Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools

Consultation with Primary and Post Primary Principals’ Organisations

Wednesday 30 March 2011 – 9am

Attendees

Harold Hislop    DES, Chair
Alan Wall        DES
Eamonn Murtagh   DES
Phil O’Flaherty  DES
Anne O’Mahony    DES
Clive Byrne      NAPD
Pat Goff         IPPN
Gerry Murphy     IPPN

Key points made to the Department in addition to those in the written submissions:

- Principals have been keen participants in the debate on literacy and numeracy: the topic has proved very popular at recent conferences. Fortunate that the debate on literacy and numeracy has come at a time when curricular and other changes are occurring.

- The role of the principal is vital and needs to be further developed in the document. This should bear in mind that at primary level, 60% of the principals now in post were not principals ten years ago. IPPN and NAPD can make a significant contribution to delivering training and CPD for principals as was acknowledged in the Draft Plan.

- Principals’ primary role should be instructional leadership. From a leadership perspective the voice and role of principals is very important in maintaining or improving standards.

- The role of deputy principals as leaders needs to be acknowledged.

- Croke Park presents an opportunity for staff to come together to develop the literacy and numeracy plan. We need to drive change at local level.

- Lack of a database and information on students is a difficulty. There should be a mechanism to track pupils: a proper primary pupil database with proper linkages to the post-primary sector. The transfer of appropriate information on the child’s progress between primary and post-primary schools must be addressed.

- The Teaching Council has an enormous role in setting the tone re professionalism of teachers and IPPN and NAPD believe that their views should be represented at that forum. Welcome for the proposals re teacher education generally.
- Organisations have some concerns regarding the proposal that it would be necessary to have a school leadership/management qualification to be eligible to apply for principalship; suggest that it be a requirement that such a qualification be acquired within two years of appointment.

- Provided schools had the necessary flexibility they would consider removing teachers from the classroom to lead literacy and numeracy in schools or in clusters of schools.

- Welcome for the proposals regarding school self-evaluation.

- The document lacked a sense of the importance of “the joy of reading” and how this should be cultivated.

- Some principals are critical of the “down-playing” of the arts suggested in the document.

- Need for urgent amendment of the junior cycle curriculum and examination.

- Assessment proposals are acceptable, but opposed to league tables of schools.

- Suggested community-based workshops for parents could play a major role in equipping parents with the necessary skills to support their children’s learning.