

Mayo Education Centre

The School Inclusion Project

Second Partners Meeting

Nottingham, 9th – 10th June 2008



Mayo Education Centre
IONAD OIDEACHAIS MHAIGH EO

Main National Trends

Annual Schools Survey 2004

82% of school leavers attained the Leaving Certificate.

The trend in educational attainment shows little change in previous & subsequent years. In the same year 15% of students left school with the Junior Certificate as their last official second level examination.

- 85% of females left with the Leaving Certificate
- 79 % of males left with Leaving Certificate
- Male students more likely to leave school early than their female counterparts

Early school leavers

- 53% of male
- 47% female
- An estimated 1,000 children do not transfer from primary to secondary school annually
- 4% leave without taking any exam
- 15% leave after Junior Cert

Main Reasons & Causes for Leaving Education

National bodies in charge of the prevention of the problem:

The Department of Education and Science

- Progression from primary to second level schools
- A familial history of early school leaving
- Family circumstances
- Poverty
- Early school leaving and socio-economic background
- Rural living
- Teenage pregnancy
- Work
- Stress, anxiety & discomfort with school
- Traveller culture & education

National Policies Implemented To Combat Early School Leaving

A number of policy initiatives provided & funded by The Department of Education and Science to enhance school attendance & reduce early school leaving

- Disadvantaged Areas Scheme
- The School Completion Programme
- Home-School-Community Liaison Scheme
- Support Teachers Project
- Special Needs
- The Learning Support Teacher Scheme
- Educational Psychological Services
- Book Grant Scheme
- School Meals Programme
- Education of Non-nationals
- Youthreach

Traveller Education

- Traveller Specific Measures in Post-Primary Education
- For each Traveller child enrolled in a post-primary school capitation grant provided
- €427 for each Traveller child in addition to the €286 standard capitation grant.
- Extra hours allocated to schools on the basis of the number of Travellers enrolled
- Specific educational support and pastoral care for Travellers attending post-primary school.

Junior Education Centres for Travellers (3)

- 80 students aged 12 – 15 years

Senior Traveller Training Centres (33)

- Centres provide a programme of integrated general education, vocational training, work experience and guidance/counselling/psychological services
- 769 Travellers annually in the 15+ age group
- Out-of school setting, & feature integrated personal development, literacy, numeracy, ICT & communications & a range of vocational options and work experience

Conclusions & Recommendations

- One dedicated national body or organisation to draw together all the strands dealing with inclusion & thus create a concentrated & concerted effort with a dedicated team to focus all energies on tackling the issue
- Funding
- Funding available to finance initiatives and programmes to prevent early school leaving e.g. DEIS - delivering equality of opportunity in schools
- Lobby for adequate funding to incorporate the best preventative measures
- Implement preventative programmes, e.g. School Completion Programme, in more schools

Traveller & Intercultural Education

- Teachers professionally & personally aware of inclusion issues the overall approach to early school leaving. Process & Package developed & delivered to teachers to further this aim
- All teachers more aware & sensitive to the cultural & traditional values within the Traveller community
- Expansion of the Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers
- Ireland is currently dealing with a large influx of foreign national students
- Learn from the mistakes of the European experience & to build on the positive experiences and concepts of the educational systems in those areas.

Inservice Training

- In-service training for teachers & principals that encourages direct engagement with inclusion in all its guises
- In-service training specifically targeting early school leaving – its causes, responses to individual students & preventative strategies
- In-service to include strategies of responding to poor behaviour & non-engagement in the classroom

Teacher Pupil Relationship

- Decrease the pupil: teacher ratio
- Establishing a positive atmosphere in the school to build student
- Reaffirm & praise every effort by all students engagement
- Ensure that all students feel safe & secure in their school environment by creating a comfortable class environment
- Ensure certification of achievements for all students e.g. Annual Awards night
- Ensure flexibility in curriculum & assessment

Services

- Develop specific policies to be incorporated into all second level schools
- Increased availability of psychological services to address the needs of a growing number of young people
- Encourage students to attend homework & organised activities

Partnership

- Partnership between schools & the non-formal sector e.g. community groups/business organisations
- Establish links with local, regional & national agencies e.g. National Educational Psychological Services, Neighbourhood Youth Project, Health services, visiting Traveller Scheme
- Enhance co-operation between primary & second level schools
- Implement a partnership Programme in schools whereby parents, students & teachers all meet twice a year to monitor the progress of the student
- Establish a Care Team in schools that meets weekly & comprises of the Deputy Principal, Counsellor, Home School community Liaison officer, School Retention Officer & Year Head

Parent/Guardian Involvement

- Parent(s)/guardian attend preparatory meeting to prepare students for the transition from primary to secondary schools, & participate in activities organised through school initiatives e.g. computer classes, parenting classes etc
- Parent/guardian establish contact with the child's year head
- Attend regular student/parent/teacher meetings
- Attend talks for parents on drug abuse, alcohol abuse, healthy lifestyles
- Be prepared to get involved in the Parent's Council or Board of Management
- Inform school personnel of any circumstances in the child's life which may influence their progress &/or behaviour in school e.g. bereavement, family separation, illness...

Curriculum

- Use varying teaching methodologies to address the needs of all students in the class
- Providing students with access to subjects with a more practical orientation
- Be mindful of children with special needs by being sensitive in setting appropriate targets for them
- Be flexible with timetable of students at risk of leaving school e.g. awareness of poor attention span for particular subjects
- Aim to create an integrated & holistic variety of activities including academic, sporting & creative activities
- They should familiarise themselves with all the facilities & activities available in the school e.g. Breakfast club, homework, mentoring programme, counselling and guidance services...
- Ensure that an anti-bullying policy is in place in the school & that all teachers are familiar with it & competent in implementing it

Quotations

“... I would like to be a nurse but I don't know if I will finish my exams”

“I have some friends in school... but not too many”

“It would be great if teachers were more aware of students and what to do...”

“We try to meet any problem they have ... & there is no book to cover every problem. First thing you do is that you don't *not* do anything, you have to meet it early...”

“It wasn't helping me, there were too many in a class & I wasn't getting the help I needed. I was slow at learning & in here they can take me individually & teach me better.”

“The great thing about the project is that so many services work together to support the students & each other”

“The Breakfast Club is a great way of bringing children together & also ensuring they are fed while listening to teachers”



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