



**ISSU**  
IRISH SECOND-LEVEL  
STUDENTS' UNION



NATIONAL PARENTS COUNCIL  
Post Primary  
COMHAIRLE NAÍSIÚNTA TUISMITHÉORÍ  
Iarthúnoideachas



## Press Release

### ISSU, NPCPP, UNICEF and IGC Joint Campaign for Enhanced Resources for Students Returning to School in September

#### Background

COVID-19 poses serious threats to the Education Sector. **ISSU, NPCPP, UNICEF and IGC** are calling for an urgent and proactive response from the new Minister for Education Norma Foley to address the challenges ahead for students, parents/guardians, guidance counsellors and school staff returning to school in August.

Decisive leadership and decision making are paramount in the weeks ahead. Policy-makers/ decision-makers must address the key issue of resourcing in schools for:

- **Transitions** - to support students to achieve educational/developmental milestones. To progress young jobseekers into education, apprenticeships, employment.
- **Health and Wellbeing** – the mental health of our young is a concern and they will need enhanced individual support to cope with increased levels of anxiety, grief, fear, isolation and the resocialisation process needed on the return to the routine of the school environment.
- **Curriculum** – modifications must take place to cater to all students' diverse needs.

As we prepare for the reopening of schools, we are calling for a strategic response that hinges on the key issues of these enhanced resources. Speaking for parents, **Noel Keenan, Vice President of NPCPP** stated: *“This pandemic will exacerbate existing educational inequalities. Parents and guardians have legitimate concerns regarding academic progression, given that a significant period of time for learning was lost during the closure of schools.”* ISSU and NPCPP issued a joint survey to their members this week.

According to **Beatrice Dooley, IGC President**: *“Guidance counsellors, already under acute pressure, will be overwhelmed with a tsunami of anxious students post rentrée. An immediate reversal of austerity-era cuts to our allocations is now urgently needed”*. Yet, the IGC’s recent survey of second-level schools/colleges of further education (IGC, 2020), shows out of the 301 respondents, in 64 schools guidance counsellors currently deliver non-guidance counselling classroom teaching and spend 6.84 hours weekly on time-tabled classroom teaching.

**Reuben Murray, President of the ISSU**, affirms that *“The syllabus of each subject must be adapted to reflect the deficits in key elements of their course that students have encountered, specifically 5<sup>th</sup> year and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students. Since COVID, we have taken on more than people realise, some of us were carers and minders yet still expected to get school work done.”*

**Peter Power, Executive Director (UNICEF Ireland)** states: "An entire generation of children has seen its education disrupted. When children return to school, they must be guided through the adjustment. UNICEF is calling for a commitment from Government that the special supports children need will be put in place now, with particular consideration given to the needs of vulnerable or disadvantaged children. [UNICEF's Framework for the Reopening of Schools](#) contain recommendations on compensating learning, wellness and protection and reaching the most marginalised. This is also an opportunity to reimagine. Schools must look at how they can reopen better."

Ends.

**Organisations Involved:**

*United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)*

*The National Parents Council Post Primary (NPCPP)*

*Irish Second-Level Students Union (ISSU)*

*Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC)*