

Brainstorm Day 10th March 2012

The schools first Brainstorm Event took place on the 10th of March 2012.

This event was organized by the schools Board of Management in response to the school's Educate Together Ethos Evaluation which took place in 2011. 39 people, representing staff, parents and board of management, attended this event.

The main purpose of this day was for the three main bodies of the school community to come together, get to know each other a bit better and discuss the 8 main themes listed below.

Themes discussed on day

- 1 The Playground
- 2 Fundraising
- 3 Educate Together
- 4 Our School Image And Profile In The Wider Community
- 5 Community Links
- 6 Communication
- 7 Car-parking And Safety
- 8 School Policy and Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

This report outlines the main points that were discussed by the group on the day followed by the follow up discussion of the findings between the reps of the three main school stakeholders, the Staff, the Board of Management (BOM) and the Parents Association. (PA)

Present at the follow up meetings were Principal Tomás Hickey, Teacher Claire Meegan, Parents Association Reps Anna Merritt and Suzannah Lourenzo and Board of Management rep Aisling O Connell.

Angela Murphy, an active member of Skerries community, facilitated the event and was also present at the two follow up meetings.

Theme 1: The Playground

Basketball Hoops, are they needed?

High winds – safety concerns

(Maybe one moved into Senior Yard, net and backboard on fences (no pole)

Open up the playground, let them play on grass

Actions arising from this discussion:

The basket ball hoops shall be removed from the fenced court and will be stored until needed.

It was suggested that Cormac O' Connor from the Board of Management and also Buildings Manager should take charge of this.

Plans for an outdoor classroom are ongoing.

The Department (of what??) has offered to plant a row of trees by the court offering the area a well needed wind break. This will happen when phase two of the school building commences.

Claire, the teachers' rep present at both follow up meetings, will work with the outdoor classroom committee, namely Vice deputy Jean Timmons and Aisling O Connell BOM, to make practical suggestions in how best we can get the students to play more on the grass area.

It was discussed that perhaps we could fence off an area of grass so that this could be kept closely mowed so that it would be able to be used more frequently. The PA will look into costing this.

Theme 2: Fundraising

Advertise the school as Rental venue of choice on Google Groups – (Skerries Newsflash)

Café Times, Skerries News, Word of Mouth

Christmas Raffle, Educate Together Cookbook, Table Quiz

Beauty Night (book venue and ask beauty therapists and fashion consultants)

Sponsored Walk, Laughter Lounge, School Calendar

Communicate purpose of fundraising with a display in the school (e.g. barometer showing funds reached each week)

Who wants to be a Thousandaire Quiz – Lot of planning with this (outside company will do this for school and we would pay them a fee) Great money-spinner.

Actions arising from this discussion

Fundraising

The main point that came out of this discussion was there is already lots of great fundraising going on but we need to communicate to the school population what it is we are fund raising for. We need solid short term and long term goals. One suggestion was stocking the new school library.

This will be organized by a PA representative and a staff rep.

Revenue from school rental

The Board of Management will work with Principal Tomás Hickey in promoting and renting rooms in the schools to evening groups/summer camps and also work out a plan in how best to promote and rent out our new General Purpose (GP) room once it is built.

Theme 3 : Educate Together

Uniform Issue – should be re-addressed.

What makes an Educate Together School?

How we are perceived, eg Are we an alternative form of education?

-inclusive ethos is evident

-can be seen as a last resort school in Skerries

From current Parents point of view:

Positive, proud, confident, safe, community, good communication

At home, lived ethos

This needs to be communicated to the wider community.

Actions arising from this discussion.

Angela Murphy will communicate with our patron body on the matter of the school uniform and return her findings to the BOM.

Tomas and Claire suggested that they would run an internal competition for the students. They would be asked to write about their day in school.

Theme 4: Our School Image and profile in the Wider Community

Our image is getting better.

Less Ignorance

What can we do to improve our image?

Newspaper articles from Parents, Teachers and Children

FAQs on Skerries Educate Together

Reports on events, Photographs of events

Information on Feeder school

Signposts

Word of mouth

Leaflet about the school

What do we want our image to be?

-School motto

No.1 choice (treated equally)

Website: Pre-approved comments

Action arising from discussion:

It was decided that we should nominate a PR person within the school so that we can communicate what is going on in the school to the wider community. Aisling and Claire agreed that they would share this task.

This will lead to better reportage of events.

Angela suggested that we write an article on the clubs programme, including the new clubs starting next year, for publication in Skerries News.

Cormac is at present organising signposts for our school and a flag pole for our green flag.

Theme 5: Community Links

How do we include our children in more community clubs?

Links to club websites on our website.

Invite parents and club organisers to meet each other

Inter-school activities like soccer, art, dance, choir and orchestra.

School visitors to engage with parents eg. Clubs

Teachers communicate with parents

Action arising from discussion:

Angela very happy to link us up and keep us informed with the various events in the community.

Emily Diabold editor of Skerries News says very happy to report or photo any events we run.

Claire to look into a possible school musical performance in 2013/14.

Making links with other schools sport teams esp as our older student population is growing.

Angela also suggested that our schools PA communicate with the other PAs in the area.

Theme 6: Communication

Website

Skerries News Facebook page and printed version

School news eg. Green Flag

St. Patrick's Day parade and visibility of school at this event

Meetings/liaison with PA's and BOMS of other Skerries Schools

School Musical performance?

Communication

At present: letters, textaparent, website, PA Page to come

Facebook(PA) and Google Groups

How to explore communication between stakeholders? (BOM, P.A. and Staff)

Email

More face to face meetings

Facebook group (PA based at the moment)

One World Festival link with cookbook

Green flag ceremony

Action arising from discussion:

It was agreed that a meeting should take place once a term between the three key stakeholders – Board of Management, teachers and PA. The first meeting should take place in October 2012.

PA to fund flag pole for our green flag.

Theme 7: Car-parking and Safety

Lollipop person for outside the school? (Already investigate and no funds to hire one!)

Walking Bus to school – someone needs to contact Fingal County Council to investigate further.

Need to get council involved contact

Ciarán Byrne and Brendan Ryan TD's in our area.

School needs to be signposted from road outside and down the town.

(signage needed) from Kelly's Bay Junction and outside shops

Need road markings outside school and Belisha Beacons.

Introduce permits for cars allowed into the school car-park.

Make an official car park outside school?

Parking in front of gate –strictly prohibited

Organise a sub-committee to police new parking arrangements at start of term.

Use end of road to turn around and park at grass verge outside school instead of parking on both sides of school.

Get land handed over to the council as currently it is private land. If handed over to the council, they could put down road markings and be in charge of it.

Write a drop-off document for new parents as a guidance when dropping kids off at school.

Action arising from discussion:

A walking bus needs to be organised...need volunteer parents to co ordinate this with Susan Jordan in Fingal RSA

BOM and Tomás are in discussions with Martin Sweeney from Fingal road safety, Councillors and the Department of Education about the issue of the private road outside school gates.

Measures ongoing to manage the traffic by use of traffic cones, signs and letters to parents. Also presently trying to secure a traffic warden.

Looking into drawing up a traffic mobility plan with Tomás, BOM, and parents.

Communicate to school body that it would be seen as a responsible and safe measure that parents use Spar car park instead of parking just outside school gates.

Theme 8: School Policy and children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Difference is valued in our school

Inclusiveness is encouraged.

Assessment- Parents understanding of the process and the links to local organisations e.g. Fingal Partnership

Parents support forum

Provide a network of parents to access.

'Exceptionally able' children within classroom and outside

Look at our school definition of special needs

Use of parents as a resource – plenty of parents who would volunteer

Action arising from discussion:

Tomás and Neassa Sheahan presently involved in drafting this policy. They will be consulting with parents of special needs kids and then present it to the Board of Management.