

Parent Council Events

August 2009

Conference Report



“Brilliant performance from Taylor High!”
(Comment on graffiti wall)

Around 180 parents attended the second national conference for parents and Parent Councils organised by the Scottish Government and Learning Teaching Scotland at Hampden Park, Glasgow on 13 June this year. Parents came from as far afield as Orkney and the Scottish Borders.

The day began with a superb singing performance from Taylor High School in North Lanarkshire. Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary

for Education & Lifelong Learning, gave the opening speech. She began by giving an update on the new qualifications that will be introduced from 2013 onwards to complement the changes being made under *Curriculum for Excellence* to Scottish education. She went on to talk about the parental involvement projects that had been running over the last year and can be seen on the Sharing Ideas section of parentzone <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/parentzone/getinvolved/sharingideas/index.asp>. Finally, she outlined her thoughts on national representation for Parent Councils giving her support to the creation of a National Parent Forum to represent parents' views. After her speech she took questions from delegates on changes to the exam system and national representation for parents.

“I would very much welcome the prospect of dialogue and engagement with a new National Parents Forum.”

(Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Education)

“Parents can help by reinforcing the idea that most things are achieved in life ... through hard work, perseverance and good learning strategies.”

(Carol Craig, Centre for Confidence & Wellbeing)

Carol Craig from the Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing <http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/> then gave the keynote speech in which she spoke of how parents can help build confidence in their children through encouraging them to work hard to achieve their goals, and by focussing on building relationships with other people.

Delegates then chose from a wide range of workshops covering different aspects of education from information on the new National Qualifications to hints and tips on how Parent Councils and head teachers can work well together. More details of these, as well as the Cabinet Secretary's speech, can be found on parentzone <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/parentzone/Events/ParentConferenceNPC/conferencesummary.asp>

There were a variety of information stalls also available throughout the day.



National Parent Forum



“Since Parent Councils were introduced in 2007, more parents have been finding their voice at local level. Now, however, is the time for their voice to be heard at the national level.”

(Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Education & Learning)

The afternoon session went on to discuss the Cabinet Secretary's proposal that a National Parent Forum should be set up. The Cabinet Secretary's proposal followed her consideration of the findings of a research survey she had commissioned to find out what parents' views were on the issue. The research involved a survey of all Parent Councils in Scotland, interviews with parental stakeholder groups and discussion forums with Parent Council representatives. Out of the 491 returned questionnaires, of those who did express a view, 79% are in favour of a national body that would allow parents a voice at

national level. The survey also showed that Parent Councils valued many of the services that were already provided by local authorities and parent organisations. The Cabinet Secretary set out her view that we should build on what exists already and that a helpful next step would be for parents to create a National Parent Forum in the new school year.

“Yes! We want a meeting!”

(Comment from delegate)

“Ensure children's best interests are at the heart of decisions.”

(Delegate comment)

Around 80 parents discussed the proposal which was met with broad agreement with many good suggestions for the way ahead. All suggestions were recorded and drawn together to help us start to make this a reality and pave the way ahead for the future.

A strong message coming through from the discussions was that there should be parent representation from each local authority area and that the Government should offer practical support for such things as travelling and accommodation. Similar comments on funding centred around support for clerical staff for the Forum, a facilitator, hospitality for meetings, practical support, i.e. booking meeting venues, secretariat, crèche, refunding expenses, expertise on budgeting, *Curriculum for Excellence* etc.

The general consensus was that a Forum should be set up later in the year and that Parent Councils should have time to contribute to the process of nominating members for the Forum. Membership of the Forum should be made up from parents but not necessarily just Parent Council Chairs. In the short term the members should consider the role, remit, meeting location and how best to reflect parents' views from grassroots. In the longer term the Forum should become involved in Government consultations, dissemination of good practice and new initiatives.

“Making sure that all parents have a voice” was a general comment that should be kept at the forefront of everyone's mind as we take the first important steps forward to set up a National Forum.