A Chara,

As somebody who attended events organised by the English Language Support Teachers Association (ELSTA, established 2006) or showed interest in ELSTA, we are writing to ask for your support in our effort to revive the association.

We consider the revival of ELSTA necessary as we have encountered teachers of general subjects who have expressed frustration at the lack of training in English as an Additional Language (EAL). Furthermore, I (Mary Ryan) have also been contacted by a number of teachers, because of my earlier involvement in ELSTA, asking for support. In this context, we feel that if ELSTA is revived, a small group of committed teachers could organise a teacher-led annual conference in the areas of EAL training, interculturalism and plurilingualism as happened between 2007 and 2015.

Our suspicions that EAL students are not reaching their potential in Irish schools were copper fastened in recent days, when the results of Unicef’s Report Card 15 were published:

“An Unfair Start: Inequality in Children’s Education in Rich Countries” shows that substantial gaps exist between the best and worst performing students in Irish schools, and that migrant students are listed among the three vulnerable groups in danger of being left behind due to insufficient educational supports (Traveller children and homeless children are the other two).

In 21 of the 25 countries with substantial levels of immigration examined by Unicef, a higher percentage of first-generation immigrant children (12.8%) fail to reach basic literacy levels at age 15 than non-migrant children (9.1%). Ireland is one of these countries.

While the difference is modest, the report goes on to show that similarly, the rate of second-generation immigrants failing to reach basic literacy levels at age 15 in Ireland actually disimproves (13.2%), as opposed to many other countries such as the UK, France and Australia, where educational outcomes vastly improve for second-generation immigrants.

In addition, you will be aware that Ireland’s inward migration continues and, according to the Central Statistics Office, is assumed to remain at the 2017 levels of 20,000 per annum for the entire period of 2017 to 2051. While not being able to predict the numbers of young students from among those groups who will not speak English, experience would suggest there will at least be some.

You may wonder as to why we are asking for your support. The answer lies in a difference of opinion as to the need for ELSTA, between us and the last National Executive of ELSTA who are constitutionally in control of the association and want to disband it with immediate effect. We are currently asking to take over the “reins” until we can organise elections for a new National Executive.

As somebody who carries gravitas in the world of EAL, interculturalism and/or plurilingualism, we are asking if you would lend your name to this effort. We would also very much appreciate your asking colleagues to consider supporting us in a similar fashion.

If you wish to indicate your support for the revival of ELSTA, please respond to this email [[martin.niamh@gmail.com](mailto:martin.niamh@gmail.com)] by giving your name, position in your organisation and name of the organisation (if you are willing), confirming that you support our initiative. It would be much appreciated if we receive this support by **Friday November 23, 2018.**

We will then use this compiled list of names to endorse our aspiration to revive ELSTA.

Many thanks for your time and consideration.

Is muidne, le meas,

Mary Ryan (co-founder of ELSTA)

Niamh Martin (MFL and EAL teacher)

**Who is Mary Ryan?**

Mary Ryan was a second-level teacher for thirty years and spent the last seven years of her teaching career teaching EAL to immigrant students. She was responsible for supporting interculturalism and plurilingualism in her school.

She co-founded ELSTA in 2006 and was its Cathaoirleach for several years.

She co-founded the Immigrant Parents and Guardians Support Association (IPGSA) in 2011 which provided information evenings on the Irish educational system to migrant families. It has recently changed its mission and now provides mentoring for newly-arrived migrant families.

Currently Mary is working on the longitudinal study Growing Up in Ireland with the Economic and Social Research Institute.

**Who is Niamh Martin?**

Niamh has a background in European studies and teaching, has a keen interest in cultural identity and has worked at the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) of the Council of Europe.

As coordinator of a cooperation agreement between the ECML and the European Commission, Niamh provided support to project teams, e.g. “Supporting Multilingual Classrooms”, and their training workshops across Europe to education professionals and stakeholders.

Currently Niamh is teaching French, Spanish and EAL in Dublin and is very interested in helping to revive ELSTA.