

SENIOR CYCLE: TEACHERS' VOICES MUST BE HEARD

Teachers' voices must be heard in changes to Senior Cycle, writes Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary.

Earlier this year, the Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, published 'Equity and Excellence for All', the roadmap for changes at Senior Cycle. The future curriculum framework will aim to:

- empower students to meet the challenges of the 21st century
- enrich the student experience and build on what's strong in our current system, and
- embed well-being and reduce student stress levels.

The redeveloped Senior Cycle will include:

- revised curricula for all existing Leaving Cert subjects
- revised Leaving Cert subjects will have assessment components (in addition to written exams) worth 40% of the total Leaving Cert grade
- introduction of teacher-based assessment components
- updated curriculum and assessment models in chemistry, physics, biology and business will be available for fifth-year students in network schools* in September 2024
- Leaving Cert established students entering Senior Cycle in September 2023 will sit paper 1 in English and Irish at the end of fifth year
- introduction of two new subjects: drama, film and theatre studies, and climate action and sustainable development – these subjects will be available to network schools* in 2024
- oral examinations and the music practical performance will take place during the first week of the Easter break
- new level 1 and level 2 qualification (National Framework of Qualifications) will be introduced for some students with special educational needs
- Leaving Cert Applied students will have improved access to maths and foreign languages from September 2022, and
- the Transition Year programme will be revised.

*The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) will invite a selection of schools to become network schools. These schools will participate at an early stage in revised curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Unanswered questions

Beyond setting out these actions, the Minister's announcement does not provide information on how or when the above actions will commence. This is a cause for concern, as is the Minister's terminology around a "co-created curriculum". This term is vague and confusing. It certainly does not accord recognition to the professional expertise, experience and role of teachers. Moreover, the Minister's announcement that a Senior Cycle reform programme delivery board will be established to oversee and drive the changes suggests that a markedly technocratic approach will be taken to the change process.

Get involved

The teacher's voice cannot be just one among many: unlike other stakeholders, teachers' unique role in implementing the curriculum in the classroom must be afforded a distinctive place in the process of curriculum change. The ASTI will engage in deep consultation with its members on the programme set out by the Minister. This consultation will include:

- hosting a special CEC meeting in early autumn – see www.asti.ie for details
- publication of the ASTI's vision for curriculum change
- survey of teachers
- creation of teachers' petition, and
- special branch meetings.

The following motion was adopted by ASTI Convention 2022:
Motion 48 – Leaving Certificate Assessment – That the ASTI insist that the assessment and grading of the Leaving Certificate remain the sole remit of the State Examinations Commission.

For more information, see the ASTI website – www.asti.ie