Submission to Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools

The Parents’ Associations of Community and Comprehensive Schools (PACCS) welcomes the recognition in the Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools, of the vital role which parents play in the education of their children. We believe that parents should be seen as a resource which, if supported and empowered, could be used to the benefit of the entire community.

Research has shown that “the single most important factor in a child’s achievement is parental input” [1]. However, as seen in a recent ESRI report [2], one in four parents of Irish secondary school students feels unwelcome in their children’s school. One in six finds their children’s teachers unapproachable. This is a situation which must be urgently addressed if we are to see improvement.

If all partners were willing and encouraged to operate in a mutually supportive and enabling way to create a culture of learning within the school community, this would surely have a beneficial effect for all. We see here an opportunity, not only to improve the literacy and numeracy of our children, but also of parents who struggle with these issues. By including adult learning in the National Plan, perhaps we can counteract the stigma associated with poor literacy and numeracy skills and foster a culture of life-long learning as a nation.

We fully support the measures outlined in section 7 of the Draft Plan, Enabling Parents and Communities to Support Children’s Literacy and Numeracy Development, and would like to make ourselves available to work with the Department of Education and Skills in their further development and implementation.

1. Must Try Harder: Evaluating the Role of Effort in Educational Attainment
   http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/REST_a_00013
2. Behind the Scenes? A Study of Parental Involvement in Post-Primary Education
   http://www.esri.ie/publications/search_for_a_publication/search_results/view/index.xml?id=3141

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