



Supporting Parents Supporting Children



What we have been doing



National Parents Council Primary (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in primary and early education. NPC was established in 1985, under the programme for Government, as the representative organisation for parents of children attending primary school. It received statutory recognition in the Education Act 1998.

National Parents Council Primary was established to contribute to the advancement of the early and primary education of all children, in order to improve and enrich the education of each child and to support the involvement of parents in all stages of education.

NPC has three main activities:

1 SERVICE DELIVERY

NPC services are aimed at empowering parents so that they can support their children in all aspects of education.

Helpline

The NPC Helpline is a national confidential service for parents. The Helpline staff listen and give information and support to parents to help them make the best possible decisions for and with their children.

Training and Development

The NPC Training and Development programme is a national programme of training, development and support for parents. The purpose is to empower parents to play an active part in their child's education at every level.

Website

The NPC's website www.npc.ie aims to provide parents with information regarding primary education. The site also allows parents an opportunity to give NPC their views regarding primary education issues.

2 ADVOCATING FOR AND REPRESENTING PARENTS

NPC consults with parents and brings parents views to bear on education policy.

3 FACILITATING AND SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

NPC facilitates and supports parents to develop associations in their schools and supports the organisation of county level and local area level support networks for parents.

NPC has staff based in its Dublin office and volunteers in its County Branches in Cavan, Clare, Cork East, Cork West, Dublin North, Dublin North West, Dublin South, Dublin South West, Kildare, Laois, Limerick, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Sligo, Tipperary and Wexford.



Background to the Strategic Plan

Over the last number of decades there has been a wealth of research which shows the difference parental involvement can make in the educational outcomes for children. As the National Parents Council for parents of children in primary school this research is of vital importance to us in charting our way forward over the next 5 years. It is always important, but even more so at a time of constrained budgets, that NPC prioritise the activities research tells us will make the biggest difference for children.

The European Commission in its report on the quality of school education in May 2000 stated that:

“..[It] holds that the degree of parental participation is a significant indicator of the quality of schooling.”

Research studies have also supported the value of parental involvement in children's educational attainment;

“When parents are enabled to become effective partners in their child's education, performance in schools where children are failing improves dramatically.”

(Best Practice Briefs' June 2004, Michigan State University)

“The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to:

- Create a home environment that encourages learning;
- Communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for children's achievement and future careers;
- Become involved in children's education at school and in the community”

(Best Practice Briefs' June 2004, Michigan State University)

NPC's Strategic Plan represents our commitment and determination to strengthen parental involvement in children's education to ensure that children have the best possible opportunities for their success in life.

Developing the Strategic Plan

NPC's strategic plan has been developed with the knowledge that its successful implementation will rely heavily on the ownership that our members and key supporters have of the goals and aspirations contained within it. With this in mind, NPC undertook an extensive consultation exercise during the process of developing the key themes of this strategy.

The process for the strategic plan consultation and the subsequent development of the draft strategic plan was carried out by the Strategic Plan Development Team which consisted of NPC Board and staff members.

During the consultation phase NPC sought input from, members, non-members, strategic stakeholders, children, the general public and the NPC staff and Board. In total over 580 people's voices and opinions were heard and have contributed to developing a strategy that will drive all NPC activities over the next five years.

Finally the Board considered and approved the NPC strategic plan on the 7th of September 2012.





The Plan

OUR VISION

NPC want to see an Ireland where **every** child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

OUR MISSION

NPC exists to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's education. NPC will work to increase the capacity and capability of the primary education sector, to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all children.

VALUES

NPC knows that when parents and schools work together, children do better. Therefore NPC believes that:

1. Parents must be actively engaged in the education of their children.
2. Parent involvement in children's education must be supported by the attitudes, beliefs and practices of all members of the school and broader education community.
3. Parents should be viewed as partners in facilitating children's learning and should be supported in this role by the school and broader education community.
4. Parents should be viewed as full partners in the decisions that affect their children and their family.
5. Parents should be welcome in the school, and their support and assistance should be sought as a valuable resource to support children's education in the school.
6. All communication and dialogue with parents must be regular, open, two-way and meaningful.



Our key activities

- 1 Representing the parents' voice in primary education
- 2 Advocacy
- 3 Building participation
- 4 Service delivery

1 REPRESENTING THE PARENTS' VOICE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Over the next 5 years NPC will continue to represent the voice of parents through its representation on external bodies and other mediums. It will continue to develop policy by consulting with parents through the NPC Assembly, NPC special interest groups, the NPC membership and the broader parent population. It will increase its capacity to consult with and represent parents' voices through better and increased use of information technologies and will develop the NPC website as its main communication hub.

2 ADVOCACY

Over the next 5 years NPC will focus its advocacy and campaigning activities on the objectives of this strategy; parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community.

3 BUILDING PARTICIPATION

Over the next 5 years NPC will focus its efforts on building the participation of parents and children within the activities and work of NPC.

4 SERVICE DELIVERY

NPC Helpline: Over the next 5 years NPC will continue to run its national confidential Helpline supporting parents and parental involvement. NPC will increase its call answering rate over the next 5 years ensuring that more callers get through first time when calling. The Helpline will also develop new evaluation mechanisms to ensure that it builds on its high standard of service delivery.

Training and Development: Over the next 5 years NPC will continue to provide a national Training and Development programme to parents and schools. It will expand its training programmes and develop new evaluation mechanisms to ensure that it builds on its high standard of service delivery.



Our objectives

NPC has developed six strategic objectives to guide it over the lifetime of this strategy. These objectives have been developed using Joyce Epstein's framework for Parental involvement (2009)¹.

1 PARENTING

NPC will support all families in establishing home environments to support children as learners by:

- Providing supports to both Parents' Association and individual parents through training support, the provision of a Helpline service and on-line services.
- Developing and sourcing funding for the provision of an anti-bullying training for parents.
- Providing information and support to parents of children up until the end of the primary school years to assist them in parenting their child through their child's early and primary education/learning.

2 COMMUNICATING

NPC will develop effective two-way communications to ensure NPC is delivering quality information to its stakeholders and is able to hear the voice of its stakeholders in matters that affect them by:

- Developing a new, dynamic and innovative website that will provide a sophisticated method for communicating with parents. NPC's website will become its communication hub for all stakeholders.
- A commitment to hearing children's voices on issues relating to their experiences and hopes regarding primary education. NPC will develop an internal structure for consulting children on matters that affect them regarding their education.

- Hosting an annual conference for parents and others who are interested in assisting parents in their vital role in supporting their children's education. The conference will provide information and support to parents so that they can provide the best environment for their children to achieve their best outcomes in their educational lives.
- Working with the broadcast, print and on-line media to promote the parents' voice in education and to support parents in their role.

3 VOLUNTEERING

NPC will provide added value to the Vision and work of the NPC through an ethos of volunteerism within NPC by:

- Utilising volunteer efforts within NPC to achieve its Mission, Vision and Objectives, and recognising the added value that volunteers bring to the organisation, though their commitment and values.
- Providing services through a combination of professional staff and highly trained volunteers.
- Developing and delivering a volunteer training programme to support the NPC County Branch structures.
- Developing a volunteer handbook to support volunteers in their vital role within NPC
- Restructuring the County Branch function to ensure that County Branches can become more effective in supporting the delivery of NPC's strategic aims and spend less time on administration and bureaucracy.

1. Joyce Epstein's Framework for parental involvement (Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., et. al., Partnership Center for the Social Organization of Schools) has also informed NPC's parental involvement policy in "Education for Tomorrow The Parents Vision".

4 LEARNING AT HOME

NPC will provide information and support to parents at home and in schools so that they may be better able to provide for the best possible outcomes for their children's educational lives by:

- Developing a parenting programme for parents of children of Primary school age that will help them support their child through their education and in particular examine the importance of supporting children's learning at home.
- Ensuring NPC service provision is designed to support school Parents' Associations and individual parents.
- Providing on-line supports and activities for families in the area of learning at home.
- Providing on-line information and support services for families, to assist them in setting children's learning goals.
- Establish the "NPC Fred O'Connell" annual school award to recognise schools and/or school Parents' Associations who are showing leadership and innovation in supporting parental involvement in children's learning.

5 DECISION MAKING

NPC will contribute to strengthening parents' role in decision making at a home, school and national level by:

- Conducting research to further the knowledge in Ireland regarding the impact of parents' involvement in their children's educational lives.
- Seeking to strengthen the legislation in Ireland to further concretise parental involvement in children's learning beyond the structural boundaries of Parents' Associations and Boards of Management.
- Developing new models of Parents' Associations to accommodate the differing needs of parent bodies in different schools, to enhance the vital role of PA's in supporting and representing parents in schools.
- Continuing to strengthen the voice of parents on issues affecting parents and children in primary education through the continued work of the NPC Assembly.

6 COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY

NPC cannot achieve its vision alone. NPC is therefore committed to working in partnership with others who share the same vision and objectives by:

- Seeking strategic partnerships whenever appropriate and where there will be clear added value in the delivery of NPC's strategic plan.
- Ensuring that working with partners always aspires to seeking solutions and supports creative thinking with the objective of better outcomes for all children.

Increasing NPC's effectiveness



NPC is committed to delivering on the six objectives of its strategic plan over the next five years. To be able to deliver on these objectives, it is important that NPC continues to increase its effectiveness as an organisation. It will do this by developing in the following areas:

GOVERNANCE

- NPC will adopt the Governance Code and will commence the accreditation process for PQASSO from the Charities Evaluation Services.
- NPC will conduct an initial and on-going Risk Management process relevant to its Strategic Plan 2013–2017.
- NPC is committed to training and developing its Board, staff and volunteers to support the delivery of the Strategic Plan.

MEMBERSHIP

- NPC will continue to grow its membership over the lifetime of the Strategic plan.
- NPC will provide services and supports to members in-line with the Strategic Plan.
- NPC will conduct annual members' surveys for general feedback on NPC's activities and work.

RESOURCES

- NPC will continue to work with its current funders and ensure that it continues to provide quality services that represent excellent value for money.
- NPC will seek strategic funding partners that share the values and vision of the organisation.
- NPC will employ a co-ordinator for the volunteer activities within the organisation. Their role initially will be to recruit, co-ordinate and support volunteers in their work in the NPC County Branches. In the longer term the co-ordinator will examine other areas within NPC where volunteers may support the work of the organisation.



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