



EDITORIAL

The publication of REACH: *Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland*, volume 38.2, comes at a time where many scholars have noted that we are at a crossroads in relation to inclusive education in Ireland (see, for example, Howe and Griffin, 2020; Shevlin and Banks 2021). The crux of the inclusion debate is currently centred around the dichotomy of a segregated and an all-inclusive education system, imagined via the dedication to full inclusion, yet an increase in the number of special schools and classes dominating the Irish Educational landscape. As Ireland commits to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) we face the dilemma, as Travers (2025) points out, whereby we prioritise the rights of children to inclusive education over parental rights to choose alternatives. Despite this tension, there is ongoing dedication to ensuring every child and individual is included in either mainstream or special settings and this is reflected in the work of the current volume.

The many themes of volume 38.2 of the journal endorse the pledge to inclusive practices and the ongoing work being done across early childhood, primary, post primary and higher-level education settings. Jennifer O’Sullivan’s article on “Prevention Over Remediation: A New Paradigm in Addressing Reading Difficulties” explores the key components of the preventive approach and highlights its transformative potential for improving reading outcomes. Margaret Flood explores Ireland’s inclusion trajectory and it’s evolving thinking around UDL through an exploration of UDL’s emergence in Irish curriculum in her article: “The emergence of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in Irish curricula as an approach to Inclusive Education in the Republic of Ireland”.

Three of the articles explore inclusive practices in post primary settings. Carol Kennedy – Gardiner examines teacher recruitment policies for educating learners with English as an Additional Language (EAL) in Irish post-primary schools in her work: “How the Policy of ‘Out of Field Teachers’ is Challenging Reimagining and Embracing Change in Language and Education Policy in Post-Primary Schools in Ireland”. There is an examination of the general attitudes towards inclusive education and on inclusive pedagogical practices utilised by post-primary STEM teachers in Ireland in: “Inclusive Education and Pedagogy in Post-Primary Stem Classrooms” by David Byrne, Frank Kehoe and Patricia McGrath. Jane Brennan investigates the experiences of post-primary teachers in Ireland in facilitating the use of assistive technology (AT) for students with specific learning difficulties in her article: “Facilitating Assistive Technology Use for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties: Insights from Irish Post-Primary Teachers”

It has been a busy year in terms of inclusion, and this volume gives us a glimpse of what is going on in educational settings. This year, in June 2025, was a landmark time in Ireland when the Minister for Education and Youth, Helen McEntee, and Minister of State with responsibility for Special Education and Inclusion, Michael Moynihan, announced the publication of the Report on the Review of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004. Key recommendations of the Review as noted on the Department of Education website include:

- consideration to be given to include all school-age children under one Act to provide a legal rights-based inclusive education
- language use in the area of additional needs to be considered further
- to ensure that the rights of the child, and their voice, in relation to their educational needs, are a central part of educational changes
- to complete the work on the roadmap towards an inclusive education system
- to legislate for Student Support plans
- to work towards legislating for a legal right of access to pre-school
- to build upon the steps being taken in relation to the Irish language in the context of children with additional needs, so that they can be supported through the medium of Irish
- consideration to be given to a review of the Disability Act 2005, with particular focus of the Assessment of Needs process
- more focus on transitions between educational settings

Miriam Colum, Editor.

- Howe, C., & Griffin, C. (2020). Is Ireland at a Crossroads of Inclusive Education?. *REACH: Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland*, 33(1), 44-56.
- Shevlin, M., & Banks, J. (2021). Inclusion at a crossroads: Dismantling Ireland’s system of special education. *Education Sciences*, 11(4), 161.
- Travers, J. 2025. Children of all needs must learn together. *Irish Examiner article*. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/commentanalysis/arid-41708819.html> (Accessed on 1 December 2025)