



NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN



**NATIONAL PARENTS COUNCIL
SUBMISSION**

RE-DEVELOPMENT OF THE SENIOR CYCLE

APRIL 2024

www.npc.ie



National Parents Council (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in early, primary and post-primary education. NPC was established as a charitable organisation in 1985, under the programme for Government, as the representative organisation for parents of children attending primary school and has been extended to cover parents with children in early years in 2017 and in post-primary in 2022. NPC received statutory recognition in the Education Act 1998.

NPC Vision

NPC want to see an Ireland where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

NPC Mission

NPC exists to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's education. NPC will work to increase the capacity and capability of the primary education sector, to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all children.

NPC's Key Activities are:

- Representing the parents' voice in all aspects of their children's education
- Advocacy
- Building participation
- Service delivery



NPC Service Delivery

NPC services are aimed at empowering parents so that they can support their children in all aspects of their education.

Helpline

The NPC helpline is a national confidential service for parents. Their helpline staff listen, give information and support to parents to help them make the best possible decisions for and with their children.

Training and Development

The NPC Training and Development programme is a national programme of training, development and support for parents. The purpose is to empower parents to play an active part in their child's education at every level.

Website

The NPC's website www.npc.ie aims to provide parents with information regarding Early Years, primary, and post primary education. The site also allows parents an opportunity to give NPC their views regarding education issues.





INTRODUCTION

The National Parents Council welcomes the opportunity to share the views of parents with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in relation to the redevelopment of senior cycle, specifically the two programmes for students with additional needs. On this basis, we developed a survey to hear the insights and concerns of parents regarding the proposals for the new programmes.

Our survey was open from 26th March to 1st April 2024 and received a response rate of 32 parents. In our survey, we promoted the specific survey published by the NCCA and included the links for it at the end of our survey. The NPC survey was sent to NPC members and those on the NPC contacts database. Links to the surveys were also displayed on our website (www.npc.ie) and on the NPC social media platforms.

In addition to this NPC hosted 2 online consultations to gather the views of parents on the proposals. We presented a short summary of the proposals and followed this with discussions on key areas of interest and concern that had arisen from the surveys.

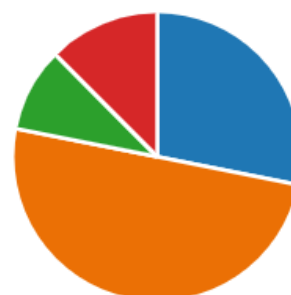
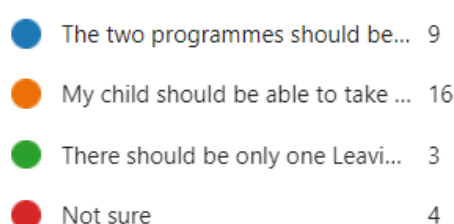
Online consultation L1 and L2 Learning programmes

NPC circulated a survey regarding the proposals for the proposed learning programmes which was open from 26th March to 1st April 2024. We had a response rate of 32 parents to the survey. NPC also hosted two online consultations sessions with parents on Monday 8th April. One in the morning and one in the evening. A total of 13 parents attended these sessions. Below is an outline of the responses regarding 8 key areas.

1. Structure

In the survey, it was clarified to parents that L1LP and L2LP will be offered as two separate programmes, where students can enrol in either one depending on their needs and following an assessment provided by an educational psychologist, or other professional depending on the complexity of students' individual needs. Parents' views of this structure were as follows: 16 parents believe that their child should be able to take elements of both programmes, 9 parents believe that the two programmes should be separate from each other, and 3 parents believe that there should be only one Leaving Certificate at senior cycle that caters for all students' needs (See figure 1).

(Figure 1) It is proposed that L1LP and L2LP will be offered as two separate programmes, where students can enrol in either one depending on their needs and following an assessment provided by an educational psychologist, or other professional depending on the complexity of students' individual needs. As a parent, I believe that



In the consultation parents were very clear that an option to choose modules from either programme would be preferable. They strongly believed that student choice and ability would vary and therefore having more options would be beneficial.

Some particular comments included:

"A choice of both is very helpful as every child's abilities are different and have different Strengths and capabilities. "

Choice is important - not just left up to teachers to decide – they should be challenged."

"It should not be left up to teachers to decide if children should be enrolled in either programme. As parents, we should decide what works for our children. "

2.Integration

In the survey, it was suggested to parents that modules in Levels 1 and 2 Learning Programmes could be taught separately from or as part of mainstream subject teaching. Parents' views on this structure were as follows: 50% of parents found this a good idea, 19% did not find it a good idea, and 31% of parents were not sure (See figure 4).

(Figure 4) Levels 1 and 2 Learning Programmes can be taught separate from or as part of mainstream subject teaching. As a parent, I believe that:

● This is a good idea	16
● Not a good idea	6
● I am not sure	10
● Other	0



Most parents in both consultations expressed a preference for children being taught in mainstream settings where possible. Suggestions were made regarding personal care or finance being included in SPHE lessons where students following a L1 or L2 programme could learn alongside their peers.

There were some concerns related to ability and individual needs but the consensus was that where possible children should be taught with their peers. Some particular comments included:

“Children with special needs to be integrated with other kids rather than being seen as different. “

“Our children need to be able to integrate in society as a whole, find work etc., so they need to see that modelled in all settings including school where possible “

3. Modules at Level 1

On the whole parents welcomed the modules in Level 1 but there was a query as to why there weren't any electives at Level 1 and a suggestion that they be included.

Parents whose children had followed the Junior Cycle L1 and L2 programmes welcomed the continuity that was evident here.

Parents noted that mental health or emotional support had not been included and they thought this would be useful.

There were also suggestions that finance could be covered at L1 albeit at a lower level.

4. Modules at Level 2

As part of the survey, parents were asked if there were any areas in the modules or electives which they felt should also be included. Below is a list of what was proposed:

- Art and other creative skills.
- Friendships, relationships, personal interactions, especially through social media.
- Community involvement, interiors, drama.
- Food nutrition and culinary skills.
- vocational skills, including healthcare support, education support, trades. psychology, community development, and financial literacy.
- Self-care, meditation, mindfulness, relaxation techniques, breath work.
- Coding, gaming, and computers.
- Sport or physical education.
- Cookery and horticulture.
- Art and humanities.

In the consultation, as with Level 1, parents felt the modules were appropriate and they particularly welcomed the elective options where they felt that students could pursue their particular interests. There was concern however, that schools would not be able to offer all options suggested in the electives and therefore there might be a limit on the choices available to students.

There was a suggestion that parents and schools might need to work together to challenge students to try new things.

There were some concerns expressed about the lack of PE for those students who would be physically able to take part. A number of parents shared experiences of their children being left out of organised sport and felt that this could be addressed through access to PE in the curriculum. Parents were reminded that PE could be provided through the module on Active Living but there remained a strong view from some parents that this would not be enough.

There was a strong welcome for cooking and practical skills in general, particularly those related to the home. There was a suggestion that gardening or horticulture could also be included.

There was a strong welcome for learning around finance, particularly in relation to budgeting and saving.

There was a request for more emphasis on social skills also.

There was also concern raised about how this programme would be monitored.

Some particular comments included;

“Practical skills are just as important as the theory.”

“Sport should be offered to them as a subject rather than an extra-curricular activity. “

5. Benefits of Assessment

In our survey parents were asked about the benefits of assessing their child's progress at L1 or L2. Below are some views that were expressed:

- **Teenagers Don't Like to Feel Different:** Assessing progress in L1LP and L2LP can help ensure that students with special learning needs do not feel singled out or different from their peers. By monitoring their progress and providing support as needed, schools can promote a sense of inclusivity and belonging among all students.
- **Attendance:** Regular assessment and tracking of progress can identify any attendance issues early on and prompt interventions to address barriers to attendance, such as health issues or difficulties with transitions, thereby supporting overall academic success.
- **Underestimating a Child's Abilities:** Regular assessment provides concrete evidence of a child's abilities and progress, helping to challenge any underestimation and promote higher expectations for academic achievement.
- **Support to Achieve and Adapt to Needs:** Assessment helps identify areas where students may require additional support or accommodations to succeed in L1LP and L2LP, ensuring that their individual needs are met and they can effectively progress in these language programs.
- **Stress in Exams and Fairness in Assessment:** Fair and objective assessment practices in L1LP and L2LP help alleviate stress during exams and ensure that students' best interests are maintained. Clear assessment criteria and ongoing feedback support students in understanding their progress and areas for improvement.
- **Integration into Traditional Classes:** Assessing progress in L1LP and L2LP can inform decisions about integration into traditional classes, ensuring that students receive appropriate attention and support to succeed in both specialized language programs and mainstream education.

6. Involvement of Parents

Most parents in the consultation sessions said they would like to be involved in their children's learning at this level. When pressed as to what that involvement might look like, they described their involvement in the primary school where they engaged regularly with teachers and SNAs and said they would like a similar level of involvement.

Parents felt it would be good to know what their children were learning and what challenges they might be facing. They felt that they may be able to support them at home.

There was also an alternative view put forward that students should take ownership of their own learning.

Some particular comments included:

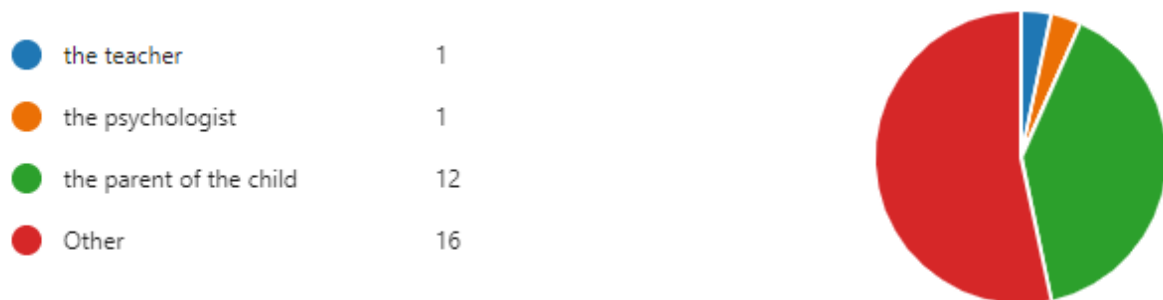
"I like to be involved because I don't always trust the school – don't want to discover at the end of the year that they could have had a choice. "

"Sometimes they are more comfortable doing things at home to make it easier in school – I'd like to be involved in knowing if my child struggles with something."

7. Decision on enrolment

In our survey when parents were asked who should decide if a child should enrol in L1LP or L2LP, 40% of parents thought it should be the parent of the child, 3% said the teacher, and 3% said the psychologist. Parents were asked to include other options if they wish through a free text box. Their main comments were as follows (See figure 7):

(Figure 7) The decision to enrol in L1LP and L2LP should be up to



The remaining parents (56%) suggested a range of options including:

- Both parents and teachers should be involved in this decision.
- A combination of the teacher, parents, and psychologist, with confirmation from a psychologist report.
- A combination of the teacher, parents, psychologist, and student, with the ultimate decision resting with the parent and student in case of disagreement.
- Collaborative conversation between the school and parents.
- It should be mainly up to the child while being supported by the parent/psychologist.

8. Certification

There was a very warm welcome from all parents for the accreditation that students will get following the L1 or L2 programme.

Some particular comments included;

“Yes some sort of certification would help“

“They deserve recognition and a certificate“

“Give the child confidence with certificate“



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