

Taking the Next Step

A Blueprint for Educate Together
Second-level Schools



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Foreword

This blueprint for Educate Together second-level Schools has been developed following extensive consultation and discussion with pupils, parents, teachers and friends of Educate Together primary schools. It 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 first Educate Together primary school opened just over 30 years ago and today there are 56 such schools in the system, with an enrolment of over 10,000 students. A survey (Seery et al.) carried out on behalf of Educate Together in 2008 provided clear evidence that parents who send their children to Educate Together primary schools would send them to an Educate Together second-level school if one existed. Since the early days of the sector, parents have expressed an interest in having a follow-through of the Educate Together ethos into second-level education, and it is a tribute to the current Educate Together Executive Committee and its Chief Executive Paul Rowe, that this interest is now being capitalised on and that a comprehensive blueprint has been developed.

The four core principles of Educate Together – multi-denominational, co-educational, child-centred and democratically run – as implemented in a second-level context, are explored in this document, which is organised under the following key headings:

- **Curriculum, Teaching and Learning**
- **The Ethical Curriculum**
- **Leadership, Management and Structure**
- **The Built Environment.**

In relation to curriculum issues, the blueprint recognises the flexibility and potential which exists within the existing (national) second-level curriculum. It refers to the NCCA review of the Junior and Senior Cycle curriculum which is intended to create a better balance between knowledge and skills, as well as promote a variety of learning strategies that will enable learners to participate in a 21st century knowledge society.

It recognises that current and future generations of young people will be faced with new and exciting challenges in an increasingly complex world and that the education system must prepare them to meet these challenges. It emphasises the importance of developing lifelong learning skills that will enable the graduates of Educate Together schools to be active and responsible citizens, and reminds the reader that the curriculum of these schools will be underpinned by the principles of democracy, participation, advocacy, inclusion and equality.

The blueprint also refers to the many good teaching and learning practices which exist in second-level education in Ireland and internationally. It draws on a wide range of international research and reiterates the need for staff and students to engage in a deep and meaningful way with the knowledge, skills and values inherent in the National Curriculum and in the Educate Together ethos. To do this effectively, co-operation across subject areas is encouraged, and an approach that encompasses multiple areas of expertise and ways of knowing needs to be incorporated into curriculum organisation and planning. It refers to Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences, which underpins the work of many Educate Together primary schools, and suggests that this theory can provide a framework for second-level schools to help them to provide a learning environment in which no young person is an outsider. It states that teachers in an Educate Together school will use strategies and learning activities to facilitate curriculum differentiation stating that "children already come to us differentiated. It just makes sense that we would differentiate our instruction in response to them" (Tomlinson 1999).

The section on the Ethical Curriculum reiterates the underlying principles of the Educate Together Ethical Curriculum for Primary Schools and reminds the reader that the values inherent in the principles – respect, equality, rights and responsibilities, justice and dignity – should underpin and permeate all school policies and practices. It states that the Ethical Education Curriculum at second-level will be a development of the curriculum at primary level.

In relation to Leadership and Management, the blueprint indicates that an Educate Together Second-level school will promote the fullest participation by parents, students and teachers in decision-making processes and will promote a genuine creative partnership between parental involvement and the professional role of the teachers. There will be a shared vision, a shared purpose and shared values. An important role of the Principal will be to keep the ethos and vision of the school visible, tangible and alive for everyone so that the ethos can be experienced by all members of and visitors to the school. The various school structures will provide opportunities for members of the school community to be involved in the academic and social aspects of school life.

This comprehensive blueprint is both visionary and realistic. It is an excellent document which will provide an invaluable guide and support for founders, parents and teachers in future Educate Together Second-level schools. It covers the key issues which a new school will need to address, and provides answers to many of the concerns which might be raised. It also provides a useful set of questions at the end of every section – which will help focus the mind of the different partners on the various issues. Educate Together owes a debt of gratitude to the author of this document, Fiona Richardson, and I have no doubt that this blueprint will underpin the development of Educate Together Second-level schools for many decades to come.

All that now remains is for the Department of Education and Science to grant recognition to Educate Together to act as Patron of Educate Together Second-level Schools and to provide grant-aid to the various founder groups around the country to enable them to get their second-level schools up and running. This blueprint provides a compelling case for such recognition. There is no excuse any more for the Department's prevarication.

Áine Hyland

**Former Professor of Education and Vice-President,
University College Cork.**

Acknowledgements

In order for this document to come into being a great deal of talking had to be done by a large number of people. Contributions have taken the form of submissions, reports, meetings, workshops, discussions, informal chats, phone calls, emails, and passing comments which have taken place over the past ... well, thirty years. The number of people who have contributed is uncountable but every contribution has been valuable and is greatly appreciated.

We are particularly grateful to those who have contributed their time and energy to our working groups over the past fourteen months, as well as those in local start-up groups around the country. These volunteers have not only enabled us to clarify what direction Educate Together second-level education should take, but helped us to draw linkages with relevant Irish and international research.

Our thanks also go to members of the Advisory Panel to the Second-level Project (see appendix) who volunteered their time to read the blueprint and offer feedback before its publication.

The author would particularly like to thank Aengus Carroll for his editorial assistance and support.

Drawing together the views expressed, forming a coherent picture of what a Second-level Educate Together school will look like, and putting that picture into words was a mammoth task and we are hugely grateful to Fiona Richardson, Second-level Education Officer for carrying it out in such a thorough and professional manner.

We hope that this blueprint accurately represents the aspirations of those who have contributed and that it will act as a springboard for further discussion of second-level education both within and outside the Educate Together network.

Emer Nowlan
Second-level Project Manager

1 Introduction

For 30 years Educate Together has successfully developed a unique, inclusive and equality-based ethos at primary level. The Educate Together model is founded on a legal commitment to parents¹, staff and children to run a school based on equality and respect irrespective of social, cultural or religious background - the founding concepts are those underpinning human rights discourse and equality policy.

There are now 56 Educate Together National Schools, educating over 10,000 students, across 18 counties, with 25% of schools operating in the DEIS scheme for disadvantaged schools and 14% of schools having dedicated autism units - the network is diverse, nationwide and mainstream. Involved in running these schools are approximately 15,000 parents and 1,400 staff members. In 2008 a feasibility study carried out by Trinity College Dublin (Seery et al) provided clear evidence that parents who send their children to Educate Together National Schools would send them to an Educate Together second-level school if one existed. The report on the feasibility study also highlighted that 97% of Educate Together parents surveyed said that their children were happy at school, and in particular parents were happy that their children were treated with courtesy and respect. Parents felt that Educate Together schools provided a balance between academic development and social well-being and it is this balance and respect that parents also wanted to see carried through to second-level.

¹ Parent/s when used in this document refers to birth parent/s or adoptive parent/s or a legal guardian/s.

1.1 Educate Together at Second-level

Educate Together is now responding to the demand from parents and students involved in Educate Together National Schools, as well as other educators, academics and stakeholders, to promote its philosophy in the wider context of post-primary education provision. As at primary level, an Educate Together second-level school will be guided by the four core principles as laid down in the Educate Together Charter (1990):

- 1) They will be multi-denominational in character, ensuring that children and young people of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds have equal access to and rights within the school;
- 2) They will be co-educational, thereby encouraging children and young people to learn and live together;
- 3) They will be child-centred, respecting individual students' abilities to learn in unique ways;
- 4) Finally, Educate Together schools will be run on a democratic basis, encouraging active participation by parents and students in the daily life of the school whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers.

1.2 Vision & Mission

This blueprint brings the vision, mission, values and commitments of Educate Together into the context of second-level education in Ireland. These were defined in the organisation's business plan *The Future Starts Here Every Day* (2006) in the following terms:

Vision: Educate Together is working towards an Ireland in which all people have access to an excellent education that is inclusive of all, irrespective of belief system, race, ethnicity, class, culture, gender, language, lifestyle and ability.

Mission: Educate Together will be an agent for change in the Irish State Education System seeking to ensure that parents have the choice of an education based on the inclusive intercultural values of respect for difference and justice and equality for all. In Educate Together schools, every child will learn in an inclusive, democratic, co-

educational setting that is committed to enabling and supporting each child to achieve their full potential while at the same time preparing them to become caring and active members of a culturally diverse society.

Values & Commitments: Educate Together is committed to:

- Placing the child and young person at the centre of the educational process;
- Respecting and celebrating the different and unique identities of all;
- An educational philosophy that promotes the values of justice, equality and human rights for all children and young people, and challenges injustice and unfair discrimination;
- Providing children and young people with the knowledge, skills, dispositions and attitudes that they need, enabling them to make informed moral decisions and preparing them to become caring members of society;
- Empowering children and young people to take an active role in society and in the stewardship of the environment;
- Working in a democratic way that embraces the input from children, parents, teachers and supporters to enable the highest level of partnership and participation;
- Working together and with other educational partners in a consultative and collaborative way;
- Building school communities which engage with, and work meaningfully with, the local community;
- Ensuring that this type of education is provided by the State and available to all families who wish to access it.

These commitments are reflected in the following mottoes:

"Learn Together to Live Together"
"No Child an Outsider"

An Educate Together second-level school will aim to provide an education that will enable all students to contribute meaningfully to their communities, embrace the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society and develop the knowledge and skills necessary to live their lives and to build their careers in the 21st century.

1.3 Blueprint Overview

To ensure this blueprint reflected the ethos of Educate Together and the expectations of families campaigning for Educate Together second-level schools, a collaborative and consultative process was embarked upon. To assist Educate Together in the development and articulation of its second-level model:

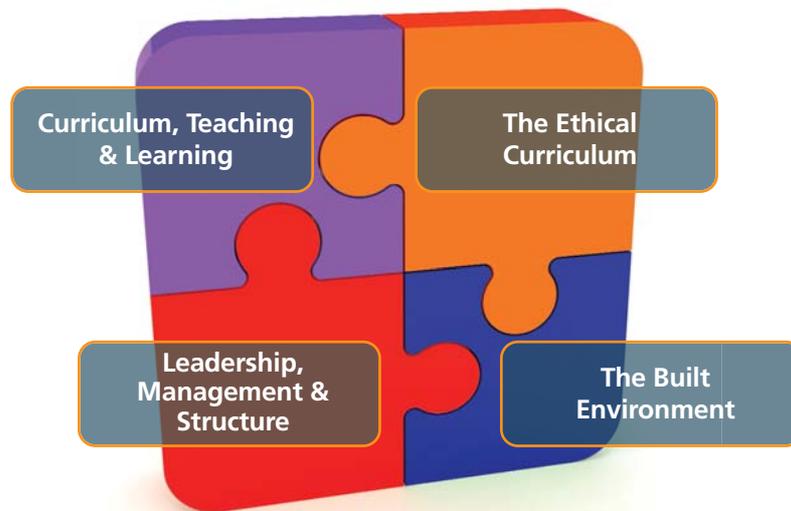
- *A Feasibility Study for the Opening of a Second-level School by Educate Together* (Seery et al. 2008) and a *Draft Curricular Framework for an Educate Together Second-level School* (Geraghty 2008) were commissioned and published.
- Four working groups were assembled, each one charged to examine a specific area of schooling - Management & Structure, Campus & Built Environment, Curriculum, Teaching & Learning and the Ethical Curriculum.
- General members meetings of the organisation provided an opportunity for the broad Educate Together community - teachers, parents, past pupils and others involved in education, to meet and discuss key issues in relation to second-level education and explore how the Educate Together ethos would be visible in the policies and practices of a second-level school.
- An Advisory Panel was established to ensure that policy was developed in the most informed manner possible, with reference to all key stakeholders, academics and other interested parties in education, both in Ireland and abroad.

- Parents involved in the second-level start up groups throughout the country, who champion the parental right to choose the most suitable education for their children and who tackle the difficult and complex task of attempting to establish an Educate Together second-level school, explored how the unique Educate Together ethos would develop in their particular communities.

This blueprint encompasses and articulates a vision for an Educate Together second-level school drawing on the expertise of these various groupings as expressed through their discussions and documentation, as well as national and international research. It aims to provide a basis for the development of the Educate Together model at post-primary level that educators, families and the wider community will continue to contribute to and develop into the future. The blueprint should be seen as a work in progress.

1.4 Structure

The four core principles of Educate Together – multi-denominational, co-educational, child-centred and democratically run – and how these will be given effect in an Educate Together second-level school are explored in this document through four key areas, sections 2-5.



Blueprint for Educate Together Second-level Schools: Key Areas

<p style="text-align: center;">Curriculum, Teaching & Learning</p> <p>An Educate Together second-level school will provide a curriculum and learning environment that equips students for the challenging world of the 21st century. The school will ensure that students are supported to take responsibility for their own learning, their physical, personal and social wellbeing, their relationships with others and their role in their local, national and global communities.</p> <p>By integrating 21st century teaching and learning strategies comprehensively and purposefully into the curriculum, and by assessing not only what students learn but how they learn, schools will nurture critical thinkers, problem solvers, effective communicators, creators and innovators.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Ethical Curriculum</p> <p>An Educate Together second-level school will provide an ethical curriculum that focuses on the ethical, moral and social development of young people. It will provide the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that young people need to enable them to make informed moral decisions and prepare them for life in a pluralist society which embraces diversity.</p> <p>The ethical curriculum will be part of the daily life of the school, part of every subject, visible in curriculum resources and woven into the very fabric of all school processes, policies and practices.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Leadership, Management & Structure</p> <p>In an Educate Together second-level school the inclusive and democratic principle will extend to the various sets of relationships in the school. Schools will promote collective responsibility for the development of a shared vision and purpose. Underlying every decision taken in the school will be the need to provide the best learning environment, where all students can achieve and become enthusiastic, independent lifelong learners.</p> <p>The fullest participation by parents, students and teachers in decision-making processes will be developed. The management of the school will reflect the belief that leaders come from many places in an organisation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Built Environment</p> <p>An Educate Together second-level school community will consider how the built environment influences students' academic performance and well-being in school. The learning environment will express the Educate Together ethos and the physical setting will enhance and support the way students learn, teachers teach and the wider school community interacts.</p> <p>The Educate Together ethos and principles in school building design will address such issues as efficiency and sustainability, functionality and flexibility, building in context, accessibility, democratised spaces and aesthetic quality.</p>

Key Questions

Each section concludes with a series of questions for discussion, reflection and further exploration by parent groups and education partners.

2 Curriculum, Teaching & Learning

An Educate Together second-level school will provide an education that will enable students to contribute meaningfully to their communities, embrace the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society and to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for their lives and careers in the 21st century. Central to this will be the development of a curricular framework that has the key principles of the Educate Together Charter (1990) at its core, while fulfilling the requirements for second-level schools as outlined in the *Rules and Programme for Second-level Schools* (DES 2004/5). The curricular approach adopted by Educate Together schools will be an ongoing process and will develop over time in conjunction with all other school policies that aim to provide an approach to education based on the core values of mutual respect, dignity and critical awareness. The specific ways in which these values find expression in an individual school will be guided by dialogue between the school and its community.

The question of what type of curricular approach would best embody the Educate Together ethos at second-level has been widely explored through working groups, members' meetings and research. How the national curriculum, as well as the school curriculum, can equip students for the challenging world of the 21st century and ensure that students are supported to take responsibility for their own learning, their physical, personal and social wellbeing, their relationships with others and their role in the local, national and global communities was pertinent to this exploration.

From the *Trinity Feasibility Study* (Seery et al. 2008) it was clear that parents who are interested in sending their child to an Educate Together second-level school would place academic achievement high on their list of priorities, but they would do this without compromising the importance of Educate Together's inclusive values and the holistic development of the young person. Facilitating fully holistic and inclusive approaches and preparing young people for life and work in the 21st century will mean reorganising and refocusing educational content, pedagogies and assessment modes at second-level. **An Educate Together second-level school's curriculum will be based on a clear and shared understanding of how learners learn and will recognise the dynamic interplay between content, pedagogy and assessment.**

‘... not only successful learners but also responsible members of society, effective workers, caring members of the community and lifelong learners in an interdependent world ...’

2.1 Curriculum Change

The UNESCO International Commission for the 21st Century suggested that curriculum should be restructured around four pillars of learning: ‘learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be’ (Delors 1996). The Commission believed that striking a balance between these four pillars would enable individuals to achieve their full potential as citizens. **Enabling learners to become not only successful learners but also responsible members of society, effective workers, caring members of the community and lifelong learners in an interdependent world, will be central to the Educate Together ethos at second-level.** Each Educate Together second-level school will examine the learning opportunities available and provide a coherent, relevant learning experience both in and out of class, by creating the supports necessary for young people to ‘learn to know, learn to do, learn to live together and learn to be’.

Refocusing and renewing curriculum has been central to international efforts to improve the quality of education generally, and has been a feature of the Irish educational landscape over the last number of years. At senior cycle the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) review of existing subjects, the development of new subjects, short courses, transition units and the

‘... the importance of learning how to learn ...’

introduction of a focus on key skills, is intended to create a better balance between knowledge and skills, as well as promote a variety of learning strategies that enable learners to participate in a 21st century knowledge society. At junior cycle the curriculum builds on the learning of the primary curriculum and aims to provide students with a broad and balanced programme of study, in order

to prepare them for transition to senior cycle education. As part of its ongoing review of the junior cycle, the NCCA has been rebalancing junior cycle syllabi with the aim of reducing overload within (and overlap between) subjects, and attempting to provide more space and time to have the quality of learning engagement with students that teachers would like (NCCA 2006).

The NCCA review (2005), as well as organisations such as the Combat Poverty Agency and Forfás, criticised the dominance of information recall and the lack of congruence between goals and assessment at senior cycle. The NCCA senior cycle review (2005) emphasised the importance of assessing the development of key skills so all students can achieve their full potential. The four pillars of learning (Delors 1996) also embody a range of key competences or skills required by learners in the 21st century, consistent with the emerging consensus across western economies that the development of lifelong learning skills provides an important foundation for participation in the knowledge society. Governments and employers are looking for graduates, employees and citizens with thinking and learning skills. There is widespread belief that the 21st century presents high levels of challenge, complexity and individual responsibility. This century also requires innovators, problem-solvers, communicators and effective learners. Schools need to strengthen the capacity of young people and develop in them the personal resources necessary to thrive in such a context (Claxton 2007). Educationalists are aware of the need for teachers and students to understand the nature of learning and the need to learn how to learn. However, Claxton in his keynote address at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference (2006) pointed out that **even though there is wide consensus on the importance of ‘learning how to learn’, ‘on the ground it has proved very hard to prevent these fine words slipping back into a concern with improving examination performance.’**

2.2 Junior & Senior Cycle Programme

The NCCA report on the junior cycle (1999) noted that, while some of what was envisaged in the development and introduction of the Junior Certificate programme has been achieved, work remains to be done in the area of assessment. The failure to implement the wide range of modes and techniques of assessment associated with the aims and objectives of the Junior Certificate programme has had a negative impact on the breadth and balance of the curriculum at junior cycle and on teaching and learning. The background report prepared for the Department of Education and Science by the Leadership Development for Schools Programme, for the OECD *'Improving School Leadership Project'* (2007), also pointed out that in Ireland the State Certificate Examinations are, in the main, once-off written examinations and reward

textbook until such a time as the assessment modes available facilitate deeper reflection, deeper understanding and engagement with the processes, topics and concepts of the curriculum.

Professor Tom Collins, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, has stated that, 'they [second-level students] think like PowerPoint. They find it difficult to construct a narrative; they return exam scripts in bullet points. Second-level education is not training them to link their ideas, to tell a story. They come to university singularly unprepared for the intellectual challenge of adult life' (*Irish Times* 2007). *Towards a National Skills Strategy* (2007), a report by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, showed that a 'significant percentage of the current workforce has low skills and qualifications and a poor record of participation in lifelong learning'. IBEC (Irish Business and Employers Federation) has criticised the Junior Certificate,

'... education is about becoming a Learner rather than a Knower ... a change of heart by those who run and work in our schools'

forms of learning that encourage recall and the ability to organise and write answers to examination questions in a relatively short timescale. Ramsden (1992) suggests that 'our choice of assessment methods should be conditioned by our goals for student learning' and that assessment should be seen 'less as a means of getting a single score for comparative purposes, and more as a means of providing opportunities for students to demonstrate how much they understand'.

The proposed new senior cycle and the suggested assessment changes in the draft rebalanced syllabi in junior cycle signals a move from a centrally devised and marked terminal written examination to a broader range of assessment modes and techniques. However, the junior cycle programme is still, in the main, a mirror image of the Leaving Certificate programme, where students and teachers must 'cover' large amounts of content in preparation for State Certificate Examinations. It could be argued that the junior and senior cycle programme will continue to be the test and the

saying it 'stifles creativity and a spirit of inquiry in the next generation' and fails to produce independent thinkers with an appetite to learn. Claxton (2008) suggests that across educational systems **'we are now realising that education is about becoming a Learner rather than a Knower and coming to see that developing positive, transferable learning dispositions is a subtle but achievable goal that takes time, finesse, and a change of heart by those who run and work in our schools'**.

Recent ESRI research (2006) into the experiences of junior cycle students highlighted the need to refocus and restructure curriculum provision, pedagogy and assessment at junior cycle. Shifting the emphasis away from the Junior Certificate exam by refocusing and concentrating on the learning outcomes and cross curricular links inherent in junior cycle syllabi as outlined in the NCCA draft rebalanced syllabi would provide some flexibility to teachers and students to embed into the curriculum those values, skills and strategies necessary for effective lifelong learning.

The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), via its surveys of 15-year-olds worldwide, aims to assess how students have acquired some of the knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society. Reading, mathematical and scientific literacy are covered both in terms of mastery of the school curriculum, and in terms of important knowledge and skills required for adult life. In Finland 15 year-old students consistently score at the top or near top in PISA studies. For example, in 2003 Finnish 15-year-olds came first in reading literacy, mathematics, and science, and second in problem solving. Four factors within the Finnish system said to influence these results are highly qualified teachers; freedom

narrow range of academic skills, to the detriment of 'many other qualities which young people need for life and work'. Whilst offering the traditional Leaving Certificate, Educate Together schools will simultaneously draw out the key skills embedded within the curriculum and provide other opportunities for the development of lifelong learning skills through the systems and structures available to students, such as peer mentoring and teacher/student curriculum planning.

Having followed a junior cycle programme that focuses not only on content but also on learning how to learn, senior cycle students will also be in a better position to undertake the learning necessary

'... teaching and learning opportunities ... underpinned by notions such as democracy, participation, advocacy, inclusion and equality'

of curriculum; no streaming; and no mandatory testing during the compulsory years of education (7-16yrs). In Finland 95% of students take the equivalent of the Leaving Certificate and 70% go on to further education (Valijarvi et al. 2002).

Until such a time as the assessment modes promoted through the junior cycle facilitate more meaningful learning and teaching and develop 'learners' as opposed to 'knowers', an Educate Together second-level school may consider following the junior cycle programme but not entering students for all or any of the Junior Certificate subject examinations. While care would need to be taken to ensure a range of accreditation options were available, so that no student would be disadvantaged by not having received a Junior Certificate, a policy of not entering students for this examination simply as a matter of course, would facilitate a move away from the 'coverage' model seen as necessary for 'results'. This in turn would 'provide more space and time to have the quality of learning engagement with students, that teachers would like' (NCCA 2006) and create the necessary opportunities and time needed for learning how to learn.

At senior cycle, the report from the Commission on the Points System (1999) referred to the emphasis the Leaving Certificate examination generated on a

for success at senior cycle. Whatever the programmes of study available at senior cycle **in an Educate Together second-level school, lifelong learning skills that enable active and responsible citizenship will be embedded in the teaching and learning opportunities provided and will be underpinned by notions such as democracy, participation, advocacy, inclusion and equality.** The NCCA senior cycle proposed changes are a welcome development in the educational landscape, incorporating many of the excellent learning opportunities that are provided for in the Transition Year Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. These changes will, when available, be embraced by Educate Together second-level schools.

The breadth and balance of the junior and senior cycle programmes offered by an Educate Together second-level school, as explored in more detail in the 'Proposed Curricular Framework for an Educate Together Second-level School' (Geraghty 2008), should be defined by the school community not only in terms of the different subject, unit or skill areas, but also by the approaches to teaching and learning, assessment and assessment types. The importance of extra curricular activities in an Educate Together second-level school and the provision of a variety of opportunities (sports,

dance, drama, music, visual arts, environmental, ICT, new media, community links, etc.) both within the formal and informal curriculum are also outlined in this proposed framework document.

The importance of providing as wide a range of subjects as possible will be an underlying principle for an Educate Together second-level school. School curriculum design will involve making decisions about how to give effect to the national curriculum in ways that best address the particular needs, interests and circumstances of the school's students and community. **The formal and informal curriculum in an Educate Together second-level school will also nurture and support creativity and innovation and provide opportunities for all learners to discover and engage their creative capacities.** How the wider community will be used as a resource to enrich the learning experience, and how the school curriculum will reflect the view that there are a range of settings that include the home, community and the workplace where learning can take place, will also need to be considered in Educate Together second-level schools' curriculum design. Education programmes that enrich and support the curriculum, provided by organisations such as Amnesty International, Schools Across Borders, Yellow Flag Programme, Young Entrepreneurs, Young Social Innovators, Model United Nations, Green Schools Programme, The Arts Council, Poetry Ireland, NAPD arts/culture programme, An Gaisce, Foróige, etc. would all also be considered in this context.

2.3 Skills & Competencies in the Curriculum

Hargreaves (2004) points out that learning how to learn is a gateway to enhanced achievement and to the independence in learning that is a crucial developmental skill for students during the second-level years. The OECD report *'What Works In Innovation In Education', Motivating Students For Lifelong Learning* (2000) suggests that lifelong learning is not just about preparing young people for a working life that will include several career changes, but that by '2010, many of today's 18-year-olds will be doing jobs that do not even exist at present'. So there is a need to 'inculcate the

"zest for learning" that young people will need if they are to thrive in 21st-century post-industrial societies'. The integration of curriculum outcomes with lifelong learning outcomes is seen as key to the development of lifelong learners (Prendergast et al. 2005).

The principal objective of the junior cycle is for students to complete broad, balanced and coherent courses of study in a variety of curricular areas and to allow them to achieve levels of competence that will enable them to proceed to senior cycle education (DES 2007). The NCCA review (2004) suggested that an emphasis on skills at senior cycle needs a foundation in the junior cycle curriculum, if they are to form a significant part of the learning experiences of students in senior cycle. Skills such as information processing, critical and creative thinking, communicating,

'the formal and informal curriculum ... will also nurture and support creativity and innovation ...'

working with others and being personally effective are necessary for students throughout their second-level education. These skills enable students to develop as effective learners, learning how to learn and developing those competencies necessary to proceed to and succeed in senior cycle.

There is general agreement that education must be a lifelong process if we are to have an inclusive society which can adapt successfully to meet the challenges of a changing global economy. This means students must be provided with opportunities throughout their schooling to develop lifelong learning skills. For example, the skill of working together proposed by NCCA (2006) highlights 'the role that working with others has for learning and for reaching both collective and personal goals' and is relevant at junior cycle. The NCCA suggests that this skill is also 'important for social cohesion and for engaging with diverse cultural, ethnic and religious groups' (Looney & Klenowski 2008). **Equality and inclusion are**

‘equality and inclusion are central to the Educate Together ethos ... participate in an increasingly diverse society in an effective and constructive way ...’

central to the Educate Together ethos and developing skills so all young people can participate in an increasingly diverse society in an effective and constructive way will be an important element of curriculum provision in an Educate Together second-level school.

Therefore in an Educate Together second-level school the development of key skills, as outlined by the NCCA, will be part of curriculum provision at both junior cycle and senior cycle.

The knowledge, skills, values or competencies that are embedded in the junior and senior cycle programmes and the Educate Together ethos, should be planned for and expressed in terms of

‘...enable students to have greater ownership of, and active participation in, learning’

learning targets and learning outcomes for students. **Educate Together second-level schools will be learner centred and expressing student learning in terms of clearly stated learning outcomes will enable students to have greater ownership of, and active participation in, learning.** Clearly stating what students are expected to know, understand or be able to do in order to be successful in a subject topic, unit of work or project, informs the learning experiences. For example, in History, students might be asked to work cooperatively as part of a group in the creation of a documentary that outlines the main causes of World War 1. The criteria for success could include the ability to develop good relations with others to achieve a goal, manage time effectively, research and present a balanced summary of the causes of World War 1 and link learning from other subjects. By defining learning outcomes, the teacher and crucially the learner

have a clear and shared understanding of the purpose and goal of the lesson or the unit of work and what successful achievement of that goal will look like. Learning outcomes allow for a more personalised and inclusive learning experience and provide a fuller picture of student attainment as they take account of the knowledge, skills and attributes students have gained. They also identify future directions for personal and intellectual development.

Providing for the learning of key skills at junior cycle will not only enrich learning at senior cycle but also provide opportunities for teachers to become enablers and facilitators of learning, as they focus on helping students to develop skills intrinsic to their subject specific study, their learning and their life e.g. formulating questions, creating hypotheses, working in teams, planning for and reporting on what has been learned, etc. If Educate Together schools decide not to enter students for the Junior Certificate examination this could facilitate greater innovation in curriculum organisation and design, as well as deeper engagement with the knowledge, values and skills inherent in the junior cycle programme and the Educate Together ethos.

Embedding key skills across the whole curriculum both inside and outside the classroom will require a deep understanding of, and a commitment to, the principles underpinning the curriculum and the approaches to teaching and learning that are inherent in it. It also requires the development of procedures and structures within the school that will facilitate a process of consistent and on-going curriculum and organisational planning.

Curriculum planning will also need to consciously make links with the curriculum and teaching and learning strategies used at primary level as a way of building on students’ prior learning and addressing the disjuncture between students’ experiences at primary and their experiences at second level.

‘... make links with the curriculum and teaching and learning strategies used at primary level as a way of building on students’ prior learning ...’

It will require subject planning that refers to inclusion of all students, teaching and learning methodologies, learning outcomes, assessment and the integration of ICT. It will require a shared and clear vision of what a school community wants for all the young people in their school.

2.4 The Adolescent Learner

Over the last decade, much research has focused on the particular needs of early adolescents and on effective teaching and learning in the middle years (11yrs-15yrs) of schooling (Zemelman et al. 1998; Chadbourne 1999; 2001; Barratt 1998). The report from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, *Turning Points* (1989; 2000) described adolescence as a ‘turning point’ when young people develop sophisticated cognitive and social skills, and make choices that have an impact on the rest of their lives. In recognition that **adolescent learners are at a particularly significant stage of development schools in other countries have begun to develop and implement innovative middle schooling strategies and organisational structures, in response to the need for a more stimulating and nurturing environment for young adolescent students** (Prendergast et al. 2005).

The *Turning Points* report (1989; 2000) explored strategies to cope with the complexities and incongruities associated with educating young adolescents. Amongst its recommendations to increase the effectiveness and quality of learning at this stage of schooling are:

1. Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, academic standards for what students should know and be able to do, relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best;

2. Use methodologies designed to prepare all students to achieve higher standards and become lifelong learners;
3. Staff the middle grades with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing, targeted professional development opportunities;
4. Organise relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose;
5. Govern democratically, through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know the students best;
6. Provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens;
7. Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development.

‘... adolescent learners are at a particularly significant stage of development ... need for a more stimulating and nurturing environment ...’

Educate Together second-level schools will be cognisant of the needs of the adolescent learner and respond to the unique educational and social needs of this age group. **Creative timetabling, curriculum adjustments, flexible use of space and innovative teaming of teachers and students will be considered both to accommodate the developmental needs of young adolescents as well as to facilitate continuity of learning from primary to second-level and junior cycle to senior cycle.**

‘creative timetabling, curriculum adjustments, flexible use of space and innovative teaming of teachers and students will ... accommodate the developmental needs of young adolescents ...’

2.5 Organising Curriculum & Learning

Dewey, in 1938, suggested that ‘almost everyone has had occasion to look back upon his school days and wonder what has become of the knowledge he was supposed to have amassed during his years of schooling... but it was so segregated when it was acquired and hence is so disconnected from the rest of experience that is it not available under the actual conditions of life’ (in Beane, 1997). How the curriculum is organised impacts on teaching and learning. Many schools provide opportunities through programmes such as Junior Certificate School Programme, Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied Programme, for learners to engage in cross-subject and project work that cuts across subject boundaries and makes learning less segregated and more relevant. However, in the main, the majority of learning in post-primary schools takes place in separate, timetabled subject classes. This can lead to a fragmented and incoherent learning experience, as well as overlap and/or omissions in learning, as one teacher rarely knows what another teacher is doing.

The quality and relevance of the learning experience schools provide will increasingly depend on the extent to which they prepare learners to manage the demands of modern society successfully (NCCA Strategic Plan 2003-2005). **We live in an interdisciplinary world. Organising and planning the curriculum in a way that crosses subject boundaries is one approach that an Educate Together second-level school will take as a means of providing a more relevant, connected learning experience for students.** Educational systems in other countries have developed methods to organise and connect curriculum in a variety of ways including:

- The provision of a multidisciplinary curriculum where two or more subjects are connected around a theme, issue or topic, e.g. geography and science investigating sustainable energy.

- The provision of an interdisciplinary curriculum creates new fields of inquiry. In an interdisciplinary project the various subjects combine to solve problems or consider issues that cannot be adequately addressed by any one subject alone, e.g. our heritage.
- The provision of an integrated curriculum promotes personal and social integration through the organisation of curriculum around significant problems and issues, identified by teachers and learners. Projects and other activities involve integration and application of knowledge and skills in the context of a theme. Content and skills are taught, learned and applied as they are needed to work on particular themes. While knowledge is drawn from the different subjects (among other sources) students move from activity to activity, or project to project, rather than from subject to subject during the school day.

In general, the definitions of an integrated or interdisciplinary curriculum include a combination of subjects; an emphasis on projects; sources that go beyond the textbook; relationships between

‘... organising and planning the curriculum in a way that crosses subject boundaries ... means of providing a more relevant, connected learning experience for students’

concepts; thematic units; flexible timetable and flexible student groupings. Through interdisciplinary or integrated curriculum modules or projects, the overall demands made on teachers and schools can be reduced, the range of student capacities can be

developed and key skills such as reflection, problem solving and creative thinking skills can be embedded in cross discipline understanding. Darling-Hammond, Ancess, and Ort's (2002) seven-year study of the Coalition Campus Schools Project in New York City describes how teams of teachers who taught a thematic, interdisciplinary curriculum with cohorts of students for two-year stints, in class periods that lasted 70 minutes or more, enabled intensive study and research, improved attendance, increased performance on reading and writing assessments and college-going rates. An integrated, thematic approach has also been shown to make the curriculum more accessible to students whose first language is not the language of instruction (Blair 2002).

Hayes et al. (2006) suggest that deep knowledge comes about through 'systematic, integrated or holistic understandings of concepts'. An integrated

with teachers in first year. Using an integrated or interdisciplinary approach is seen to be beneficial in helping students transfer from primary to second-level and adjust to their new school. It can be used as a bridge between the primary school classroom and the subject-based teaching of second-level (DfES 2004).

Students' preference for more practical subjects at junior cycle was also highlighted in the ESRI research and by Harland et al. (2005), in their longitudinal study of the educational preferences of adolescents in Northern Ireland. An integrated or interdisciplinary curriculum can provide opportunities for first year students to experience a variety of subjects or 'taster' courses, as well as facilitating flexible timetabling that can accommodate the practical and creative areas of the curriculum such as ICT, technology, drama, art, music and 'real' life learning, etc. being

'... co-operation across subject areas and an approach that encompasses multiple areas of expertise and ways of knowing ...'

approach can facilitate multiple ways of teaching and learning and develop lifelong learning skills as students encounter knowledge and skills in an integrated fashion, as they do in the real world, rather than in discrete, compartmentalised subject areas. **To facilitate deep and meaningful engagement with the knowledge, skills and values inherent in the National Curriculum and the Educate Together ethos, co-operation across subject areas and an approach that encompasses multiple areas of expertise and ways of knowing needs to be incorporated into curriculum organisation and planning.**

2.6 Organising Learning & Transfer

Research (ESRI 2004) investigating curriculum provision and school integration among first year students has found that students feel anxious and excited about transferring to 'big school' and may experience difficulties in relation to the greater number of subjects, increased academic pressure, additional homework and a different relationship

experienced by all students at junior cycle. An integrated curriculum will support the provision of as wide a range of subjects as possible to be experienced by all students in an Educate Together second-level school.

The creation of smaller learning communities within a large school can also address transfer issues. Small learning communities, as defined by Sammon (2000), are any separately defined, individualised learning unit, within a larger school setting. Students and teachers are scheduled together and often have a common area of the school in which to hold most or all of their classes. For example, the creation of a small learning community for first years, who are moving from a relatively small and intimate educational environment to a much larger, complex and more impersonal one, could ease transition. It is common practice in some countries (Prendergast et al. 2005) to create a certain amount of separation by physical space or by students having the same main teacher, or a pair of teachers, for at least the core subjects of the curriculum. Mertens et al. (2001) found that students in small learning communities with

‘creating smaller learning communities by using small teams of teachers and integrating curriculum ... address the distinctive developmental characteristics of young adolescents’

interdisciplinary teaching teams outperformed students in schools without such organisational arrangements.

Reducing the number of teachers for each class allows for pedagogical consistency, as well as increasing the potential for curriculum integration. **Creating smaller learning communities by using small teams of teachers and integrating curriculum has also been used to address the distinctive developmental characteristics of**

smaller schools within large ones, with teacher and student teams and other personalisation strategies, may engage socially and economically disadvantaged students better and improve academic performance, reduce dropout rates, enhance developmental outcomes and close equity gaps. The teachers in Hargreaves’ (1994) study stated that conventional timetables with separate teachers, subjects, and short lesson periods, fragmented their relationships with students, and their preference was for more open time structures such as a core-blocked timetable that could facilitate their efforts to develop positive relationships and emotional understanding with their students. **An Educate Together second-level school will consider how to increase the effectiveness and quality of learning by creating small learning communities within the larger school context. This will enable the development of a school environment where the teacher–student relationship can be enhanced so all young people feel safe and are happy, motivated and engaged with learning.**

‘... enable the development of a school environment where the teacher-student relationship can be enhanced ...’

young adolescents. Equally, the needs of students at senior cycle, where there should be a greater emphasis on self-directed, independent learning and a culture where students ‘engage meaningfully with a more mature, adult learning environment’ (NCCA 2004) can be met by smaller learning communities within a school. Perry (2003) states that small school communities can provide opportunities for a more personalised learning environment as students interact more often and engage more deeply with their teachers, formally and informally, on both school and non-school issues. Smaller learning communities also lend themselves to greater parent involvement as communication between parents and teachers is often more substantive, because teachers can get to know students better (Cotton 2001).

Felner et al’s (2007) research on high performing learning communities suggests that the creation of

2.7 Organising Learning & Inclusion

The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (1998, 2003, 2005) suggests that inclusion generally develops well in primary, but in the second-level sector serious problems emerge. It could be argued that increasing subject specialisation and the organisational strategies in second-level schools create obstacles to student inclusion. However, the Agency (2005) has highlighted how some schools in EU countries are implementing effective inclusive education at second-level. The case studies outline several effective practices within inclusive schools. For example:

- Luxembourg: Each class has the same group of students for three years. There are a restricted number of teachers per class and each teacher can take on several subjects. The number of

teachers is reduced to a minimum in order to ensure a good atmosphere. A team of teachers covers the lessons for three years in order to strengthen the group and build up a better relationship between students and teachers.

- Sweden: The school has about 55 teachers. They are organised in five teams of 10-12 teachers. Every team has responsibility for 4-5 classes. The students are in mixed aged groups with two teachers teaching most of the theoretical subjects. In the Swedish model, while teachers are specialists in one or two subjects, they teach other subjects as well.
- Norway: The school emphasises that each class level must be a physical, social and academic unit where all students have a strong connection to their class. The team of each class level consists of two to three class teachers, a special educator, resource or subject teacher, and social educator and/or assistant. The members of each team support each other, collaborate as they plan the work, and co-operate with parents.

The report also noted that streaming in second-level education contributes to the marginalisation of students with Special Education Needs (SEN). Similarly, the ESRI (2004) found that streaming led

‘Educate Together second-level schools will not stream’

to lower achievement among students in bottom streams and increased transition difficulties for students in higher streams due to academic pressure. **Educate Together second-level schools will not stream.**

All students differ in learning preferences and need multiple and varied avenues to learning. **Gardner (2001) points out that ‘the biggest mistake of past centuries in teaching has been to treat all children as if they were variants of the same individual and thus to feel justified teaching them all the same subjects in the same way.’** Teachers in an Educate Together school will use strategies and learning activities to facilitate curriculum differentiation, for as Tomlinson (1999) points out ‘children already come to us differentiated. It just makes sense that we would

‘... the biggest mistake of past centuries in teaching has been to treat all children as if they were variants of the same individual and thus to feel justified teaching them all the same subjects in the same way...’

differentiate our instruction in response to them.’ Differentiating the curriculum will provide a variety of learning experiences where all students in the class can be included, participate and learn and where the different learning needs of all students are met. Tomlinson et al (2003) defines differentiation ‘as a way of teaching in which teachers proactively modify curriculum, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products. The needs of individual students and/or small groups of students are addressed to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in the classroom.’ In an Educate Together second-level school differentiating classroom instruction and adapting curriculum will be the rule rather than the exception.

Inclusive education in an Educate Together second-level school will mean the provision of a learning environment within which all young people - whatever their ability, language, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic, social or cultural origin, will be provided with real learning opportunities and classroom practices that explicitly take account of the multiple ways all students learn. Differentiated instruction and curriculum organisation which supports the inclusion of all students, which improves transfer from primary to second-level as well as engaging and motivating learners will be shared, developed, reviewed and evaluated as part of school curriculum planning.

‘... learning opportunities and classroom practices that explicitly take account of the multiple ways all students learn. Differentiated instruction and curriculum organisation which supports the inclusion of all students ...’

2.8 Pedagogy

An Educate Together second-level school will provide an education that will enable students to contribute meaningfully to their communities, embrace the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society and develop the knowledge and skills necessary for their lives and for their careers in the 21st century. **To prepare students for success in the world beyond school they need to develop the capacity to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, effective communicators, creators and innovators. Traditional teaching approaches, based on direct instruction and textbook learning alone, will not adequately develop in students these capacities and improve achievement.**

A teaching philosophy based on the idea that teaching approaches should vary, be flexible and adapt to the individual and diverse needs of students is the fundamental belief of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson 2000) and in an Educate Together second-level school this will be one approach that will provide the scaffolding that students at different levels of readiness need in order to prepare them for success in the world beyond school.

Teaching is a complex job. It requires a knowledge of subject matter, pedagogical skills and classroom management techniques. Hattie (2003) suggests

‘to prepare students for success ... need to develop the capacity to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, effective communicators, creators and innovators ...’

that the major influence on student achievement, after the students themselves, is ‘the person who gently closes the classroom door and performs the teaching act.’ Darling-Hammond’s (1996; 1998; 2000) study of the restructuring of schools for the improvement of student achievement, found that high quality subject and pedagogical knowledge, or quality teaching, proved to have the single greatest impact on student success, when measured against a wide array of other influencing factors. However, quality teaching is not restricted to pedagogical approaches and subject content alone. The importance of the student-teacher relationship and the provision of a warm and caring environment has been shown to have a profound influence on student engagement with learning, achievement, motivation and behaviour, as well as being critical in supporting the nurturing of the values and dispositions needed to accept personal responsibility for life-long learning (Habermas 1972; Lovat & Smith 2003; Hattie 2004; Deakin-Crick and Wilson 2005; Brady 2005; Noddings 1984; 1992; 2002; Manen 1986). In an Educate Together second-level school the teacher-student relationship will be viewed as integral to successful teaching and learning. Hansen (1998) suggests that ‘it is the person in the role, not the role itself, who brings education to life in the classroom.’ **Teachers in Educate Together second-level schools will actively develop a caring, nurturing, safe and supportive environment, characterised by positive teacher-student relationships and interactions that bring education to life and support student learning and well-being.**

Educate Together second-level schools will be professional learning communities where school staff, including teaching and other staff, work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all (DuFour 2004). Staff continuous professional development and the sharing of best

practice across and between schools will be developed and supported. A collaborative culture will be nurtured and developed, where teachers' passion for learning can be sustained as they work, plan and problem-solve in teams, to develop practices that support the social, emotional and academic needs of all learners. However, DuFour et al. (2005) point out that very often "what passes

4. Teachers need to know the learning intentions and success criteria of their lessons, know how well they are attaining these criteria for all students, and know where to go to next in light of the gap between students' current knowledge and understanding and the success criteria of: 'Where are you going?', 'How are you going?', and 'Where to next?'

'... a caring, nurturing, safe and supportive environment, characterised by positive teacher-student relationships ...'

for collaboration or collegiality in schools typically lacks focus on achievement results." Members of an Educate Together school community should view themselves as 'all playing on the same team and working toward the same goal: a better school' (Hoerr 1996). Through collective inquiry, shared responsibility, professional development and community partnership, teachers and other staff will be provided with opportunities to consider how best to improve outcomes for all students and create learning opportunities where all students can experience success.

2.9 Visible Teaching and Learning

In his synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses of research related to what influences student achievement, Hattie (2009) concludes that it is critical that teaching and learning are visible in the classroom. He highlights six signposts towards excellence in education:

1. Teachers are among the most powerful influences in learning.
2. Teachers need to be directive, influential, caring and actively engaged in the passion of teaching and learning.
3. Teachers need to be aware of what each and every student is thinking and knowing, to construct meaning and meaningful experiences in light of this knowledge, and have proficient knowledge and understanding of their content to provide meaningful and appropriate feedback, such that each student moves progressively through the curriculum levels.

5. Teachers need to move from the single idea to multiple ideas and to relate and then extend these ideas such that learners construct and reconstruct knowledge and ideas. It is not the knowledge or ideas, but the learner's construction of this knowledge and these ideas that is critical.
6. School leaders and teachers need to create school, staffroom, and classroom environments where error is welcomed as a learning opportunity, where discarding incorrect knowledge and understandings is welcomed, and where participants can feel safe to learn, re-learn, and explore knowledge and understanding.

(Hattie 2009)

Educate Together second-level schools will intentionally and purposely employ effective evidence-based teaching and learning methodologies and create challenging and creative learning environments where mistakes are welcomed and viewed as learning opportunities. Teachers will be supported to develop 'deliberate interventions to enhance teaching and learning' (Hattie 2009) and incorporate strategies that are flexible and responsive to the learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds and differing learning styles

'... intentionally and purposely employ effective evidence-based teaching and learning methodologies ...'

(Gardner 1993; Vygotsky 1978; Grasha 1996). The ESRI report (2005) highlighted the benefit of involving students actively in their learning. Students expressed a preference for working in groups as the sharing of ideas made the work easier. Methodologies identified by students as conducive to learning included activity-based learning, discussions, teachers using different teaching styles rather than teaching from the book, and teachers making the subject interesting. **To support the different ways of thinking and learning, students will be provided in an Educate Together second-level school with multiple opportunities to be active participants in their learning.**

‘... students will be provided ... with multiple opportunities to be active participants in their learning’

Teachers will adopt practices built on evidence. For example, practices such as: using students' prior knowledge and skills to link new learning to old (including building on and linking with students' learning at primary); reciprocal teaching to improve reading and comprehension skills; metacognition strategies to develop students' understanding of how they think and learn; problem based learning to nurture research skills; cooperative learning methodologies to foster interpersonal skills; and the use of effective feedback and formative assessment to achieve learning goals. These are all part of a repertoire of teaching strategies that improve learning outcomes. Hattie (2009) suggests that 'active teaching involves more backward design. Rather than starting from the textbooks, favoured lessons, and time honoured activities, start backwards - from desired results (success criteria related to learning outcomes)'. As previously stated, **in an Educate Together second-level school, curriculum planning will involve expressing student learning in terms of clear learning outcomes and success criteria.** For example, in planning for learning, teachers will consider:

Expectations

- What will students know and be able to do at the end of the learning time (i.e. unit, topic or project)?

Assessment & Evaluation

- How will I determine that they have achieved these expectations?
- What are the criteria for success?
- What are the key tasks or assignments that will allow each student to best demonstrate the expectations?
- How will I collect a variety of data on how well students are doing?

Teaching and Learning Strategies

- What teaching and learning strategies will best achieve the success criteria?
- What changes and adaptations will be needed so all students learn, achieve and experience success?

Resources

- What resources do I have? (to include people resources e.g. parents, community, business, 3rd level colleges, etc.)
- What resources do I need?

Curriculum planning, as well as knowledge of individual learners' needs, will inform the range of evidence-based pedagogical approaches adopted by teachers to create an engaging and challenging learning environment.

2.10 The Visibility of Student Voice in Learning

Educate Together schools are democratic and inclusive in nature. Booth (2003) outlines the kind of classroom which is helpful to all learners; 'It [participation] implies learning alongside others and collaborating with them in shared lessons. It involves active engagement with what is learnt and taught and having a say in how education is experienced. But participation also involves being recognised for oneself and being accepted for oneself: I participate with you when you recognise me as a person like yourself and accept me for who I am'.

‘... classrooms will be places where the centrality of the student’s voice will be evident in teaching and learning practices ...’

At second-level, all students will be provided with opportunities to exercise choice and negotiate with teachers regarding the structure and content of learning activities. The benefits of involving students as partners in their learning and involving students in authentic decision-making are well documented (Rudduck & Flutter 2000, 2004; Fletcher 2005; Fielding 2001). Listening to students has been shown to be of key importance in good teacher-student relationships (O’Brien 2008).

Educate Together second-level classrooms will be places where the centrality of the student’s voice will be evident in teaching and learning practices.

education can play a major role in developing the kind of critical thinking and inclusive ethical perspective that underpins respect for differences’ (Lynch & Baker 2005).

In an Educate Together classroom the organisation of the learning will incorporate recognition of difference and will be characterised by a teaching practice that affords a visibility to diversity and acknowledges diversity as a learning resource.

Students’ individual identities will be reflected in the school environment and the curriculum, and the diversity of students’ lives and cultures

‘... the organisation of the learning will incorporate recognition of difference and will be characterised by a teaching practice that affords a visibility to diversity ...’

In Educate Together second-level schools, students will participate in decision-making about what and how they learn and how their learning is assessed. Students will participate in curricular planning meetings, be involved in teacher/student and student/student working groups on teaching and learning and take part in teacher/parent/student conferencing. Involving students actively in their learning, both at the planning, doing and reviewing stages, increases motivation, engagement and achievement and ‘the more the student becomes the teacher and the more the teacher becomes the learner, then the more successful are the outcomes’ (Hattie 2009).

2.11 The Visibility of Diversity

In *Well-Being and Post Primary Schooling* (2008), O’Brien states that ‘to foster well-being, schools need to become meaningful places for the diversity of young people they purport to serve’. In an Educate Together classroom the learning experience will respond to and reflect diversity. Effective pedagogical practices ‘have shown how

celebrated and seen as a resource. Lynch and Baker (2005) point out that ‘to educate people about inequality is to include members of oppressed groups in the design of educational programmes’. Blair (2002) has shown how in schools which are particularly effective for minority ethnic pupils, diversity in the curriculum is seen positively by all parents, teachers and students in relation to its value for all children. **Educate Together schools will challenge negative stereotypes and false assumptions in relation to groups experiencing inequality.** Teachers will choose curriculum content and materials where ‘the lives of all peoples are allowed to be read, recognised and critiqued in a critical inter-cultural manner’ (Lynch and Baker 2005). For example, to reflect, explore and critique difference (in terms of gender, ethnicity, ability, social class, sexual orientation, diverse family units, etc.) will require, among other things, teachers considering what authors, images, music, films, scientists, mathematicians, artists, etc. are chosen for study and by what means they are represented in the learning.

‘... a learning environment that is participatory, inclusive and valuing of diversity ...’

Educate Together school communities will endeavour to create a learning environment that is participatory, inclusive and valuing of diversity and will adopt policies and practices to support this.

2.12 Assessment

Educate Together second-level classrooms will be learner-centred, where students are the key initiators and architects of their own learning.

Weimer (2002) identifies learner-centred teaching as encompassing a shift in the balance of classroom power from teacher to student, designing content as a means to building knowledge rather than a ‘knowledge end’ in itself, positioning the teacher as facilitator and contributor, rather than the source of knowledge, shifting responsibility for learning from teacher to learner and finally promoting learning through effective assessment.

The UK Assessment Reform Group (2002) identifies five key factors which improve learning through assessment:

- providing effective feedback to pupils;
- actively involving pupils in their own learning;
- adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment;
- recognising the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self esteem of pupils, both of which are crucial to learning;
- considering the need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and to understand how to improve.

Hargreaves (2007) suggests that assessment can shape ‘student learning in both positive and negative directions. At worst, assessment methods force students into surface learning; facts are quickly acquired to meet examination pressures and just as quickly forgotten. At best, assessment methods provide students with opportunities to apply their newly acquired knowledge to real and

challenging problems, and hence with the chance to learn in depth and test the limits of their understanding’. Black and William (1998) reviewed 250 research articles relating to the role of classroom assessment in learning and concluded that it ‘typically encourages superficial and rote learning, concentrating on recall of isolated details, usually items of knowledge which pupils soon forget’. The UK Assessment Reform Group research (2002) also identified a number of risks with regard to assessment:

- valuing quantity and presentation rather than the quality of learning;
- lowering the self-esteem of students by over-concentrating on judgements rather than advice for improvement;
- demoralising students by comparing them negatively and repeatedly with more successful learners;

‘... students are the key initiators and architects of their own learning’

- giving feedback which serves social and managerial purposes rather than helping students to learn more effectively;
- working with an insufficient picture of students’ learning needs.

Educate Together second-level schools will incorporate effective assessment approaches that impact positively on student learning using a combination of summative and formative assessment methods.

Summative assessment is intended to summarise student achievement at a particular time, whereas formative assessment is intended to promote further improvement of student attainment (Crooks 2001). Summative assessment or assessment of learning is a common feature of second-level schooling in Ireland. Students’ learning is measured in order to generate a grade or mark that reflects performance at the end of a period of learning, for example, school in-house examinations or the Junior and Leaving Certificate. As discussed earlier,

‘... creating independent learners who take responsibility for their own learning and work collaboratively with teachers to assess and progress their learning ...’

this form of assessment alone does not provide information about the full range of educational outcomes or encourage the development of important lifelong learning skills or creativity.

What is assessed has a strong influence on what is taught. **In an Educate Together school, it will be crucial that assessment methods are linked to the learning that is essential for young people who live in a rapidly changing and information rich society.** For example, higher order thinking and questioning skills, an understanding of how to learn, the ability to work and learn collaboratively and independently, as well as the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances, are skills needed for life and work beyond school. The NCCA (2004) point out that involving learners in the ‘whole process of assessment gives clarity and direction to teaching and increases motivation in learners. Involving learners in assessing their own and each other’s work affords the teacher greater insight into learner motivation and progress and is a source of valuable data for reporting to parents’.

Hargreaves (2007) states that research has shown that assessment for learning can have a significant effect on how well students achieve in terms of their attainment, behaviour, motivation, engagement and their ability to work independently. The NCCA leaflet on assessment for learning (2004) also highlights research evidence that has ‘indicated improvements in the order of 12% in test scores for students coming from “assessment for learning” classrooms’.

Quality feedback is essential for effective learning and teaching and by integrating assessment for

learning across every subject, students will develop a deeper understanding of their learning as they are given opportunities to discuss their learning with their teacher and with their peers and plan for their next steps. **Educate Together second-level schools will be concerned with creating independent learners who take responsibility for their own learning and work collaboratively with teachers to assess and progress their learning.** In an Educate Together second-level school assessment for learning will be embedded into normal classroom practice as it improves learning and achievement for all learners as well as fostering those skills necessary for participation in the knowledge society.

2.13 Conclusion

An Educate Together second-level school will recognise the dynamic interplay between content, pedagogy and assessment. Through the integration of powerful pedagogies, with effective assessment and a relevant school curriculum, Educate Together second-level schools will provide an engaging and challenging learning environment where all students ‘learn to know, learn to do, learn to live together, and learn to be’ (Delors 1996). Educate Together schools will provide a holistic and inclusive educational experience that will prepare young people to be successful learners, responsible members of society, effective workers, caring members of the community and lifelong learners in an interdependent world.

‘educate together second-level schools will provide an engaging and challenging learning environment where all students “learn to know, learn to do, learn to live together, and learn to be” ...’

Key Questions for Reflection and Further Exploration by School Communities:

- Is our vision for our students and their learning clear and shared?
- Does it express what we want for our young people?
- How is our vision reflected in the design of the school's curriculum?
- How is our commitment to the principles of the Educate Together Charter demonstrated in our curriculum and classroom practices?
- Have we identified and agreed on those values that we believe are important for everyone involved in the life of our school?
- Do our values support and complement those in DES strategy documents and NCCA syllabi and guidelines?
- Does our school curriculum explain how our values will be an integral part of teaching, learning and the daily life in our school?
- Is the school curriculum aligned with DES strategy documents and NCCA syllabi and guidelines?
- Does the school curriculum explain how students' learning and progress are monitored and recorded in relation to learning objectives?
- How do we best provide a curriculum, learning activities and school structures that meet the needs of early adolescence? How do we know?
- How do we ensure that students experience as broad a range of subjects as possible?
- Have we clarified which key skills we are focussing on, the meaning that each should have for our students and how they will be developed?
- Does our school curriculum explain how these key skills are to be developed across all learning activities and programmes in and out of the classroom?
- Does our school curriculum provide guidance on how to help students monitor their development and demonstration of their learning?
- How will planning for connections across subject areas, values and key skills be organised?
- Does our school curriculum explain how programmes are designed to meet the needs and interests of all students?
- Have we identified the characteristics of effective teaching and learning?
- How are the characteristics of effective pedagogy reflected in our curriculum and our practice?
- What approaches and techniques are used which set out to acknowledge and exploit the diversity of students in classrooms?
- How can we provide for the creative and cultural development of all students in the formal and informal curriculum?
- How are ICT and new technologies incorporated into learning?
- How is a supportive classroom environment maintained?
- How does the teacher model the characteristics and practices of the lifelong learner?
- How will teachers' lifelong learning be supported?
- What professional development has been planned for – by whom and why?
- What timetabling and staff, student and community organisational systems need to be in place to foster lifelong learning?
- How are transitions in and out of the junior cycle and senior cycle catered for?
- What types of authentic assessment are in place to cater for diverse learning and learners?

3 The Ethical Curriculum

“Learning Together to Live Together” is the vision statement of Educate Together as published in its Strategy Statement (2000). Educate Together schools have been at the forefront in developing intercultural education in Ireland. The four core principles, as laid down in the Educate Together Charter (1990), are the foundation upon which a school community builds an inclusive and intercultural learning environment. The values inherent in the principles – respect, equality, rights and responsibilities, justice, dignity – underpin and permeate all school policies and practices. The core Educate Together principles inform the culture and ethos of all Educate Together schools and guide the delivery and content of an ethical education curriculum. The ethical curriculum, *Learn Together*, is the curricular approach to delivering school ethos and a concrete expression of Educate Together’s inclusive values.

The curriculum focuses on the ethical, moral and social development of children and young people in inclusive schools. It encourages learners to explore their own spiritual identities in a safe and supportive environment, while also being aware of and respecting the notion that other people may think differently to them. It enables learners to appreciate, be informed and be comfortable with those of differing faiths to themselves and empowers them to critically interact across viewpoints within a common language of human rights and respect (Mulcahy 2002). The curriculum at second-level will celebrate difference and provide the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that young people need to enable them to make informed moral decisions and live in a pluralist society, which embraces diversity.

[The Educate Together ethical curriculum] demonstrates that spiritual and ethical education does not have to involve separate education. It identifies the common values that we share in our humanity and offers a pathway for educating our children to live in a pluralist Ireland. It integrates theory and action in spiritual and ethical education. What is important about the curriculum is its truly holistic approach to ethical education. Children will not just be educated about spiritual values or ethical principles emanating from their own belief or religious tradition. They will learn about the values, cultures and lifestyles of those who are different to them. They will learn to name difference with a language of respect.

Professor Kathleen Lynch, 2004

Osler and Starkey (2005) point out that democracy is also about living together and that ‘education is an essential component of democracy, as it is about learning to live together and the practice of living together.’ **An Educate Together second-level school, through its ethos and ethical curriculum, will provide a pathway for educating young people in a democratic society to live out the ideal of learning together to live together.**

3.1 The Four Strands

Banks (2009) states that an important part of any theory of intercultural citizenship is to instill high levels of intercultural skills and knowledge. He suggests 'we should encourage individuals to have the ability and desire to seek out interactions with the members of other groups, to have curiosity about the larger world, and to learn about the habits and beliefs of other peoples'. The ethical curriculum provides learners with both knowledge and a range of dispositions and skills to enable them to participate in and contribute to the democratic process and become informed, socially responsible and fair-minded citizens of the world. The theory underpinning the ethical curriculum is informed and influenced by major theorists in the area of the philosophy and psychology of theory and learning, for example Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, Gardiner, Kohlberg and Gilligan. The curriculum also draws on the work of sociologists and in particular critical theory in the areas of equality and justice.

The Ethical Education Curriculum at second-level will be a development of the curriculum at primary, which is divided into four strands:

- Moral & Spiritual
- Justice & Equality
- Belief Systems
- Ethics & the Environment

The four strands are complementary, interlinked and of equal importance. The aims and objectives of each strand are underpinned by core values such as respect for self, respect for others, respect for and knowledge of difference, gender equity, respect for the environment and the rights and responsibility of being a citizen from a local perspective but also on a global level (Mulcahy 2000). As with classroom practice in all Educate

'... young people will be encouraged to gain personal understandings in supportive, respectful, creative and engaging learning environments ...'

Together schools, a wide range of methodologies that recognise the multiple intelligences and range of learning styles present in all classrooms will be used in the delivery of the curriculum. **Through a school's learner-centred approach young people will be encouraged to gain personal understandings in supportive, respectful, creative and engaging learning environments and to evaluate information, form judgments and articulate these judgments.**

Within the school week time will be set aside to deliver the ethical education curriculum. However the teaching of the curriculum will also be integrated and interdisciplinary in nature. Elements of the curriculum will complement, link and extend existing syllabi at junior and senior cycle such as Religious Education, Civic, Social and Political Education, Social, Personal & Health Education, Geography, Science, Art and Design, etc. For example, opportunities for a thematic exploration of identity and diversity could take place in the context of Art and Design by examining the use of iconography in visual representations of cultural identity in world conflict situations, and in the *Learn Together* programme by exploring the part played by rights and differing belief systems in those conflict situations and the implications of this in terms of diversity in 21st century Ireland. The ethical curriculum at second-level will also name and analyse 'old' familiar differences and social divisions in Irish society such as class, gender, sexuality, Traveller status, and dis/ability.

The ethical curriculum will directly promote life skills that are essential to a generation of young people growing up in diverse and varied social environments, growing up in what Lynch et al. (1992) describe as a global society and world-wide culture. Promoting life skills through the ethical curriculum could, for example, involve a problem-based learning WebQuest on an area such as ethics in politics, sport and business – or, the significance and role of sacred places, persons and ethical codes in world religions – or, how the definition of rights in different societies is influenced by their historical, economic and political experiences and present reality. The incorporation of creative, cooperative and active learning strategies into the teaching of the ethical curriculum will develop life skills such as:

‘the ethical curriculum ... will be part of the daily life, part of every subject, visible in curriculum resources and woven into the very fabric of all school policies and practices’

- information and media literacy skills (access, manage, use, evaluate and interpret electronic forms of information);
- higher order critical thinking skills (collecting and analysing material from different sources, identifying different perspectives, distinguishing between fact and opinion, detecting prejudice and bias, critical reflection, reaching a balanced, informed conclusion);
- interpersonal skills (working and cooperating with others, taking and sharing responsibility, negotiating with others, taking constructive criticism, using conflict resolution);
- communication skills (discussing, listening, respecting others opinions, summarising main points, oral and written presentation).

However, learning about diversity will be most effective when integrated into the day-to-day activities and evident in both curricular and extra-curricular activities. **The ethical curriculum in an Educate Together second-level school will be part of the daily life, part of every subject, visible in curriculum resources and woven into the very fabric of all school policies and practices.**

Gundara (2006), writing about inclusive intercultural education, draws attention to the African proverb that says that ‘it takes a village to raise a child’. Educate Together schools promote the fullest participation by parents, students and teachers in decision-making processes and promote a genuine creative partnership between parental involvement and the professional role of teachers. The ethical education curriculum will provide schools with an opportunity to involve parents, students and other members of the community in the delivery of elements of the programme within the classroom or in related activities; for example, exploring cultural themes during assembly. **The cultural background of all learners and the wider school community will be used as a**

significant resource to illuminate the Educate Together core principles and the core values of the ethical curriculum. Links between schools, both nationally and internationally, will also be seen as a resource in the delivery of the curriculum. Fostering cross-school and cross-cultural connections through visits, community links or web based activities and forums has the potential for creating authentic encounters, moving teaching

‘the cultural background of all learners and the wider school community will be used as a significant resource ...’

and learning beyond the walls of the classroom and developing cross-cultural dialogue for learners and teachers. Networking with other schools also has wider school impact as it supports ‘improvement and innovation by enabling schools to collaborate on building curriculum diversity, extended services and professional support and to develop a vision of education that is shared and owned well beyond individual school gates’ (Hopkins 2007).

3.2 Best Practice in Learning Together

Educate Together second-level schools will provide a developmentally appropriate, relevant, learner-centred ethical curriculum where the language of equality and respect are central.

‘To promote egalitarian ways of seeing the world, students must be educated about the subject of equality and other cognate concepts such as human rights and social justice. In particular, schools and colleges need to educate their staff and students about the equality-specific issues that arise in relations of social

class, gender, colour, nationality, ethnicity, ability, religion and other differences. Syllabi should be social-class-proofed, gender-proofed, abilities-proofed, etc. so that the lives of all peoples are allowed to be read, recognised and critiqued in a critical inter-cultural manner.'

(Lynch and Baker 2005)

Educate Together schools promote egalitarian ways of seeing the world and at second-level, schools will provide an ethical curriculum that identifies the common values underpinning international human rights discourse, particularly those enshrined in the 1989

Convention on the Rights of the Child. The 'lived' ethos in the school will promote these values and build students' understanding of and respect for the diversity that surrounds them, recognising similarities and appreciating different cultures, beliefs, ethnicities², abilities, sexual orientations and socio-economic backgrounds.

The NCCA guidelines (2006) on intercultural education state that 'education not only reflects society but also influences its development. As such, schools have a role to play in the development of an intercultural society. While education cannot bear the sole responsibility for challenging racism and promoting intercultural competence, it has an important contribution to make in the development of the child's intercultural skills, attitudes, values and knowledge'. The Educate Together *Learn Together* Programme has been recognised by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia as an example of best practice in intercultural education (EMCU Annual Report 2005) and the first Multicultural Ireland Award for Schools was awarded in 2002 to Swords Educate Together National School. The Educate Together *Learn Together* ethical curriculum, that permeates all life in the school, has demonstrated that it is possible to build a school ethos which genuinely provides equality of esteem

between differing religious, cultural, and ethical viewpoints and develop learners' intercultural skills, attitudes, values and knowledge.

Educate Together schools see intercultural education as important for all children irrespective of their nationality and as Banks (2009) states 'It enriches our lives to be able to have positive interactions with the members of other cultures: it expands our horizons, provides new perspectives, and teaches us to reflect more critically on our own inherited traditions. It is, in short, an important part of self development.' Educate Together second-level schools will continue to provide best practice in intercultural education, empowering all young people in the school 'to speak, to have a voice, to name their own world in respectful terms, and to come to name the world of others who are different from themselves in equally respectful terms' (Lynch 2004).

3.3 Conclusion

An Educate Together second-level school community will be a vibrant and inclusive learning environment that promotes shared values that are guided by the Educate Together core principles. Hill (2004) defines values as the 'priorities individuals and society attach to certain beliefs, experiences, and objects in deciding how they shall live and what they shall treasure', while Halstead and Taylor (2000) describe them as 'principles and fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behaviour, the standards by which particular actions are judged as good or desirable'. However, Aspin and Chapman (2007) point out that 'unequal learning opportunities, inconsistent discipline, lack of follow up on absenteeism or lack of pastoral care will all speak volumes to students about the real values in the school.' The importance the school community attaches to the values that underpin the ethical curriculum and the Educate Together core principles will be obvious by both

'... promote egalitarian ways of seeing the world ... the common values underpinning international human rights discourse, particularly those enshrined in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child'

‘... a formal and informal curriculum that gives voice to learners’ varied identities... through the reflection in classroom texts and resources ... of different cultures, beliefs, ethnicities, abilities, sexual orientations and socio-economic backgrounds’

their consistent expression in whole school policies and practices and by their visibility in the daily interactions within the school. A school climate that enshrines the Educate Together core principles and the values inherent in the ethical curriculum will best develop where both the student body and the school staff reflects the diversity - in terms of ethnicity, religion, dis/ability, sexual orientation, social background, etc. - of the broader community, and where this diversity is highlighted and its value spelt out.

The ‘living out’ of these shared values will be visible in an Educate Together second-level school by the way all members of the school community are on first name terms; by the use of mediation and conflict resolution in disputes; by a formal and informal curriculum that gives voice to learners’ varied identities; by the use of respectful and inclusive language by members of the school community; and through the reflection in classroom texts and resources and the school’s physical environment of different cultures, beliefs, ethnicities, abilities, sexual orientations and socio-economic backgrounds.

These practices will reflect what the school community values and the intercultural and inclusive nature of the learning environment. The ‘living out’ of shared values based on human rights discourse in an Educate Together second-level school will ensure that a culture of equity exists which encourages communities of practice where everyone can feel a sense of belonging, security and esteem.

It will be the duty of the Patron to ensure that the *Learn Together* ethical curriculum reflects the ethos of the Educate Together sector. The curriculum at primary level is subject to review and development

by the Educate Together Education Committee and decisions at Annual General Meetings of the organisation. This will continue to be the practice at second-level, and will enable the continued development of a curriculum that engages learners in age appropriate issues, that fosters complex, creative, critical, reflective and ethical thinking, and that develops intercultural and interpersonal competences so young people can participate effectively and constructively in an increasingly diverse 21st century Ireland. The ethical curriculum will not trivialise and de-politicise immigrant cultures and identities by reducing intercultural education to a ‘focus on teaching the more exotic

‘... an inclusive, intercultural learning environment will develop that does not fall into the trap of token “saris, samosas and steelbands” ...’

and colorful aspects of other cultures, particularly their traditional holidays, costumes, dances and food’ (Kymlicka 2003). In Educate Together second-level schools, **by the provision of an ethical curriculum that is subject to review and evaluation, an inclusive, intercultural learning environment will develop that does not fall into the trap of token ‘saris, samosas and steelbands’ (Alibhai-Brown 2000) but where students will critically interact across viewpoints within a common language of respect.**

Key Questions for Reflection and Further Exploration by School Communities:

- What teaching and learning strategies support the delivery of the ethical curriculum?
- Which assessment processes will be used to support the ethical curriculum?
- How do we create awareness and discussion of the school's values among learners, school staff and the wider school community?
- How do we develop a shared set of values across the school?
- In what ways can school policies and practices reflect our shared values?
- What assessment and pedagogic initiatives need to be in place to support the delivery of the ethical curriculum?
- What timetabling and staff/organisational systems need to be in place to enable the delivery of the ethical curriculum?
- What professional development is needed to support the delivery of the ethical curriculum?
- How will we deliver a whole school approach?
- How will the ethical curriculum be reviewed and evaluated?
- How can school decision-making processes support the values inherent in the ethical curriculum?
- How will we ensure that relationships in the school reflect the values inherent in the ethical curriculum?
- How will we celebrate difference and diversity?
- How will we link with the wider communities of which the school is a part?

4 Leadership, Management & Structure

The Educate Together model is founded on a legal commitment to parents, staff and children to run a school based on equality and respect irrespective of social, cultural or religious background - the founding concepts are those underpinning human rights discourse and equality policy. Lynch and Baker (2005) point out that 'there are two levels at which equality of power is an issue in education. At the macro level, it concerns the institutionalised procedures for making decisions about school management, educational and curriculum planning, and policy development and implementation. At the micro level, it concerns the internal life of schools and colleges, in terms of relations between staff and students and among the staff themselves'. An Educate Together second-level school will be characterised by the culture that emerges from the structures, systems and practices that are shaped and guided by an ethos based on inclusion and equality. Each Educate Together second-level school will have a clearly articulated vision and shared set of core values, which will underpin all policies and practices as well as the management and structure of the school, and these will be evident in the daily interactions of the school community.

The four core principles, as laid down in the Educate Together Charter (1990), will be the foundation upon which the school community builds an inclusive and equality-based learning environment. All Educate Together schools:

- 1) are multi-denominational in character, ensuring that children and young people of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds have equal access to and rights within the school;
- 2) are co-educational, thereby encouraging children and young people to learn and live together;
- 3) are child-centred, including and respecting individual student's abilities to learn in unique ways.
- 4) Finally, Educate Together Schools are run on a democratic basis, encouraging active participation by parents and students in the daily life of the school whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers.

In an Educate Together second-level school the core principles will be clearly identifiable and will underpin the management, structure, policies and practices of each school, its ethos and its relationship with all communities in the neighbourhood. The approach to leadership, management and structure that would best embody the Educate Together ethos at second-level has been widely explored through working groups and members' meetings. Central to this exploration has been how every Educate Together second-level school will develop its own unique response to its particular communities but the specific ways in which the Educate Together principles and values find expression in an individual second-level school must be guided by the Educate Together core principles as well as through dialogue between the school and its community.

‘... keep the ethos and vision of the school visible, tangible and alive for everyone, so the ethos can be experienced by all members of and visitors to the school ...’

4.1 Board of Management

The Board of Management of an Educate Together second-level school will also evaluate its performance against the core principles at all levels of school activity. The ethos of the Board of Management will be as important as the ethos of the school. **The Board of Management of an Educate Together second-level school will be representative of its community - the school staff, the student body, the parent body, the local community and the patron.**

Banks (2009) points out ‘for students to internalise the concept of human rights, they must have experiences in the school as well as in the larger society that validate them as human beings; affirm their ethnic, cultural, racial, and linguistic identities; and empower them as citizens in the school and in the larger society.’ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the most widely ratified international treaty and considered as representing best international practice regarding children’s rights, states that ‘in all actions...the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration; and that the child has the right to express their views in all matters that affect them’ (Article 12(1)). As the founding concepts of Educate Together are those underpinning human rights discourse and equality policy, at second-level students will participate on Educate Together school boards of management as associate members. This will be one of several ways Educate Together second-level schools will facilitate students to express their views in matters that affect them. Including students on boards of managements not only gives a voice to young people on matters that affect them, but also develops communication, reasoning, organisational and negotiating skills as well as increasing a young person’s confidence in talking to other students and adults as they learn to positively influence school policy (Hannam 2005) – all necessary skills for lifelong learning.

4.2 Leadership

Embodying an equality-based, culturally inclusive and democratic ethos translates into action. The ethos of Educate Together second-level schools will be seen ‘lived out’ in the ethical principles and educational policies and practices upon which the school strives to base all its activities. In Educate Together second-level schools there will be a shared vision, a shared purpose and shared values. Senge (1990) points out ‘when there is a genuine vision (as opposed to the all-too-familiar ‘vision statement’), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to’. In an Educate Together second-level school the Principal will facilitate the clarifying, articulating and securing of a consensus as to the core values, vision and purpose of the school. This will require a shared decision-making process and shared leadership. **An important role of the Principal will be to keep the ethos and vision of the school visible, tangible and alive for everyone, so the ethos can be experienced by all members of and visitors to the school** - as it will be the ‘natural outcome of what is actually happening within the school’ (Hogan 1984).

Mulford and Silins (1998), in discussing schools as learning organisations, point out that Principals not only need to attend to vision and structure, but also need to promote an atmosphere of caring and trust, encourage staff to reflect on what they are doing, model a personal commitment to learning, expect high standards of performance and take account of broad staff opinion when making decisions. In an Educate Together second-level school the Principal will be aware of the key dimensions and multifaceted nature of the school leadership role and develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviours necessary for personal leadership; instructional leadership; transformational leadership; and organisational leadership (Leadership Development for Schools, 2002). Coolahan (2003) points out that high

quality school leadership is an essential pre-condition for effective and efficient schools and in an Educate Together second-level school the Principal will look within and beyond the school for support and expertise in developing and strengthening these key dimensions.

Fullan (2005) suggests that the main mark of effective leaders is 'how many effective leaders they cultivate and leave behind who can go even deeper than they did'. Educate Together second-level schools will be learning organisations where leadership is distributed and where formal and informal leadership roles are cultivated and supported. The Principal will foster and encourage the dispersal of the leadership roles throughout the

school will address some of the challenges documented in the Joint Managerial Body's (JMB) *Survey of Secondary School Principals* (2005).

West-Burnham and O'Sullivan (1998) claim that those who are 'responsible for student learning should be learners themselves – not just subject experts but people who make mistakes, are anxious, are exhilarated by understanding and filled with awe when something new is discovered'. In an Educate Together second-level school the Principal will model an ongoing commitment to his/her own learning and establish inclusive collaborative structures and opportunities for staff to reflect on their professional beliefs, values, assumptions, goals and performance in relation to

'... school staff will have a real opportunity to share, contribute and take responsibility for creating an inclusive, equality-based model of education and a school culture where students are challenged and supported to engage in learning and achieve ...'

staff, in order to improve learning opportunities for all students and strengthen the school as a professional learning organisation. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) draw attention to how research on teacher leadership has shown more significant effects on student achievement than Principal leadership and that this has led to advocacy for the development of greater teacher leadership in schools. **In an Educate Together second-level school staff will have a real opportunity to share, contribute and take responsibility for creating an inclusive, equality-based model of education and a school culture where students are challenged and supported to engage in learning and achieve.** All staff, including teaching and other staff, will be involved in deliberately and systematically developing a culture focused on improving learning and the Principal, as the leading professional in the school, by working with and through others, will establish an ethos that promotes excellence, equality and high expectations for all students. The Principal will ensure that the school is managed and organised in ways that support the development of this culture and in dispersing leadership roles throughout the

student learning and the nature of effective teaching and learning. **As a professional learning organisation, there will be an expectation in an Educate Together second-level school that all members are continually engaged in learning.** Darling-Hammond (1996) suggests that students' right to learn is directly tied to their teachers' opportunities to learn what they need to know and points to a number of factors that are important in enabling all students to succeed:

- Structures for caring and structures for serious learning;
- Shared exhibitions of student work that make it clear what the school values and how students are doing;
- Structures that support teacher collaboration and focus on student learning;
- Structures for shared decision-making, and shared discourse about teaching and learning.

In an Educate Together second-level school the structures, policies and practices will support and

develop the school as a caring and professional learning organisation where staff collaborate on improving student learning and well-being. For example staff will be involved in interdisciplinary and curriculum planning teams, care teams, research teams, team teaching, peer support teams and new staff induction programmes. Linking with the wider community, other educational organisations and 3rd level institutions will also be seen as a resource that can enrich, support and develop the school as a learning community. **In an Educate Together second-level school staff will be supported to develop the necessary knowledge and skills needed to understand and promote practices that respond to student diversity and foster participation of all students in their learning.**

Coolahan (2003) points out that 'good school planning is likely to lead to an enhancement of individual effort and a strengthening of the school as a learning community'. In an Educate Together second-level school, **school development planning will provide an opportunity to promote and plan for those policies and practices necessary for the creation of a learning environment that is learner-centred, inclusive and equality-based.** For example, school development planning will facilitate the evaluation of student participation across school activities and subjects. This may mean examining such areas as gender issues in relation to subject preference, or the participation by students with disabilities in extra-curricular activities, or learning outcomes for students with special educational needs and addressing these through the implementation of specific school policies and practices.

'... staff will be supported to develop the necessary knowledge and skills needed to understand and promote practices that respond to student diversity and foster participation ...'

School development planning will also facilitate the development of policies and practices that ensure the implementation of an ethical curriculum into the day-to-day activities of the school that avoids what Kymlicka (2003) refers to as the 'commodification' or 'Disneyfication' of culture – 'where a complex culture is reduced to a few 'safe' items that can easily be understood and 'consumed' by non-members, without really understanding the depths of a culture's beliefs, hopes, loyalties, fears, and identities.' Blair (2002) identifies leadership as a key issue in making schools effective for students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Blair's research found that in order for minority students to achieve, the ethos of the school must be based on diversity. For this to be achieved the leadership of the school should be democratic, but guided by a strong leader, generally the Principal.

The Educate Together inclusive and democratic principles will extend to the various sets of relationships in the school and will be built on a belief that leaders come from many places in an organisation. An Educate Together second-level school will be participatory in both its formal and informal structures and provide opportunities for all members of the school community to be involved, where applicable, in the academic, creative and social aspects of school life; in the full range of learning experiences, both in the classroom and in extra-curricular settings; and in the decision-making that shapes the ethos of the school. An Educate Together second-level school will also recognise 'that the quality of relationships between management and staff, between school leadership and staff, between staff members towards each other and between staff and pupils is crucial to the development of a community ethos which gives a sense of belonging' (Coolahan 2003).

A particular strength of Educate Together second-level schools will be the distribution of leadership throughout the school community. Properly distributed leadership is not the delegation of some mundane tasks in order to lessen the workload of Principals. It is not simply mutual collaboration between teachers, or superficial consultation with parents and students, although it encourages both collaboration and consultation. In Educate Together schools distributed leadership will

‘... at a more sophisticated level of participation, students will share their voice by collaborating in decision-making with teachers and adults to improve educational outcomes ...’

be understood as ‘leadership practice as stretched over leaders’ (Spillane et al. 2005). It will concentrate on ‘engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organisation’ (Harris 2004) and will involve the ‘interaction of multiple leaders’ (Muijs & Harris 2003). Distributing leadership in this way is not only democratic, it also enhances capacity within the school (Fullan 2001, Stoll 2001, Harris 2004), empowers members of the school community (Muijs & Harris 2003) and facilitates the development of professional learning communities (Stoll & Bolam 2005).

4.3 Student Voice

A school ethos that supports student participation invests in young people’s well-being. Students’ active involvement in decisions about their lives enables them to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. To enable learners to participate in society and the wider world in an effective and constructive way, an Educate Together second-level school will foster democratic and inclusive values and support student participation.

‘a school ethos that supports student participation invests in young people’s well-being’

Dewey (1916) highlights how ‘the democratisation of schooling relations is necessary because of its intrinsic educational value’. In an Educate Together second-level school the Principal and staff have a crucial role to play, along with the broader school community, in fostering inclusive and democratic values and maintaining a democratically run learning organisation. Apple and Beane (1999) suggest that educators, parents and the community committed to creating democratic schools understand that doing so involves more than the education of students. Democratic schools are

democratic places where the idea of democracy extends to the many roles that adults play in the school and ‘result from explicit attempts by educators to put in place arrangements and opportunities that will bring democracy to life. These arrangements and opportunities involve creating democratic structures and processes by which life in school is carried out and to create a curriculum that will give young people democratic experiences’.

Educate Together primary schools involve students in authentic decision-making, with learners involved in student councils, unions, committees or working groups. The benefits of this participation have been seen across a range of educational outcomes, including general attainment, personal development and well-being. At second-level, Educate Together will build on this experience and at the most basic level of participation, **students will not only share their opinions and suggestions on issues that affect them through student councils, but at a more sophisticated level of participation, students will share their voice by collaborating in decision-making with teachers and adults to improve educational outcomes.**

Rudduck (2003) points out that ‘the principles and values of pupil voice and participation must be threaded through the daily interactions and communications of school life and reflect a coherent and widely supported set of values and principles’. The democratic and learner-centred principles that underpin the Educate Together ethos will mean providing multiple opportunities for students to participate and influence school affairs at second-level. Booth (2003) points out the importance of voice in inclusive education and states that ‘those who are determined to address inequalities may have a clear idea about what needs to be done, but inclusion is not something which can be imposed from outside, but must be based on the views and perceptions of all those involved, first and foremost those of children and

young people themselves'. **The leadership, management and structure of an Educate Together second-level school will facilitate, support and develop student participation in school affairs and see listening to the voices of the students in the school as central to the development of the Educate Together core principles.** As there are some forms of 'participatory practice' to be avoided – tokenism, manipulation and decoration – an Educate Together second-level school community will use Hart's (1994) 'Ladder of Participation' or adaptations thereof, as a model for thinking about and planning for student participation that results in young people being empowered to influence decisions that affect their lives.

Strategies enabling student voice, student leadership and student participation are also effective in challenging prejudice-related bullying and promoting equality and diversity. **Harnessing student voice as part of a whole school policy to counter bullying will be seen, in an Educate**

influencing skills, heightened self-esteem or self-confidence and an increased sense of self-efficacy and personal and collective responsibility (Rudduck & Flutter 2000, 2004; Rudduck 2005; Fletcher 2005; Fielding 2001; Mitra 2003). Each Educate Together second-level school will have a policy on student participation, drawn up in consultation with all members of the school community and will incorporate such practices as:

- students making decisions about what and how they learn and how their learning is assessed;
- students participating in curricular planning meetings;
- students co-creating new school designs;
- students taking part in teacher/student and student/student working groups on school improvement;
- students linking with Boards of Management
- students contributing to the appointment process for positions in the school.

(Grace 1999; Cruddas 2005; Jackson 2005)

'harnessing student voice ... effective element in the development of a learning environment where all students – irrespective of gender, ethnicity, dis/ability, social class, sexual orientation, etc – are treated with dignity and respect'

Together second-level school, as an important and effective element in the development of a learning environment where all students – irrespective of gender, ethnicity, dis/ability, social class, sexual orientation, etc. – are treated with dignity and respect. The benefits of involving students as partners in their learning, and involving students in authentic decision-making, are also well documented e.g. the development of critical thinking, advocacy and

'... leadership, management and structure ... will facilitate, support and develop student participation in school affairs ...'

In an Educate Together second-level school meaningful involvement of students will mean 'validating and authorising them to represent their own ideas, opinions, knowledge and experiences throughout education in order to improve our schools' (Fletcher 2005). At second-level, an Educate Together school will provide opportunities for increased student involvement that extends beyond consultation over matters such as uniform, litter and fund-raising. The centrality of student voice in an Educate Together second-level school will be visible in the day-to-day practices of the school, its management, structures and policies and classroom practices and interactions. **Educate Together second-level schools, by facilitating students' age-appropriate active involvement in decisions that affect them, will develop in**

learners those competencies necessary for lifelong learning and active civic engagement.

‘... students’ age-appropriate active involvement in decisions that affect them ...’

4.4 Parent Voice

Educate Together schools are democratically organised and governed. Educate Together schools are set up and developed by groups of parents in a local area who wish to send their children to a school that is intentionally and purposefully multi-denominational, learner-centred, co-educational and democratically run. Parental participation is a key element of the Educate Together ethos. The management, structures, policies and day-to-day practices of Educate Together schools have demonstrated the ways in which parents and teachers recognise their shared interests in, and responsibilities for, children. The feasibility study carried out by Trinity College Dublin (Seery et al. 2008) provides clear evidence that parents who send their children to Educate Together primary schools wish to continue to participate in an active way in their children’s second-level education.

Parental participation in Educate Together schools goes beyond parental involvement on Boards of Management and Parent Associations and at second-level Educate Together will continue to pioneer this partnership approach in Ireland. Through the development of its democratic principle, ‘to enable the highest level of participation and partnership’ (Educate Together Charter 1990) Educate Together second-level schools will continue to involve parents in the educational process and extend the educational opportunities available to learners, while positively affirming the professional role of the teacher (Educate Together Charter 1990). A significant body of research over the last 30 years indicates that parental participation has a

positive impact on student outcomes (Epstein 2001; Henderson and Berla 1994; Flouri 2006; Tett 2001; Hall et al 2008). Educate Together second-level school leadership, management and structures will support parental participation both formally and informally. Multiple opportunities for participation will be developed, from participation on boards of management, parent associations and school committees, to involvement in everyday school activities such as:

- participating in classroom activities;
- organising and facilitating extra-curricular activities;
- supporting activities such as paired reading and paired maths;
- developing and/or assisting with artistic, musical, dramatic, linguistic, or scientific and technological programmes;
- supporting the delivery of Educate Together’s distinct ethical curriculum.

This unique partnership approach in Educate Together second-level schools will be based on mutual respect and ‘a critical understanding of equality, recognising that both the parent and teacher have a particular knowledge and expertise to share’ (Dunst et al. 1992).

4.5 Conclusion

The OECD report *Schooling for Tomorrow* (2006) points out that the challenge for schools ‘is to ally choice with voice: voice for the pupil, voice for the parent. That is the new frontier for education. **Personalised learning aims to engage every parent and every child in the educational experience.** Only if we offer the best to students will we get the best. And it means a school ethos focused on student needs, with the whole school team taking time to find out the needs and interests of the students; with students listened to and their voice used to drive whole school improvement; and with the leadership team providing a clear focus for the progress and

‘parental participation ...will continue to pioneer this partnership approach in Ireland’

achievement of each child.’ Educate Together second-level schools, through their leadership team, school management and structures, will promote collective responsibility within the whole school community for the development of a shared vision and purpose, focused on creating the best learning environment where all students can achieve and become enthusiastic, independent learners, committed to lifelong learning.

Key Questions for Reflection and Further Exploration by School Communities:

- What are the likely needs of those students who become Associate Members of BoMs (Boards of Management) and how might these be best met?
- What are the pitfalls of Associate Membership, for young people or the wider BoM body?
- How does the school create a shared and clearly articulated vision, set of values and purpose and how will the vision and values be demonstrated in everyday practices?
- How does the school make time available and build in structures for review and strategic thinking and planning?
- How will strategic planning take account of the diversity, values and experience of the school and wider community?
- How will staff share best practice?
- How will school organisation, structures and policies support the implementation of a diverse, flexible curriculum and an effective assessment framework?
- How will underperformance at all levels be addressed and improvement supported?
- How will the school produce and implement clear, evidence-based improvement plans and policies for the development of the school?
- How is monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, and student achievements, built into school structures, policies and practices?
- How will the professional development needs of all staff (including support staff and the Principal) be planned, organised and evaluated?
- How will leadership be distributed and dispersed?
- What are the barriers to sharing and distributing leadership and how can these barriers be overcome?
- How will staff responsibilities be acknowledged and how will the achievements of individuals and teams be celebrated?
- How will the Principal ensure that effective planning, clear delegation of tasks and devolution of responsibilities are supported?
- What needs to be in place for a school climate to develop that encourages people to take calculated risks and develop innovative and creative strategies for school improvement?
- How will the Principal and school staff use and integrate a range of technologies so the school is managed effectively and efficiently?
- How will the Principal balance the leadership as well as administrative and management roles?
- What structures, policies and practices need to be in place to support authentic student participation?
- How will a diverse student voice be involved in these structures?
- What are the barriers and pitfalls to student involvement and how will these be addressed?
- What structures, policies and practices need to be in place to support parental involvement?
- What are the barriers and pitfalls to parental involvement and how will these be addressed?
- How will the school develop clearly articulated guiding principles and practices for parental involvement so the professional role of the teacher is positively affirmed?
- How will the school recruit, retain and deploy staff appropriately and manage their workload to achieve the vision and goals of the school?
- How will the school collaborate with other agencies in providing for the academic, spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural well-being of students?

5 The Built Environment

In providing the best possible learning environment for young people an Educate Together school community must consider how the architecture, layout, décor and facilities of a school play a vital role in shaping the learning environment and how they influence students' academic performance and well-being in school. Research demonstrates that well-designed school environments help generate a positive school ethos, effective learning and teaching, good health and well-being in students and staff, as well as supportive relationships with families and the surrounding community (Higgins et al. 2005; Scottish Health Promoting Schools Unit 2005; Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment 2002; Fisher 2000; Clarke 2002).

The working group on the Built Environment & Campus, as well as participants at General Members' Meetings, explored the importance of school design. A number of core design concepts emerged from these discussions – school buildings should be exciting, welcoming, light, flexible, well maintained and safe places for those who work, learn, play and socialise in them. Central to these discussions was how school design can communicate the Educate Together ethos and how the Educate Together core principles can be promoted through building design. In general terms **bringing the Educate Together ethos and principles into school building design will require considering such issues as efficiency and sustainability, functionality and flexibility, building in context, accessibility, democratised spaces and aesthetic quality.**

5.1 Educate Together Principles in Practice

Educate Together schools are inclusive. Designing a learning environment that promotes inclusion means considering the different needs of those who will use the space. For example, physical access, acoustics, signage and colour schemes are all factors in ensuring effective teaching and learning for all students, but are essential for some students with disabilities or special educational needs. Educate Together second-level schools will be learner-centred. Designing spaces that incorporate moveable partitions can facilitate the use of learner-centred active teaching and learning approaches, allow for the creation of smaller personalised learning communities within a large school and support a collegial culture and not the 'egg box culture' that leads to teacher isolation as

'... flexible learning spaces suitable for personalised learning ...'

described by Hargreaves (1992). 'Real life' authentic learning experiences can be facilitated by a design that views the external school landscape as a resource that can enrich teaching and extend learning beyond the walls of the classroom and the pages of the textbook. In the global, networked environments of the 21st century, incorporating technology into the design of learning spaces will be vital so all learners can develop the skills necessary for success in their lives and careers. An Educate Together school community will consider how school design can enrich the teaching and learning environment and support and develop the Educate Together core principles.

The NCCA (2004) pointed out that a changed school culture at senior cycle will mean viewing the physical spaces and facilities within schools differently and will necessitate investment in libraries; ICT equipped learning spaces; social spaces; and access to learning environments beyond the school. These are seen as necessary in order to accommodate the varied approaches to the management and experience of learning for senior students. **In an Educate Together second-level school flexible learning spaces suitable for personalised learning will be necessary for all learners.**

An Educate Together second-level school community will consider how to create a school building for use beyond its conventional function. This will involve the school community and school designers finding new and exciting ways for students, teachers, parents and the wider community to interact with those who design and build schools, and with those who work and learn in them.

5.2 Student Input

Woolner et al. (2007) point out that there has been a change in the language surrounding educational architecture, which privileges consultation and ensures that in the initial stages of design teachers, parents and students are able to have a voice. It is interesting to note that Principals consulted as part of the Trinity College Feasibility Study for the Opening of a Second-level School by Educate Together (Seery et al. 2008) also highlighted the benefit of involving students in school design.

The Sorrell Foundation, an education charity in the UK, has explored how listening to the voice of students can improve school design. Through their work with students on how school design can improve, the foundation discovered the foundation identified some common concerns, including these relating to the built environment:

- Colour: students want calming colours in learning spaces but vibrant colours in social spaces. They also like areas to be branded with the school colours.
- Communication: websites should be easy to use with links to homework sites and information on events, clubs and up-to-date news.
- Dinner Halls: pet hates are long queues, too much noise and not enough choice.
- Learning Spaces: flexible spaces with good acoustics and good ICT facilities are popular.
- Reception Areas: students want a friendly, comfortable reception area with space to display the work and achievements of the students.
- Reputation and Identity: they want their school to have a good reputation in their community.
- Senior Spaces: seniors want a more 'grown-up' area that is distinct but still integral to the school.

- Social Spaces: students want more seats and sheltered areas and spaces where they can exercise.
- Storage: lockers are a big issue for students. They want a safe space to keep their belongings.
- Sustainability: they want environmentally friendly schools that save energy, do more recycling and provide bike sheds.
- Toilets: students are critical of poor toilet facilities and named them as places where bullying takes place
- Furniture: a common theme was the need for sturdy, comfortable vandal-proof desks and chairs that can be adjusted and easily moved to be used in different arrangements.
- Inclusion: the buildings need to be suitable for children with disabilities and welcoming to children of all nationalities and backgrounds.
- Safety and Security: students want places to report bullying in confidence and security measures that are effective without being oppressive.

(Sorrell Foundation, 2008)

Internationally examples exist where student councils have acted as consultants to architects commissioned to design new school buildings and where teachers have used the design process to develop student awareness of the built environment and design issues (Rudduck 2003).

‘... the design process and the school building will be viewed as a rich learning opportunity and a teaching and learning resource’

Other benefits of student participation in the design process include opportunities for developing skills such as creative thinking, problem solving, research, investigation, decision-making and working in teams, as these are all elements of the design process. **In an Educate Together second-level school (wherever possible and within financial constraints), the design process and the school building will be viewed as a rich learning opportunity and a teaching and learning resource.**

5.3 The Building as a Learning Resource

Educate Together schools are learner-centred. The teaching and learning methodologies used actively involve students in their learning and reflect the multiple ways young people learn and engage with the world.

The concept of using the school building as a learning resource is not new. Examples exist both nationally and internationally where educators and designers have worked together to identify lessons the building can teach and provide new ways for students to interact and learn in school. For example windows arranged to suggest the musical notes of a song, floor patterns inspired by geometrical shapes, school façades that reflect the culture and tradition of the communities they serve, can be incorporated into school buildings (OECD 2005).

Other innovative designs use the different structural systems to provide lessons on how they work. Using features to enhance students’ understanding of how buildings work, as well as using the design and construction process as a teaching vehicle, are also highlighted by Department of Education and Science school design guidelines (DES 2007). In an Educate Together second-level school some of the ways building design and construction could be used in the curriculum and as a learning resource could include: strategically exposing structural

systems around the building and installing them with learning tools such as meters and gauges for observation and investigation; or using ‘truth windows’ that show the construction of ducting and cabling behind walls; or displaying lines of longitude and latitude in the hall or yard (OECD 2005).

The outdoor landscape can also provide ‘a valuable resource for teaching and learning across the whole curriculum, as well as for children’s emotional, social and cultural development’ (DES 2007). The

‘... provide a setting that enhances and supports the way students learn, teachers teach and the wider school community interacts’

external landscape can provide an opportunity to extend learning by providing, for example, a setting for hands-on lessons on science and ecology. Developing specialised outdoor learning areas such as a water habitat or a community garden can provide a rich resource for teachers and ‘real life’ authentic learning experiences for students.

The school building design also offers an opportunity to teach about sustainability and about how buildings impact on the environment - their carbon footprint, the effect of pollutants on climatic change, wildlife and vegetation. In keeping with DES guidelines, as well as the Educate Together ethos, the design of an Educate Together second-level school will ‘be developed on environmentally friendly and ecologically sound principles with genuine commitment to sustainability issues which conserve use of energy, water and other resources’ (DES 2007). **Building design will be seen as an opportunity for an Educate Together second-level school community to teach, practice and promote environmentally sustainable behaviours.**

5.4 Conclusion

A school environment immediately conveys powerful statements about learning and about what the school values and considers important. At second-level school design will provide an opportunity for students, teachers, parents and the wider community to participate in creating a shared vision for their school and create a building that inspires teaching and learning and supports participation and inclusion. Good school design will enhance the broader Educate Together aims at second-level, such as the inclusion of students with special educational needs, or the promotion of learner-centred active teaching strategies or the development of student well-being through the creation of smaller learning communities for 1st Years making the adjustment from the intimate atmosphere of the primary school environment. **The built environment will express the Educate Together ethos and provide a setting that enhances and supports the way students learn, teachers teach and the wider school community interacts.**

Key Questions for Reflection and Further Exploration by School Communities:

- How is the ethos of the school expressed and supported by the design?
- How does the school environment provide opportunities for fostering good interpersonal relationships – e.g. are there comfortable spaces to relax and socialise in?
- How well do the building and outdoor spaces promote an ongoing whole school commitment to environmental sustainability?
- To what extent will the design of the building and outdoor spaces facilitate the elimination of bullying?
- How will the design encourage all to be physically active and to socialise?
- How do the school grounds enable the ‘outdoor classroom’ approach?
- How can classrooms and other learning spaces be designed so they are adaptable and support a variety of classroom organisational arrangements, methodologies and the creation of smaller learning communities within a large school?
- How can the sports and recreational facilities be designed to meet the needs of all, taking account of issues such as privacy, disability and religious beliefs?
- How does the building design support the integration of ICT and new technologies into teaching and learning?
- How does the building design maximise opportunities for 21st century teaching and learning approaches (e.g. team teaching, peer tutoring, interdisciplinary curricula, multi-age groupings, co-operative learning, project-based learning, and multi-media learning)?
- How will building design take account of ‘student voice’?
- How will we want to use the building in 5 or 10 years from now?

6 Conclusion

The Educate Together model at primary level is mature and tested. Educate Together now wants the opportunity to pilot this approach at second-level. The model is based on robust legal foundations upon which has been built a philosophical approach, a management methodology and an internationally recognised ethical education curriculum. The Feasibility Study for the Opening of a Second-level School by Educate Together (Seery et al. 2008) confirmed that there is no equivalent second-level model currently operating in Ireland, and that the creation of such schools is feasible.

This blueprint is an overview of some of the key concepts involved in the Educate Together model at second-level. It is a work in progress and will develop into the future and continue to be influenced by the broad Educate Together community and by national and international research.

We understand that the approaches described in this document will require the support of many – students, parents and particularly that of pioneering teachers and educational leaders – who are excited to explore and develop this approach with us. **We look forward to working alongside many partners to support a culture of sustained professional learning across the system for the benefit of all children and young people in our schools.**

*“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”*

T.S. Eliot
Four Quartets 4: Little Gidding

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Appendix

This advisory panel was assembled to provide a sounding board of “critical friends” as Educate Together policy on second-level education develops. The aim of assembling an advisory panel is to ensure that the project proceeds in the most informed manner possible, with reference to all key stakeholders, academics and other interested parties in education, as well as with reference to current Irish and international research.

Members of the Advisory Panel to the Educate Together Second-level Project:

Denise Charlton, Chief Executive Officer, Immigrant Council of Ireland

Professor Sheelagh Drudy, Chair of Education, University College Dublin

Ruth Gallagher, Human Rights Education Officer, Amnesty International Irish Section

Dr Jim Gleeson, Senior Lecturer, Dept of Education and Professional Studies, University of Limerick

Sandra Gowran, Director of Education Policy, GLEN - Gay and Lesbian Equality Network

Annette Honan, Education Consultant

Professor Áine Hyland, Former Professor of Education and Vice-President, University College Cork and founder member of the Dalkey School Project

Professor Kathleen Lynch, Professor of Equality Studies, University College Dublin

Dr Carmel Mulcahy, Head of Education Studies, Dublin City University

Dr Aidan Seery, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin

Dr Emer Smyth, Senior Research Officer, Economic and Social Research Institute

Rose Tully, National Parents Council, Post-primary

Dr Fionnuala Waldron, Chair of Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra

Derek West, Arts Administrator for Creative Engagement [NAPD] and former Principal of Newpark Comprehensive School

Educate Together National Schools 2008-2009

Adamstown Castle Educate Together N.S.,
Station Road, Adamstown,
Co. Dublin.

Ardee Educate Together N.S.
Dundalk Road, Ardee, Co. Louth.

Aston Village Educate Together N.S.
Dunlin Street, Aston Village, Drogheda, Co. Louth.

Balbriggan Educate Together N.S.
Hamlet Lane, Moylaragh, Co. Dublin.

Belmayne Educate Together N.S.
Belmayne, Dublin 13.

Blessington Educate Together N.S.
Red Lane, Blessington, Co. Wicklow.

Bracken Educate Together N.S.
Castlelands, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin.

Bray School Project
Killarney Road,
Bray, Co. Wicklow.

Carlow Educate Together N.S.
Unit 5, Shamrock Business Park, Graiguecullen,
Carlow.

Carrigaline Educate Together N.S.
Carrigaline, Co. Cork.

Castaheany Educate Together N.S.
Ongar Village, Dublin 15.

Castleknock Educate Together N.S.
Beechpark Avenue, Castleknock, Dublin 15.

Claregalway Educate Together N.S.
Cloonbiggen Road, Claregalway,
Co. Galway.

Cork School Project
Grattan Street, Cork.

Dalkey School Project
Glenageary Lodge, Glenageary,
Co. Dublin.

Donabate/Portrane Educate Together N.S.
Ballisk Common, off Portrane Road
Donabate, Co. Dublin.

Dublin 7 Educate Together N.S.
C/o St. Joseph's, Navan Road, Dublin 7.

Ennis Educate Together N.S.
Gort Road, Ennis, Co. Clare.

Esker Educate Together N.S.
c/o Adamstown Castle ETNS, Station Road,
Adamstown, Co. Dublin.

Gaelscoil an Ghoirt Álainn
Aibhinne Murmont, Gort Álainn, Corcaigh.

Galway Educate Together N.S.
Thomas Hynes Road, Newcastle, Galway.

Glasnevin Educate
Together N.S.
Church Avenue, Glasnevin, Dublin 9.

Gorey Educate Together N.S.
Kilnahue Lane, Gorey, Co. Wexford.

Greystones Educate Together N.S.
Blacklion, Greystones, Co. Wicklow.

Griffeen Valley Educate Together N.S.
Griffeen Glen Boulevard, Lucan,
Co. Dublin.

Griffith Barracks Multi-Denominational School
The Old Guardhouse,
South Circular Road, Dublin 8

Kilcolgan Educate Together N.S.
Colgan Court, Kilcolgan,
Co. Galway.

Kilkenny School Project
Springfield, Waterford Road, Kilkenny.

Le Chéile Educate Together N.S.
Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Co. Louth.

Letterkenny Educate Together N.S.
Ballyraine Halls, Ballyraine,
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

Limerick City East Educate Together N.S.
C/o Young Munster Rugby Club
Rosbrien, Limerick.

Limerick School Project
O'Connell Avenue, Limerick.

Lucan Educate Together N.S.
Mount Bellew Way, Willsbrook
Lucan, Co. Dublin.

Lucan East Educate Together N.S.
Kishogue Cross, Off Griffeen Avenue, Lucan, Co.
Dublin.

Maynooth Educate Together N.S.
Celbridge Rd, Maynooth, Co Kildare

Midleton Educate Together N.S.
c/o Midleton Rugby Club, Towns Park, Midleton,
Co. Cork.

Monkstown Educate Together N.S.
Kill Avenue, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

Mullingar Educate Together N.S.
Rathgowan, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.

Navan Educate Together N.S.
Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath.

Newbridge Educate Together N.S.
Rosetown, Newbridge. Co. Kildare.

North Bay Educate Together N.S.
Greendale Avenue, Kilbarrack, Dublin 5.

North Dublin National School Project
Ballymun Road. Dublin 9.

North Kildare Educate Together School
Clane Road, Celbridge, Co. Kildare.

Ranelagh Multi-Denominational School
Ranelagh Rd, Dublin 6.

Rathfarnham Educate Together N.S.
Loreto Avenue, Rathfarnham
Dublin 14.

Rush and Lusk Educate Together N.S.
Rathmore Road, Lusk, Co. Dublin.

Skerries Educate Together N.S.
Kelly's Bay, Skerries, Co. Dublin.

Sligo School Project
Abbey Quarter, Sligo.

Swords Educate Together N.S.
Applewood, Swords, Co. Dublin.

Thornleigh Educate Together N.S.
Applewood Village, Swords, Co. Dublin.

Tralee Educate Together N.S.
Collis-Sandes House, Killeen Road, Oakpark, Tralee,
Co. Kerry.

Tullamore Educate Together N.S.
Collins Lane, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

Tyrrellstown Educate Together N.S.
Powerstown Road, Tyrrellstown
Dublin 15.

Waterford Educate Together N.S.
Morrison's Avenue, Tycor
Waterford City.

Wexford Educate Together N.S.
St Mary's, Summerhill, Clonard, Wexford.

Wicklow Educate Together N.S.
Marine House, The Murrough, Wicklow.