

Press Release

ELSTA (English Language Support Teachers' Association of Ireland)

March 11, 2022

We are writing this as the National Executive for ELSTA on behalf of our members. Our current membership stands at approximately 1,000 members and is inclusive of both Primary and Post Primary staff members. Since October 2020, ELSTA has held multiple free online continuous professional development events for teachers, school staff and other education professionals. We have supported school staff online on our ELSTA Facebook Group and through our website seven days a week.

In recent years, there has been a significant reduction in the allocation of support given to students who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The overall number of EAL teachers has decreased. ELSTA and other groups have been highlighting the issue of these cuts to EAL provision for many years.

The Minister of Education, Norma Foley, has stated in recent days that schools in Ireland are able to support incoming refugees. ELSTA welcomes further details from the Minister in regards to her plans to increase the capacity, staffing and resources to schools so that they may support existing students, as well as those who arrive to schools this year and in the coming years.

In the last several weeks, ELSTA has received a large number of requests from schools and teachers who are looking for support for English language teaching and how to successfully work with newly arrived students who may have experienced trauma. These are often in schools that have never had an EAL teacher.

We recommend these teachers and schools seek the support of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), however, the PDST's resources must be increased and expanded. Professional development must focus on language teaching and learning, developing school wide plurilingual approaches along with culturally and linguistically responsive practice throughout all subject areas.

We are asking the Minister for Education, Norma Foley, and the Minister of Children, Roderic O'Gorman, and other relevant bodies to provide schools and school staff with the additional staffing, resources along with the required training to provide the highest possible educational experience for every student in our schools.

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ELSTA National Executive

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