



Literacy Association of Ireland: Response to the National Conversation on Education

LAI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2026

17 – February - 2026

The response below is submitted on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Literacy Association of Ireland.

Cuireadh an freagra thíos i dtoll a chéile thar cheann Choiste Feidhmiúcháin Chumann Litearthachta na hÉireann.

The National Conversation on Education presents an important opportunity to reaffirm the central role of literacy, language, and communication in supporting learner wellbeing, participation, and lifelong learning. Literacy should be understood as the capacity to identify, understand, interpret, create, and communicate, using visual, audible, print, and digital texts across various contexts. This definition emphasises a broad, modern approach that includes multiple, changing, and digital literacies in addition to foundational reading and writing skills. Developing literacy skills in English, Irish, Modern Foreign Languages and home languages, enriches children and young people's holistic development.

From a literacy education perspective, several areas are particularly important:

1. Literacy as foundational to equity and inclusion

Strong literacy development remains one of the most significant factors influencing learners' access to education. Continued attention is needed to early literacy, oral language development, and equitable access to high-quality texts and language-rich learning environments, particularly for learners from diverse linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, literacy is a lifeline for minoritised languages and access to literacy skills in Irish affords children and young people continuous exposure to the language in both English and Irish medium schools. This is all the more important when a speech community is not available nearby.

2. Evidence Based Instruction

Teachers use their expertise to respond to students' needs, but research offers reliable guidance about what is most likely to work. When teaching practices align with evidence about how literacy develops, more children become confident communicators, thinkers, readers and writers. Literacy becomes a realistic expectation for all, not a privilege for some.

3. Supporting teachers as literacy leaders

Teacher education and ongoing professional learning are central to improving literacy outcomes. Teachers benefit from opportunities to engage with:

- contemporary children's and young adult literature
- pedagogies and celebrate the richness of indigenous literature
- pedagogies that value and support plurilingual identities
- inclusive literacy practices
- research-informed approaches to language teaching
- disciplinary literacy (particularly at post-primary level)

- professional development that focuses on building teacher leadership and capacity to plan, implement, and review literacy at a whole-school level
- home-school literacy partnerships
- pedagogical and content knowledge in relation to the teaching of a second language
- pedagogical and content knowledge relating specifically to the teaching and learning of a first and / or second language in an immersion setting (scoileanna meán-Ghaeilge)
- supporting teacher agency and professional learning communities will be critical in sustaining literacy development across the system.

4. The role of children's literature and reading culture

Promoting reading for pleasure and engagement with high-quality literature in English, Gaeilge and other home languages should remain a national priority. Partnerships between schools, libraries, literacy organisations, contemporary writers and teacher education institutions can play an important role in sustaining reading cultures for children and young people.

5. Plurilingual identities and language learning

The increasing linguistic diversity of Irish classrooms presents an opportunity to value home languages, Gaeilge, and additional languages as integral parts of literacy development. Language learning should be viewed as interconnected rather than separate curricular areas.

6. Digital and critical literacies

Young people require support in navigating complex digital environments. Developing critical literacy, media literacy, and ethical engagement with digital technologies should remain an important focus within education.

7. Disciplinary literacy

A focus on disciplinary literacy reflects the recognition that literacy practices vary across subject areas, and that pupils must learn how to read, write and communicate in ways that are specific to each discipline. The language, text structures and modes of reasoning used in subjects such as mathematics, science, and history differ significantly, and these differences shape how knowledge is constructed and expressed. Attention to disciplinary literacy therefore supports pupils in developing the specialised vocabulary, interpretive strategies and forms of writing required to participate meaningfully in different areas of the curriculum through both English and Gaeilge.

8. Professional development for literacy leadership

Professional development that cultivates teacher leadership in whole-school literacy planning is central to improving and sustaining improvements in pupils' literacy attainment. Teachers who occupy formal and informal leadership roles should be supported to lead literacy in ways that are responsive to their own contexts through opportunities for collaborative planning, engagement with assessment information and access to research-informed approaches that can be adapted to local needs. Offering financial support for postgraduate literacy qualifications would advance the development of literacy leadership.

9. Home-school-community partnerships

Literacy is a process influenced by a wider social and cultural context. Attention to home-school-community literacy partnerships reflects an understanding that children's language and literacy practices are shaped across multiple settings. What children experience at home, through everyday talk, storytelling, shared reading, or engagement with texts, forms an important part of their literacy development.

Establishing meaningful links with families can help to create greater continuity between home and school experiences. It also supports schools and families to work together in ways that enable teachers to make more effective use of the linguistic and cultural resources that children bring to the classroom. It can also nurture connections between children and young people, and Irish-language communities.

10. Cur Chun Cinn na Gaeilge i Scoileanna Meán-Bhéarla

Ní mór an tacaíocht chuí a chur ar fáil do mhúinteoirí, daltaí agus tuismitheoirí / caomhnóirí i scoileanna meán-Bhéarla chun tacú le sealbhú agus úsáid an dara teanga (An Ghaeilge) ar scoil agus taobh amuigh de gheataí na scoile. Cé go bhfuil an Plean Gnímh don Ghaeilge i Scoileanna Meán-Bhéarla curtha i bhfeidhm ó dheireadh na bliana seo caite, ní mór a dheimhniú go clóitear leis an bPlean agus go gcuirfear tacaíocht ar fáil chun an teanga a chur chun cinn sna scoileanna agus sa phobal.