

## **INTO addresses Joint Committee on Leaving Cert reform**

INTO today participated in the Oireachtas Joint Committee roundtable discussion on Leaving Certificate Reform, with the union stating that senior-cycle reform should reflect the diversity of pupils, their needs and abilities.

The Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science met to discuss a number of issues, including assessment options; key subject areas and digital learning; access, equality and wellbeing supports; and Irish language and Irish-medium education.

Máirín Ní Chéileachair, INTO Director of Education and Research, represented the union, addressing access, equality and wellbeing supports, with a particular focus on the education of pupils in special schools, in addition to the Irish Language and Irish-medium education.

**Her opening statement is available online.**

She said: “INTO is calling for continuity of curriculum experience, in as far as is possible, for all pupils as they navigate their way through our school system. We support the holistic development of the child.

“The approaches to curriculum, assessment and pedagogy in the early years, at primary level and at junior cycle level reflect the societal aim of facilitating every child to reach his or her full potential.”

### **Access, Equality and Wellbeing supports**

Recognising that all pupils with special educational needs should be enabled to access education in settings appropriate to their needs, Máirín Ní Chéileachair added: “it is also important that students should be able to access therapeutic, socio-emotional and counselling support in the school setting. These supports are required from early years right up to senior cycle.

“We also hold the position that all pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs should be entitled to access national certification of their educational achievements.”

As part of the process of Senior Cycle and Leaving Certificate reform, INTO is calling for the development of age-appropriate curricula and learning programmes at Senior Cycle level.

Certification should take account of the fact that not all students may wish to access third-level education and will take different paths into the post-school world of work and other activities.

### **Irish Language and Irish-Medium Education**

Acknowledging that the question of the Irish language at Leaving Certificate and Irish-medium education is complex, Máirín Ní Chéileachair said: “We believe that in an inclusive Education System that Irish at Senior Cycle should be inclusive of the diversity of needs of all

pupils, including those with special needs, those whose mother tongue is Irish and those receiving education through the medium of Irish.

“We recommend that pupils of all abilities and levels of competence should be entitled to the development of their mother tongue, whichever language this may be.”

### **Pathways to lifelong learning**

In her closing remarks, Máirín Ní Chéileachair added on behalf of the INTO: “Any reform of the Senior Cycle must reflect the diversity of pupils, their needs, abilities and learning styles. The singular focus of Senior Cycle must not be access to Third Level Education only but must focus on a variety of pathways to lifelong learning.”

The committee also heard from representatives of our sister teacher unions, the ASTI and TUI, as well as the Union of Students Ireland (USI), the Irish Second-Level Students Union (ISSU) and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU).

**INTO’S submission to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science is available to read in full online.**