

To: foreignlanguages

Subject: Foreign languages in Education strategy submission

## PART 2: QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTATION

The Department of Education and Skills is drafting a Foreign Languages in Education Strategy. The views of stakeholders are being sought to inform the development of this Strategy. Outlined below are a number of key questions. You are invited to provide your feedback on each question. There is also a space at the end of this template for any other more general comments you may wish to make that are relevant to the issue of foreign languages in education. It would be important to note that the submissions received will be available for general distribution.

Name of respondent: FIONA HENNESSY

Organisation, if any, whose views are being represented:

WATERFORD/WEXFORD ETB

Email address:

## 1. Raising Awareness

What measures should be undertaken to promote awareness, at national, community, enterprise and individual level, of the importance of language learning and to increase interest in and motivation for foreign language learning?

The significant advantages of Language Learning need to be highlighted in order to increase interest in and motivation for learning. Nationally pre, primary and post primary schools need to show how language learning improves cognitive skills for the young, opens a world of courses to teenagers for further education and creates major job opportunities for graduates both nationally and internationally.

At community level evening courses supported by ETBs should be offered to encourage basic foreign language proficiency. Local libraries could have a role to play by encouraging informal conversation groups, engaging local foreign native speakers in a voluntary capacity to conduct the groups and bring along the English speakers.

Businesses, especially Social Media and IT are already attracting many native foreign language speakers, but perhaps within the workplace language buddies or language clubs could be established to encourage the Irish to develop their proficiency in their language of choice.

Individuals may also be encouraged to broaden their languages horizons through the use of national advertising campaigns on TV, radio and in Social Media highlighting the positives of speaking and using a second or even third language. Also the national broadcaster should show more foreign programmes both for adults and children.

## 2. Supporting migrant languages in educational settings

How can we encourage our migrant children to become proficient in the language of their adopted community, while at the same time maintaining oral, written and cognitive academic language proficiency in their own mother tongue?

Additional resources are vital in this process. Small group sizes are equally essential in delivering language proficiency. Combining these will help migrant children to speak English proficiently and achieve both the academic and social success they deserve.

EXAMPLE:

I have a Chinese student, who arrived in Ireland just before starting secondary school. He is now in 3rd year. I teach him German, and he is extremely capable and potentially could get an A. However I feel that due to his inability to express correctly in English the answers which will be required in the exam, he will not fulfil his potential. He will have a reasonable allowance, in that he can use an English/ Chinese dictionary but what he really needs is access to a fully qualified TEFL teacher either as part of his timetable or as an extra curricular subject.

TEFL teachers either in school or after school are essential for the successful assimilation of migrant children into the Irish education sector.

### 3. Learning and Teaching

How can foreign language learning be supported for students from post-primary educational settings and thereafter? You may wish to concentrate on one educational sector.

#### POST PRIMARY:

Smaller class sizes, as language learning employs 4 disciplines.... speaking, Listening, reading and writing. Classes of 30 students are too large in order to teach these skills effectively and are inefficient as a platform for learning.

More time exposure for languages.... Minimum 5 class periods at junior Cycle and 6 for Senior Cycle.

Mandatory Foreign Language assistants for all languages on an annual basis.

Funding for student based school exchanges.

### 4. Teacher Education

How can we ensure an adequate and ongoing supply of highly-skilled, professional teachers/trainers of foreign language at all educational levels to meet ongoing and emerging needs?

#### Mandatory CPD

Provide short courses throughout the year at different centres nationwide with a focus on language and culture

Incentivise teachers to participate in such courses... offer promotional gain, or financial gain or time in lieu.

I am currently a voluntary participant in a PHD research project aimed at improving Teaching and Learning in Foreign languages in Ireland. There are only 8 participating teachers nationally!! This begs the question why? I fear that it is because of the lack of incentive in doing such work and research.... This could change!

### 5. Assessment and Qualifications

How can enhanced flexibility, choice and continuity in foreign language learning programmes, their assessment and accreditation be provided, particularly at Further and Higher Education?