School Project 1974 - 1984*.

When future educationalists and historians look back Friday the 1st of September 1978 will be viewed as a milestone in Ireland's educational history. It was on that day that our first Educate Together School opened its doors to 90 pupils and 3 teachers in Vesey Place, Dun Laoghaire. Like so many milestone moments, it was the culmination of a long and often difficult journey, undertaken by a group of remarkable people with a shared vision for a better future and children of all circumstances being educated in conditions that were pluralist and inclusive.

The founder members of the Dalkey School Project imagined an Ireland where children of all religions and none could share a classroom and a school ethos, growing and thriving in an inclusive, all embracing and open minded environment. They also worked with inspiring commitment and determination to transform that ideal into a lived reality.

Today many thousands of Ireland's citizens can proudly call themselves pupils or past pupils of Educate Together schools. Wherever their futures have or may take them they will always remain, I hope, defined by the spirit of shared humanity and respect for the richness of difference that lies at the heart of the Educate Together philosophy. That is such a wonderful gift, enabling them to truly flourish and become active and inspiring citizens who can bring about real transformation and build more tolerant and inclusive societies.

Almost five decades now separate us from that long ago Autumn morning when the first pupils to benefit from the Educate Together ethos first walked through the doors of the Dalkey School Project. Across those years Educate Together has gone from strength to strength, and now occupies a respected and important place in our education system. Sabina and I treasure our personal involvement in the movement from those earliest years.

As a nation, we can be greatly indebted to the pioneering people who have brought such a wider understanding to our view of education. I thank and pay tribute to all those who played a role, in so many different ways, in bringing the Dalkey School Project to fruition. It has proved to be a brave and groundbreaking project that has borne much fruit, enriching our society and leaving a profound imprint on the educational landscape of our nation.

Sabina and I send out warmest greetings and congratulations to Professor Hyland, indeed to all our friends in Educate Together, and our thoughts are of course also with the legacy of the Late Bill Hyland of whom we have the warmest memories.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.

Beir Beannacht,
Michael D. Higgins

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Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland