

Parent Council Newsletter

August 2009



Here we are at the beginning of another school term and the third year for Parent Councils in Scotland. For many, this is the time when you will be handing over to new Parent Council Chairs and members. Looking for new volunteers and partners to support the work of the Parent Council can be a challenge. Community members, businesses and others can, however, be keen to develop better links with the school if they are approached.

A new school year also means thinking about what you want to do for your own Parent Forum and working up a plan for the Parent Council for the year. One of the priorities may be to let new parents know that you are there to represent their views, to support the work of the school, and how they can contact you and become involved in a way that suits them. We are producing a new card to raise awareness of the parentzone website which will include a space for your own Parent Council contact details. These will be available shortly and can be ordered by emailing the parentzone inbox: parentzone@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Planning your calendar of meetings and dividing up tasks will be another priority. I have seen some useful Cluster meetings recently and trying to identify a date in the year where you and your cluster Parent Councils can meet may be worth considering. Networking in this way can sometimes be the most valuable type of training. A recent cluster meeting which worked really well involved sharing ideas, and discussions on joint working and identifying future joint actions. As well as face to face meetings, network meetings can also be done online using a blog or forum.

To help you as you consider what you want to concentrate on, we have included with this newsletter a DVD resource – Promoting Parental Partnerships. In addition, if you are having events for parents, there are some resources available via the parentzone website which may be useful. You will find some resources which will be helpful for new members <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/parentzone> as well as examples from other Parent Councils around the country.

I hope you have a very productive school year 2009/2010 and look forward to hearing your progress and challenges throughout.

Lorraine Sanda

Lorraine Sanda
National Parental Involvement Coordinator

Update on Curriculum for Excellence

This is a big year for *Curriculum for Excellence*. Your school will now have the information on what is called the 'experiences and outcomes' which will help teachers to plan learning and teaching over the coming year. Staff will be coming together in Primary and Secondary schools to look at this material and to consider how this fits with the other parts of guidance that has already been issued. You can see all the materials on the *Curriculum for Excellence* website

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence>.

Curriculum for Excellence is all about providing children with more and better opportunities to develop themselves and the skills and knowledge they will need now and in the future. There are lots of good things already happening in schools and nurseries and *Curriculum for Excellence* will build on this.

Your Parent Council may want to talk to the Headteacher about what they can do to involve parents and support the school with *Curriculum for Excellence*. Here are some ideas:

- Think about what type of information parents need and when
- Consider how best the information can be shared, eg at events, at Parents Nights, through home learning activities etc
- Identifying skills and expertise within the Parent Forum that can help, e.g. with developing Skills for Life and Work
- Making links with the voluntary sector, local community, health, business and employers, further education
- Feedback to Headteacher, e.g. Focus Groups with invites to different parents each term
- Finding out from young people themselves about their experience and thinking about how parents can best support them
- Thinking about learning going on outside school that is contributing to *Curriculum for Excellence* and finding ways for parents to contribute to Wider Achievement records. You might find the publication on the importance of wider achievement being recognised helpful:

http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/AmazingThings_tcm4-535904.pdf

- Discuss with your Headteacher what HMIE have to say about the importance of parents' views. See section 2 and annex 3 of the recent HMIE publication *Learning Together: Opening Up learning*
<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/ltoul.pdf>



National Qualifications

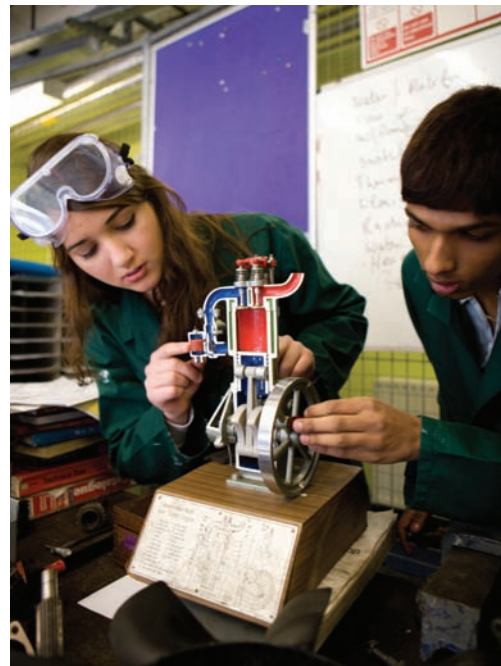
Following a nationwide consultation, arrangements are now being put in place for new and revised Scottish qualifications. It has been recognised that any qualifications system needs to be based on what children and young people are learning. As *Curriculum for Excellence* changes learning and teaching, clearly the qualifications need to reflect this. The changes, have also taken account of the view expressed for some time by teachers, parents, employers and others that the current system needed to be simplified.

Planning is now underway by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Scottish Government and others to ensure that the new qualifications will be suitable. This involves discussions and planning with employers, universities and all the key people to ensure that the excellent reputation that Scottish Qualifications have at present is maintained and improved. It is important that parents understand and trust these new qualifications. As work gets underway, clear information for parents will be made available.

The first of the new qualifications (in literacy and numeracy) will be ready from 2013 for pupils in S3 and above, National 4 and National 5 (the replacement for Standard Grade and Intermediates) and revised Access, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications will be available from 2013/2014 onwards. You can get more information on the detail of the new qualifications and who is involved in their development at <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/nq>

What lies ahead?

- The Assessment Framework will be published later this year. This will provide advice for teachers in assessing a child's progress and considering the next learning steps. New formats of reporting to parents will be devised. These will vary depending on what is agreed for each local authority or school.
- Skills for Learning, Work and Life in a modern world are a key element of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Information on this will be available for teachers and parents later this year.



A National Voice for Parents

Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, wrote to all Parent Councils on 27 April enclosing a copy of the key findings of a survey of Parent Councils on how parents' views might be heard at national level. The 500 Parent Councils that took part in the survey gave a clear signal that they wanted a strong voice that could engage with Government. A proposal from the Cabinet Secretary at the National Parents' Conference held on 13 June in Glasgow, that a National Parent Forum be set up, received a positive welcome from delegates (see attached conference report).

The first meeting of the National Parent Forum will be convened in the **Stirling Management Centre on Saturday 21 November**. The Cabinet Secretary's letter, and Nomination Form enclosed with this newsletter provide details of how your Parent Council can be involved.

Sharing Ideas

As mentioned previously, we have been trying to improve parentzone as a resource for you as Parent Councils and for parents generally.

The parentzone website has ideas from Parent Councils around the country covering some of the areas that we know can be a challenge:

- St Patrick's (N Lanarkshire) – communicating with all in the Parent Forum
- St Andrews (N Lanarkshire) – making a Parent Council work for Secondary School
- Beckford (S Lanarkshire) – getting more parents involved in supporting the school
- Kelso (Borders) – representing the views of the Parent Forum in important consultations
- Glengowan (S Lanarkshire) – tackling road safety for the benefit of all pupils, parents and the school community

Parentzone is also a source of information for parents on a range of issues related to education. You may want to share the website with the rest of the parents in your school. As well as further copies of this newsletter, which can be downloaded from parentzone, there are promotional resources (pens, postits, leaflets) available on request to help you do this which you can order by emailing parentzone@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

We are keen to keep developing the website to support you and add to the Sharing Ideas section. If you have any good ideas or examples from your own Parent Council, please get in touch.

