

19 July 2007

Dear Colleague

A Chomhghleacaí, a chara,

I am writing to update you on my proposals for the reform of administration in education which were endorsed by the Executive today.

This reform of administrative systems will only be worthwhile if it facilitates improved services and releases more resources to support teaching and learning and provide better opportunities for all. I am convinced that these objectives can be achieved with effective planning and implementation but I do recognise that such a significant programme of change and the legislation to support it will take time.

I firmly believe that the RPA is the right way forward for administration in Education and I am determined to achieve full implementation within as realistic a timescale as is possible.

Tá mé ag scríobh chugat tú a chur ar an eolas maidir leis na moltaí atá agam do leasú an riaracháin san oideachas a cheadaigh an coiste feidhmiúcháin inniu.

Ní fiú an leasú seo ar chórais riaracháin ach amháin má dhéanann sé éascú ar sheirbhísí níos fearr agus má chuireann sé breis acmhainní ar fáil maidir le teagasc agus foghlaim chomh maith le deiseanna níos fearr a thabhairt do gach duine. Tá mé cinnte de gur féidir na spriocanna seo a bhaint amach le pleanáil éifeachtach agus cur i bhfeidhm an phleanála ach tuigim go nglacfaidh sé am chun clár athraithe suntasach mar seo a chur i bhfeidhm chomh maith leis an reachtaíocht a théann leis.

Creidim go daingean gurb é an ARP an bealach ceart chun tosaigh maidir le riarachán san Oideachas agus tá mé tiomanáta i dtreo cur i bhfeidhm iomlán cúrsaí laistigh de scála ama atá chomh réadúil agus is féidir

I have decided that the RPA project in education is too big and complex to try to implement by April 2008. The Executive has agreed with my analysis and has therefore agreed that my proposal to set up the Education and Skills Authority should be progressed with its scheduled establishment by April 2009 at the latest. Staff, functions, assets and liabilities of the existing organisations will transfer to ESA at that time. Further work will focus on area-based planning, the reconfiguration of Boards of Governors and establishing the ESA as the single employing authority for all schools.

It is essential that the change starts now so that we can ensure a smooth transition to the new structure whilst continuing to maintain high standards across the sector.


I will be working closely with the Education Committee on these proposals and will be leading this transformation personally, through chairing regular meetings with the chairpersons of the current education organisations to ensure the continued effective delivery of their work, as well as discussing their ongoing contributions to this important reform programme.

A significant amount of preparatory work can and must be done in advance of the legislation being in place. I have therefore asked Gavin Boyd, the ESA Chief Executive Designate, to work with his colleagues in the Department of Education to develop and lead a convergence programme for the education sector that brings together the services delivered by the current organisations. Gavin will work with the existing organisations and will report on progress to me through the Permanent Secretary, Will Haire, who chairs the Programme Management Board overseeing the RPA Programme in Education.

I believe RPA will provide considerable opportunities to modernise our education services for the benefit of all and to deliver genuine improvements

both for staff and learners. There are major challenges ahead, but the potential rewards are greater if we take the time to plan the change properly and build success from the outset.

Since my appointment as Minister of Education, I have been greatly impressed by the industry and commitment of those who work in education, and particularly by your eagerness to improve front line services. I look forward to working with you as we transform the education sector to the benefit of our children and young people in a real and practical way.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Caitríona Ruane".

CAITRÍONA RUANE

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION