

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

The hardest thing to remember about the NCCA is the name. It's quite a mouthful. The easiest thing to remember is what we do. In summary, to use the words of one student at a recent session of Dáil na Óg, we decide the 'stuff that students have to do in school'. Officially, we advise the Minister for Education and Skills on curriculum and assessment for early childhood, primary and post-primary education. But from an NPCpp perspective, the student had it right!

NPC pp is a member of the Council itself, and of all our major committees. That's a significant commitment from NPC pp members to the Council and its work. I know that for some, attending meetings means a day off work, or a day away from home, or a day away from a business. Others around the table are usually attending the meeting as part of their work. For NPC nominees – primary and post-primary - additional commitment is needed, and appreciated.

Our big concerns at the moment include finding creative ways to support change in schools when resources are shrinking rapidly, supporting student literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and ensuring that when students are at school they are challenged, engaged, learning and making progress.

We have prioritised working with parents over the last number of years, most recently in funding the ESRI research into parental involvement in schools published as *Behind the Scenes: A Study of Parental Involvement in Post-Primary Education* and available for download on www.esri.ie.

Our own website www.ncca.ie has valuable information for parents on everything from the new maths

reforms Project Maths, to handy information notes on all the subjects in Junior Cycle to help you in helping your children make good choices.

As well as our committees and research work, we also work with networks of schools, and have found them particularly useful in consulting with local groups of parents on developments in curriculum and assessment, most recently, on plans for an overhaul of the curriculum in the first three years of post-primary education, and the examination at the end of it – the Junior Certificate. Keep an eye and ear to the website and the media as the proposals for change are finalised.

Any parent can participate in any consultation – all you need is internet access. Watch out for Physical Education for Leaving Certificate coming on May 2nd! This proposed syllabus would certainly shake things up in the examination. You will be able to take a look at the draft syllabus, the activities included and video material of students assessing their own performance and skill levels. It's a long way from a three hour written examination.

Finally, if you can't find what you need on the website, or have a particular query, you can contact us by phone on 01 6617177, or on e-mail at info@ncca.ie and one of the NCCA team will always be glad to help.

**Article by Dr. Anne Looney
CEO of the NCCA**

Changes in Tax Relief on Third Level Fees - 2011/12 Academic Year

A new student contribution of €2,000 will be introduced in higher education with effect from the 2011/2012 academic year. This

To **all** Parents of Pupils attending Post Primary Schools
You are invited to attend the
National Parents Council Post Primary Annual Conference 2011
14th – 15th October,
Sheraton Hotel, Athlone,
Co Westmeath
Contact Sandra Boylan @
01 8302740 or
sandraboylan@npcpp.ie

apply to all students who currently benefit under the 'free fees' scheme. The contribution will be paid by the Exchequer in respect of students who qualify under the third level grant schemes. These students, who account for some 43% of all undergraduates, will not be impacted by these changes.

The Government was particularly conscious of the financial pressures that this contribution may place on families where family income is marginally in excess of current eligibility levels for maintenance grant support and on families with more than one sibling in higher education at the same time. In this regard, it was indicated that the current higher education grant schemes threshold will be increased to provide for an additional eligibility category of support qualifying for '50% student contribution'. It was also indicated that it was intended to make arrangements to provide that second and subsequent siblings from a single family would not have to bear the full increased cost of the new €2,000 contribution and that further details of these

arrangements would be brought forward.

The Finance Act 2011 now provides for certain changes in relation to tax relief for qualifying fees at 3rd level, which will give an effective cost reduction in respect of second and subsequent siblings from a single family who are liable for the new student contribution. While the current Student Services Charge in higher education does not qualify for tax relief, the new contribution will be allowable for tax relief but the Finance Act 2011 provides that, with effect from the 2011 academic year, the first €2,000 in qualifying fees per claim will be ineligible for tax relief for students in full-time education. For students in part-time education, the first €1,000 in qualifying fees will be ineligible.

Families with two or more children liable for the new student contribution will therefore now qualify for tax relief in respect of payments arising from second and subsequent sibling liability. This will result in a reduction in the overall effective cost of the contribution in these cases. Based on current rates of relief, the effective cost of the student contribution, net of tax relief, for second and subsequent siblings will be €1,600 each. These arrangements provide a practical means of giving effect to the commitment made that the full increased cost of the new contribution would be alleviated for second and subsequent siblings within a single family.

As a compensating measure, it is also intended to increase the upper threshold for tax relief on qualifying fees per course from the current €5,000 ceiling to €7,000.

Further details on the tax relief will be available from the Revenue Commissioners in due course. and/or you can visit our website

www.revenue.ie or you can contact your Regional PAYE LoCall Service

This article does not attempt to cover every issue which may arise in relation to the subject. It does not purport to be a legal interpretation of the statutory provisions and consequently, responsibility cannot be accepted for any liability incurred or loss suffered as a result of relying on any matter published herein.



Tomás Ó Séaghdha

New NPCpp Research and Development Manager

Mr. Tomás Ó Séaghdha has been appointed as Research and Development Manager of NPCpp on a part-time basis and is based at head office.

Tomás brings many years of experience in education management to the position and he has served on many National and International committees.

Some of his experiences include:

- Principal / Secretary, Board of Management, Holy Family Community School
- Executive Director, Des Places Educational Association [Spiritan Trust Board]
- Treasurer, Association of Principals and Deputy Principals, Community and Comprehensive Schools [APVC]
- President, Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools [ACCS]

- President, European Secondary Heads Association - Ireland [ESHA - IRL]
- Tomás has experience of working in all three sectors at second level, Community and Comprehensive, Secondary and Vocational.

All within the NPCpp family welcome Tomás and look forward to working with him.

National Council for Special Education

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities with particular emphasis on children. The Council was first established as an independent statutory body by order of the Minister for Education and Science in December 2003.

The NCSE local service is delivered through a national network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) who interact with parents and schools and liaise with the HSE in providing resources to support children with special educational needs. In sanctioning resources for schools, NCSE operates within Department of Education and Skills policy parameters.

The establishment and development of appropriate educational services for children with special educational needs in line with the aims of Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004 is a major challenge for the entire Irish education system. Through our network of local staff, NCSE works with parents, schools and other agencies to help ensure the provision of appropriate educational services by schools for children with special educational needs. Since first establishment, NCSE has concentrated on developing an organisation which provides a timely and efficient service to schools in sanctioning teaching and Special Needs Assistant (SNA) resources to support children with special educational needs. The total annual

value of teaching and SNA resources sanctioned by NCSE is in the region of €800m.

A key aim of the Council is to progressively improve the co-ordination between the education and health sectors in providing the supports for children with special educational needs. We are doing this through participation in the Education/Health Cross Sectoral Group which includes representation from the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Health and Children and the HSE at national level and through interaction with the HSE and their service providers at local level.

In line with its statutory remit, NCSE has a substantial research programme in the area of special education under way and has published several reports on our website. This research assists in the development of policy advice and best practice information on the education of children with special educational needs.

NCSE is also engaged in the development of a policy advice programme which most recently focused on the future role of special schools and classes. NCSE is also in the process of formulating policy advice on the education of deaf/hard of hearing pupils

Further detail of the work of the NCSE and on how to contact the SENO for your area is published on our website www.ncse.ie.

**Article by Mr. Ray Jordan P.O.,
Head of Corporate Services NCSE**



**Ms. Sandra Boylan,
Administrative Officer NPCpp.**



L-R: Mr. Tommy Walshe President NPCpp, Mr. Aidan Farrell C.E.O. State Examination Commission and Mr. Ciarán Flynn Gen. Sec. ACCS at the PACCS Conference 2011 in Galway last March

New Educational Imprint

Ireland's new educational publishing imprint, Educate.ie, was established last year in Co. Kerry, and it claims to have saved parents and schools over €1m in its first year of operation.

The imprint, which styles itself as 'the low-cost schoolbook publisher', is the brainchild of business duo Tony and Patricia Walsh, and launched its publishing programme last summer with a series of more than 50 books of past-examination papers.

The publishers base their claim on their sales of past exam papers, which sell for €2.50 – an average €5 less than the price of similar books from other publishers. The books are currently used in 430 second-level schools around Ireland.

The Kerry-based company is now launching its first textbooks for second-level, and these are priced at €12.

The large-format, illustrated textbooks cover major subjects including English (In Transition: An Anthology of Texts and Tasks for Transition Year English and The Comparative Study: A Structured Approach), Communications (Better Communications Skills), Geography (Model Answers for Leaving Certificate) and Biology (Biology for Leaving Certificate).

Educate.ie has commissioned a full list of ten second-level and 18 primary level textbooks for

publication in 2012. These focus on the major subjects for second-level students and the basic skills of reading and writing for schoolchildren.

The company states that it employs experienced educationalists to source new books and that all of their publications are printed and produced in Ireland.

*Education's purpose is to
replace an empty mind
with an open one.*

~Malcolm S. Forbes

1919 – 1990

New National Children's Strategy (2012-2017)

Work has commenced in the Department of Children on the development of a new National Children's Strategy. A national consultation process took place with children and young people between 04/04/11 and 08/04/11.

The Minister for Children, Ms. Frances Fitzgerald, T.D., decided on this process to find out the issues of real importance to children and young people all over the country in order to inform the strategy. The national consultation gave them the opportunity to have their voices heard in relation to matters that directly affect their lives.

Children and young people were invited to complete questionnaires in all schools and Youthreach Centres throughout the country. The questions were designed in consultation with children and young people themselves and asked about what's good, what's not good and what they would change about being a child or young person in Ireland today.

All data collected is being analysed by a consultation team at Trinity College, Dublin and will be fed into the development of the new National Children's Strategy. A report of the children's consultation

process will be published online later this year.

This exciting project represents the Government's commitment to the goals of the current National Children's Strategy (2000-2010) and to the continued implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

NPCpp welcomed this initiative as it ensured that children and young people in Ireland have their voices heard on issues of importance to them.

NPCpp looks forward to the publication of the new National Children's Strategy later this year.



The Minister for Children, Ms. Frances Fitzgerald, T.D. and Student's from Moate Community School, Co Westmeath at the launch of a new National Children's Strategy.

FEDCBS

Federation of Parent Councils in Christian Bros. & other Catholic Secondary Schools

Executive 2011/2012

President: Mr. Declan Hogan

Secretary: Mr. Michael Mulry

Treasurer: Mr. Gerard O'Hara

COMPASS

Co-operation of Minority Religion & Protestant Parents Association

Executive 2011-2012

President: Mr. Roy Gallie

Vice-President: Mr. Richard Brickenden

Secretary: Ms. Patricia O'Malley

Ast. Secretary: Ms. Joyce Ryder

Treasurer: Mr. Alan Mulligan

P.R.O : Ms. Eleanor Petrie

Ms. Aveen Moran,

Mr. Nicky Brooks

Ms. Birgit Schmidt

Mr. Peter Johnston

Ms. Bronwen Braun Lynch



Mr. Barney Callaghan, Gaisce - The President's Award Addressing FEDCBS Conference 2011 in Portlaoise last April

PACCS

Parents Associations of Community & Comprehensive Schools Executive 2011/2012

President: Ms. Marie Buckley

Vice President: Ms. Julie Kilroy

Hon. Sec.: Ms. Connie Carolan

Treasurer: Ms. Marion Gilligan

P.R.O.: Ms. Margaret Molloy

Ast. PRO: Mr. Roland Haussmann



Ms. Claire Hughes (Pobalscoil Rosmini, Dublin) and Ms. Catherine Riordan (East Glendalough C.S. & PACCS Executive) at the PACCS

Conference 2011 in Galway last March

NPAVSCC

National Parents' Association for Vocational Schools and Community Colleges

Executive 2011/2012

President: Mr. Jackie O'Callaghan

Vice- President: Mr. John Gibbons

Secretary: Ms. Pauline O'Brien

Ast. Secretary: Mr. Ger Cleary

P.R.O.: Ms. Una O'Donnell

Treasurer: Mr. Ken Maguire

Ast. Treasurer: Mr. Joe Kennedy

NCSPA

National Congress of Catholic Schools Parent Associations

Executive 2011/2012

President: Mr. David Hegarty

Secretary: Mr. Tom Lillis

Treasurer: Mr. Paul Beddy

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