NAPD Submission to Anti-bullying Committee

Tim Geraghty (Past President)

I refer to the NAPD presentation at the Anti-Bullying forum which examines the principal’s responsibilities in creating a school culture of respect, tolerance and acceptance in which young people can explore their developing awareness, grow in maturity emotionally and spiritually and learn in a safe, secure and nurturing environment.

The presentation drew attention to the progressive stand which NAPD has already taken in relation to homophobic bullying and its support for the work of BeLong To and Glen. It went on to highlight critical considerations in addressing bullying in schools and recognised the work already being done, the personal development programmes currently running and the support of the DES and other agencies under the following headings.

MORAL PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

SCHOOLS ARE ACTIVE IN TACKLING BULLYING

STRAIN ON SCHOOL SYSTEMS

BULLYING VICTIM

EVALUATION and SELF EVALUATION IN SCHOOLS

CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOLS

SYMPOSIA - THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

A PRINCIPAL’S PERSPECTIVE

NAPD has reviewed the presentations by the other forum participants and would look to see the following issues highlighted:

- The importance of a whole school approach
- Encouragement of the use of class materials developed by BeLongTo and Glen in raising awareness and tackling homophobic bullying
- Training for teachers in delivering personal development programmes particularly around sensitive areas
- The appropriate linking of anti bullying strategies to whole school approaches to Mental Health and Mental well being
- The recognition of the specific role and skills of the Guidance Counsellor in addressing bullying issues when they arise.
- Inclusion of self evaluation instruments around issues relating to students’ well being and sense of security in school in the schools self evaluation programme. These to be given to students and parents.
• Use of restorative practices in repairing fractured relationships between bully and victim where practicable.

• A separate and exhaustive investigation into the abuse of social media, its destructive power for bullying and the impact on young people’s mental health of the perpetual availability of social media. This may require a cross disciplinary group to include educators, IT specialists, legislation and legal experts, psychologists, social scientists, gardai etc and any other discipline which can inform our understanding and help to generate new approaches to raising awareness and safeguarding the vulnerable in a cyber world that can be hidden from parents, teachers and all others who are concerned with the welfare of young people.