

## 2013 – 2014 – at a Glance



President – Brendan McCabe

### ***Priorities for Principal Teachers and Principals' Health and Wellbeing - key highlights***

Starting into year one of a two year Presidency I felt I was on a very steep learning curve. Thankfully my predecessor, Gerry Murphy, had briefed me well and had kept me very much in the loop during the two years of my Deputy Presidency. One of the first functions I attended was a press conference of the Children's Alliance, calling for government spending to prioritise the needs of children, both educationally and socially. This reminded me very early on that children and their welfare are ultimately at the heart of what IPPN is about. Our Principals Briefing Day in Citywest in September gave me an early opportunity to speak with many principals and hear their concerns as they faced into a new school year.

I could go through the diary, week by week, and tell you about all of the functions, meetings and events I attended but, instead, let me give you a flavour of my year and the things which in hindsight seemed important.

At a meeting with the Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Ruairi Quinn, we discussed the ongoing problem of principals' administrative work overload. He requested us to draw up a document outlining where duplication was taking place regarding information being sought from schools by different agencies, including different sections of the DES. This we did in great detail and that document on administration burden was sent to the DES after Christmas.

To assist our members to prioritise the vast array of tasks that arise within their own school context, we published, with the support of DES, CPSMA, and NPC, *Priorities for Principals Teachers – In Clear Focus*. This document has received very positive feedback from those who have used it.

Our Annual Conference is the highlight of the IPPN year. This year it was attended by over 1000 principals from every corner of Ireland. In tandem with Conference, we ran an Education Think Tank, chaired by Claire Byrne of RTÉ and attended by 35 business leaders and education academics. This was an effort on our part to provide a "connect" between the worlds of education and business and to provide deeper understanding between both.

For some time we have been concerned with the effects of stress created by work overload on principals' health. To address and attempt to quantify this we engaged Dr. Philip Riley, an Australian educationalist with a specialism in this area, to conduct a Health and Wellbeing Survey.

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Besides allowing participants to track their own health over a five-year period, the annual reports from this survey will inform us on the general wellbeing of our members and highlight any areas of concern to which we should be alerting our employers.

As part of our duty to promote and support the concerns of our members we this year made submissions to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education & Social Protection on *Priority Issues for Leadership in Schools* and also made a pre-Budget submission to the Department of Finance. We also of course attended many meetings of education agencies. In addition we put out 16 press releases throughout the year, giving principals' perspective on various matters of educational interest.

By way of professional support to our members we continued to build on our Principal Advice service and we are currently undertaking a major revamp of our website so as to make it the ultimate one-stop-shop for advice and support. We also added to it Resource Bundles on School Self-Evaluation, Child Custody and Access and School Improvement Planning. We will shortly be adding a Resource Bundles on Teacher Absences and Supervision.

During my Presidential Address at Conference I stated that "investing CPD funding in quality leadership training will ensure that the DES gets maximum bang for its buck". I am happy to report that three of our members are presently part of a DES working group planning a programme of coaching and mentoring for principals, and especially those

recently appointed. This group is due to report in September.

So as to create maximum openness and transparency in the way IPPN conducts its affairs we have drawn up a new Governance Code which is completely in line with the Charities Act requirements. This has necessitated amending our Constitution and Articles of Association. See Leadership+ Issue 82 article by Caroline O'Dea for more information.

Looking back on the year, the greatest pleasures for me have been twofold. Firstly I have had the pleasure of working with a team of good-humoured, truly talented and dedicated people whose commitment to serving the needs of principals is total and, secondly, I've had the pleasure of visiting and being welcomed into many schools where I have seen at first hand the wonderful work that is being done by principals in leading their school communities. There are many people who are cynical about the work of teachers and principals. If they had seen what I saw this year that cynicism would quickly evaporate. To represent people like you is for me a real honour and I look forward to continue doing so over the coming year.

*Brendan McCabe, September 2014*

## 2014 – 2015 – *at a Glance*

**President: Brendan McCabe**

### **Key milestones, challenges, projects**

- Surveys of Principals and Deputy Principals highlight issues regarding
  - Principals and Deputy Principals' health and wellbeing
  - Child mental health
  - Shortages of substitute teachers
  - Priorities for Education Budget 2016
  - School Finances
  - ICT/Broadband
  - Parent Associations
  - Principal's Role – ISM
  - Curriculum – literacy and numeracy.
- Development of IPPN promotional video clip
- Decimation of ISM posts a key concern
- IPPN President visits several schools in Mayo and Donegal – highlighting the significant challenges of leading smaller schools in sometimes remote areas
- Development of Absences & Leave, Communication, SSE Roadmap and Parental Separation Resource Bundles
- As part of the Principal Advice service, the Leadership Support Programme was expanded to support those principals who may be experiencing extreme difficulty and stress in their role. The service is provided by a group of trained retired principals
- Priorities for Principal Teachers – In Clear Focus - research publication circulated and CPD developed to support it
- Teaching Principals Summer Course expanded

- Various governance-related projects undertaken, particularly in relation to compliance with the Charities Act.

### **Continuous Professional Development**

#### **Principals' Conference 2015**

**Theme:** Daring to Lead

**Facilitator:** Olivia O'Leary

**Venue:** Citywest, Dublin

**Speakers:** Bishop Paul Colton, Dr Philip Riley, Minister for Education & Skills Jan O'Sullivan TD, Dr Rob Evans, Discussion Panel on Child Emotional Wellbeing - Fergus Finlay, Dr Colm O'Connor, Margaret Grogan, Conor Cusack; IPPN Speakers – Brendan McCabe and Seán Cottrell

**Seminars:** Pat Lyons, Seán Fallon, Sé Goulding, Mary Byrne and Teresa Griffin of NCSE, Elaine Mahon and Dr Philip Riley as well as by Principals - David Ruddy, Larry Fleming, Peter Gunning, Robbie O'Leary, Pat Goff, Caroline Madigan, Máire Nic an Rí & Bríd Ní Dhonnachadha, Tom McGann, Páirc Clerkin and John O'Byrne.

#### **Deputy Principals' Conference 2015**

**Theme:** Daring to Lead

**Venue:** Citywest

**Speakers:** Daire Keogh of St Patrick's College, Maria Doyle

**Seminars:** Micheál Rea, Seán Fallon, Anna Mai Rooney, Siobhán Allen & Aisling Heidt, Caroline Madigan and Pat Goff.

Ciall Ceannaithe Online Summer Course

## 2014 – 2015 – *at a Glance*

### Press Releases

- January 2015
- More PE time needed
- Is the Primary School Curriculum fit for purpose?
- Children need more speech and language therapists
- Health and Wellbeing Survey launched
- Leadership Crisis in schools
- New Proposed Resources for Special Needs Children will hurt schools
- In School Management must be replaced in our schools
- Majority of Primary Schools still without Broadband
- Two years of free pre-school would lessen social inequality
- Children's Learning affected
  - 25th Nov 2014 - €28m Minor Works grant
  - 14th Oct 2014 - IPPN's Reaction to Budget 2015
  - 25th Sep 2014 - Principals call on Department to Loosen Purse Strings
  - 2nd July 2014 - A Minister with Vision and Principles
  - 15th May 2014 - Deputies make the difference
  - 9th April 2014 - School Principals to be identified earlier, trained better and supported by clearer roles for Deputy and Assistant Principals - IPPN
  - 2nd April 2014 - Joint statement from Irish Primary Principals' Network & National Parents' Council – Primary Re.'Friends of School Committees'
- 31st Mar 2014 - Principal calls for intensive public education to counteract the scourge of cyber bullying
- January 2014
  - Death of Sean Flynn
  - Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) Director Seán Cottrell calls on Minister to take action on the “unreasonable expectations” threatening pupils’ future
  - Curriculum overload, maintaining standards in the face of increasing cutbacks and the belief that schools can fix everything among the “great expectations” faced by Primary school Principals says IPPN President
  - Draft IPPN Statement on Book Rental.

### Publications

- Priorities for Principal Teachers – In Clear Focus – January 2014
- Irish Principals & Deputy Principals Occupational Health, Safety & Wellbeing Survey Report 2015:
- Leadership+ issues 76 – 87
- Principal's Information Management System (PIMS).