



Updating Aistear Phase 2 Consultation

Written submission template for organisations, groups and individuals

This template is intended to help you (and your colleagues) develop a written submission in relation to Updating *Aistear*. Please e-mail your completed submission to updatingaistear@ncca.ie.

The template is structured according to the Principles, Themes and Supporting *Aistear*. Each section is briefly summarised as a support for working on the submission. Before completing the template, please read the draft updated *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* at this link: <https://ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/early-childhood-education-developments/updating-aistear/consultation/>.

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*If you are contributing your views as an **individual**, please provide details below*

Name:	
E-mail address:	
Do you wish to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website?	Yes/No
Do you wish to have your written submission published on the NCCA website?	Yes/No

*If you are contributing your views on behalf of an **organisation or group**, please provide details below*

Name	Aoibheann O'Keefe
Email address:	
Name of organisation/group:	Irish Development Education Association (IDEA)
Does your organisation wish to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website?	Yes

Please email your submission to updatingaistear@ncca.ie



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Does your organisation wish to have this written submission published on the NCCA website?

Yes

Key Messages of the Proposals

Phase 1 indicated that *Aistear* has stood the test of time and remains broadly relevant. However, it was indicated that some areas could be updated. This section seeks to understand your views on the proposed updates.

To what extent do the proposals keep the structure of *Aistear* but update individual sections?

IDEA, the Irish Development Education Association, welcomes this update of the *Aistear* Framework and the opportunity to participate in the consultation process. We support the maintenance of the *Aistear* structure, in particular the child-centred, holistic focus of the original Framework, the recognition of learning as a lifelong journey, and the importance of responding to societal changes in Ireland and internationally.

The focus on ‘agentic global citizens’, and on diversity, equity and inclusion, in the updated *Aistear* Framework is very welcome, and we urge early childhood educators to benefit from the wide range of expertise in these areas across the Global Citizenship Education/Development Education civil society sector in Ireland.

As the national network for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector, IDEA represents over 110 member organisations involved in GCE in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Together we work to strengthen GCE in Ireland and to raise awareness of the crucial role it plays in fostering global citizenship and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Target 4.7 of the SDGs highlights the importance of GCE in achieving all of the SDGs: *“By 2030, ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”*.

IDEA members offer experience, training, and resources for educators to support them to incorporate high quality GCE into their work. We recommend that collaborations and partnerships between IDEA members and early childhood educators should be explicitly recommended and fostered to support the effective implementation of the full updated *Aistear* Framework.

Given the successes to date of *Aistear*’s implementation across early childhood education settings and infant classes in primary schools, we support the retention of the structure



and values of the original framework. We also welcome the relevant updates which have been incorporated based on the key messages from Phase 1 of the consultation process regarding “rights, pedagogy, inclusion, outdoor learning, wellbeing and sustainability”.

Overall, we support the approach and content of the updated *Aistear* Framework. The suggestions provided below are intended to further enhance the Framework and its implementation, drawing on the lifelong, participatory, justice-oriented approach of Global Citizenship Education.

We note the overview of changes situates the *Aistear* updates in “*an everchanging and globally inter-connected and inter-reliant world*” (p.5). This grounding is missing from the Updated Curriculum Framework Introduction (p.7), which we recommend be extended to draw attention to the global context which has significant influence on the families and education settings within which babies, toddlers and young children learn and develop.

We suggest similar wording be included on p.7 as on p.5, with some extensions e.g. after the existing sentence concluding “*...informed by an awareness of gender, family status, disability, ethnicity, religion, worldview, or membership of the Traveller community*”, we suggest the following: *Aistear recognises that the families and education settings within which babies, toddlers and young children learn and develop, are situated in an everchanging and globally inter-connected and inter-reliant world. Humanity is currently facing multiple crises (climate, biodiversity, social), which must be challenged for the sake of the health and wellbeing of current and future generations and of the planet. Aistear sets out to establish a foundation for lifelong learning and for engagement with these global challenges, by fostering Global Citizenship Education values including empathy, solidarity, inclusivity, and learner agency.*

We also recommend that the Purpose section on p.10 be expanded to include a point on Global Citizenship: *‘Recognises that babies, toddlers, and young children have agency, and should be empowered to better understand their engagement with, and positive contribution to, the world around them as global citizens’.*

Do the proposals draw greater attention to the importance of interactions and relationships between babies, toddlers, young children, parents, educators and other important people in their lives?

Yes, these proposals draw greater attention to these important interactions and relationships. We believe this could be further strengthened by extending the descriptor of ‘Relationships and Interactions’ on p.12, to encompass and value the relationship between humanity and the rest of the natural world (recognising that humans are part of the natural world rather than distinct from it), and to value the innate curiosity and *grá* for nature that babies, toddlers, and young children possess. Elements of this are present in the Guidance for Good Practice section on Supporting Sustainability and could be drawn upon to reflect,



in the 'Relationships and Interactions' descriptor, and throughout the Updated Framework, on the interdependence between humanity and the rest of the natural world.

Do the proposals emphasise babies, toddlers and young children as citizens with rights to meaningfully participate and exercise influence on decisions that affect them?

Yes and IDEA fully supports the emphasis on global citizenship and human rights across the updated *Aistear* Framework, in particular the shift in language from 'children as citizens' to 'agentic global citizens', which emphasises the wider global context within which babies, toddlers and young children live and learn, and their own agency to make a difference.

We do, however, caution that the terminology around citizenship can be contested, confusing and at times used in a narrow and restricting manner. We recommend drawing upon the wealth of experience and expertise within the Global Citizenship Education/Development Education civil society sector to promote a critical and justice-oriented understanding of global citizenship. We recommend that the definition of a 'global citizen' in the glossary be extended to include a strong emphasis on global justice, recognition of the need to challenge inherently unequal global systems, and an emphasis on critical thinking skills, empathy, solidarity, and collective action.

The [Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy](#) (p.4) and IDEA's [Vision 2025: Towards a Society of Global Citizens](#) (p.9) could be drawn upon to enhance the definition.

We recommend the current definition should be adapted to read: *A global citizen is aware of and understands the wider world – and critically reflects upon their place in it. Each baby, toddler and young child is a citizen in the world. They take an active role in their local community and engage with national and global justice initiatives to challenge systemic inequalities. They are empathetic and work in solidarity with others to make our planet more peaceful, sustainable and fair.*

We fully support the use of human rights language in the updated framework. The relationship between rights and responsibilities may need to be explicitly explained, in particular drawing attention to the fact that human rights are not conditional i.e. even if you don't take on responsibilities as outlined in the framework, your rights can't be taken away from you, they are inherent and inalienable.

We recommend that a clear connection be drawn between *Aistear*'s aims and relevant international frameworks, specifically the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We recommend that early childhood educators be trained on the significance of these frameworks, and in particular on the significance of Target 4.7 of the SDGs which highlights the importance of GCE in achieving all of the SDGs. IDEA's members offer significant expertise, experience, and useful resources in this respect, to support educators in the delivery of the *Aistear* Framework.



Do the proposals embed the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion?

The proposals embed these concepts well.

We recommend incorporating into the descriptor of this principle (p.12) explicit reference to, and recognition of, the inequity that exists within Irish society as well as global inequities, and providing examples of these e.g. the Direct Provision system in Ireland. The updated *Aistear* Framework could usefully draw upon the [Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for ECCE](#) (DCYA 2016) especially in terms of embedding an Anti-Bias Approach.

We note the importance of questioning dominant paradigms from the outset, and throughout all curriculum development and implementation. We caution against the risks of further embedding and perpetuating mythologies around superiority and inferiority in its various forms – cultural, economic, racial, linguistic, environmental etc. These myths must be challenged across all curricula and at all levels of education. The stories we tell and share with babies, toddlers and young children have great power and become the foundation of their understanding of the world around them. When these stories are grounded in mythology such as that surrounding the perceived superiority of neoliberal, euro-centric, anglophone culture, and indeed regarding the superiority of humanity over the rest of nature, we are doing babies, toddlers and young children a great disservice and are perpetuating systemic inequalities.

Babies, toddlers and young children have an innate sense of fairness that should be fostered and harnessed. This can be achieved by educators recognising babies, toddlers and young children as leaders within their own education e.g. by observing and responding to how they recognise fairness and react against inequality.

In the section on Purpose (p.10), we welcome the recognition of the Irish cultural and linguistic history, and the incorporation of phrases *as Gaeilge* throughout the framework. We recommend adding another point in the Purpose section to be inclusive of, to value and to welcome all cultures and linguistic backgrounds. In the provision and use of educational materials, we must represent a diversity of cultures, languages and ways of living, and should demonstrate many different ways of being a global citizen.

Do the proposals emphasise and reaffirm the centrality of learning through play and hands-on experiences?

Yes. We support the focus on play for play's sake, and the references to outdoor play. This outdoor learning element could be further strengthened by linking it to the concept of stewardship for the Earth, which goes beyond a surface level approach to sustainability and



considers at a deeper level our active role as human beings in the care of the planet and natural world, of which we are part.

We welcome the explicit and clear recognition of the right to play, and the use of rights-based language across the updated Framework. We recommend that explicit reference is made to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and draw attention to Ireland's responsibilities under this Convention. In addition, it would be of benefit to educators to highlight the educational resources and support available with regards to human rights education from a range of organisations including the Ombudsman for Children, Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education (DCU), Amnesty International Ireland, and UNICEF Ireland.

Do the proposals support greater continuity of experience and progression of learning for babies, toddlers, and young children?

We welcome the inclusion of a new principle on Transitions, which duly recognises the importance of transitions for babies, toddlers, and young children.

We draw attention to, and seek clarity, regarding the future role of *Aistear* within the Primary School setting. As per the original Framework "*Aistear* is the curriculum framework for children from birth to six years in Ireland" and the original framework provides many examples of learning experiences including those for the infant classes. The new Framework, however, states that "*Aistear* is the curriculum framework for all children from birth to six years in all settings other than primary and special schools" (p.7).

We note that both the updated *Aistear* Framework and the new Primary Curriculum Framework identify alignment between the two. Further clarity on this would be useful, in particular regarding the role of *Aistear* in infant classes at primary level going forward. Given the benefits that incorporating the *Aistear* Framework has brought to children in Junior and Senior Infant classes over the past 14 years, we would like *Aistear* to continue to be used in infant classes, to provide continuity for young children as they transition from early childhood education settings into primary school.

We note also the distinction between the *Aistear* principle of 'agentic global citizens' compared to the Primary Curriculum Framework competency of 'being an active citizen', and we support the broader more globally-focussed definition (see above).

Principles of *Aistear*



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The number of Principles has been revised from 12 to 9 and reframed. Additionally, the proposals aim to integrate the Themes of *Aistear* in a seamless manner across the Principles. We are interested in receiving your feedback about these changes.

Please insert your feedback on the Principles of *Aistear* here:

We welcome the streamlining of the 12 principles into 9, which makes the implementation of the Framework more practicable, and also the addition of the new principle on 'Transitions'.

Regarding the 'agentic global citizens' principle, we recommend specific reference be made to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the corresponding responsibilities of Ireland, and reference to guidance on how educators might support babies, toddlers and young people, through human rights frameworks, to become agentic global citizens.

Regarding the 'diversity, equity and inclusion' principle, we note the shift from equity to equality. The distinction between equality and equity should be made clear in the *Aistear* documentation, to support understanding on the purpose and impact of this and to show how existing guidelines e.g. Diversity, Equality, Inclusion Charter (2016) are still relevant.

We note that the use of the term 'agentic' in reference to 'agentic global citizens' and 'agentic educators' requires further clarification, specifically on how to translate it into practice to support the delivery of *Aistear*'s principles.

Themes of *Aistear*

Aistear is underpinned by four Themes of learning and development. It is proposed that the Learning Goals within each Theme remain broad, but observable statements that support babies, toddlers and young children's learning and development. It is also proposed that the Principles of *Aistear* be interwoven and visible throughout *Aistear*'s Themes.

This section seeks your detailed feedback as to whether these key changes are visible within the draft proposals. The draft proposals are available [here](#) for your information.

Please give specific feedback in relation to each of the Themes of *Aistear*.

Theme: Wellbeing

We welcome the integrated approach to Wellbeing that is taken in *Aistear* i.e. finding space for wellbeing in the everyday, rather than presenting it as a stand-alone theme/focus.

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The descriptor of this theme could be further strengthened by explicitly acknowledging that our health and wellbeing are enhanced by being connected to each other and nature, and by making explicit the interconnected nature of humanity, and the interdependence between humanity and the natural world. There is a direct link between environmental health and human mental and physical health. Social connection and meaning derived from collective endeavours is well recognised as an essential component of human health and wellbeing.

We recommend including reference to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG3 Good Health and Wellbeing) and their importance for the collective wellbeing of people and planet.

Theme: Identity and Belonging

We support the informing of this theme by “an awareness of age, gender, family status, disability, ethnicity, religion, worldview, or membership of the Traveller community”. We would recommend drawing attention in this descriptor to the influences of the interconnection and inter-reliance of the global community on babies, toddlers and young children’s sense of identity and belonging. This would further integrate the principle of ‘agentic global citizens’ throughout the Framework.

Theme: Communicating

With regards to Aim 3, we reiterate our earlier point that care and critical thinking be applied to the selection of stories shared with babies, toddlers and young people. These stories should be selected and used, not to reinforce stereotypes and dominant paradigms, but to foster critical analysis, understanding of different perspectives, and the pursuit of empathy, solidarity, equity and justice.

Global Citizenship Education provides myriad ways to support this critical analysis, and also to enhance Aim 4, which focuses on creativity and imagination, each of which is a core feature of GCE.

Theme: Exploring and Thinking

We support the focus on care (in many forms) throughout the *Aistear* Framework, and in particular the attention drawn to caring for the Earth in this theme. With regards to Aim 3, we reiterate the importance of recognising that humans are part of nature and interdependent with the rest of the natural world, rather than separate to it.

In your reading of the proposals, are the Principles of *Aistear* interwoven and visible throughout *Aistear*’s Themes?

Yes. The threads of *Aistear* Principles can be seen throughout the themes. There are more opportunities, some highlighted above, where the principles of ‘agentic global citizens’ and ‘diversity, equity and inclusion’ could be further emphasised.



Please insert any additional feedback that you would like to share with us about the proposals here:

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) equips learners with the knowledge and skills to explore key issues such as equality, climate justice, discrimination and human rights, through creative, innovative and interactive approaches, and empowers them to become agents of positive change.

It gives them the opportunity to examine the impact of these issues globally and locally, including how their own lives are affected. It also supports them in considering how their values, choices and actions can contribute to or mitigate an issue and in exploring what action they can take themselves. No matter how young a child is, they can be empowered to be an active global citizen.

We strongly recommend that early childhood educators receive appropriate guidance in terms of training and access to resources to ensure that they are equipped to empower and support babies, toddlers and young children to embrace their role as active global citizens contributing to a more just, equal, and sustainable world.



Supporting Aistear

Part 1: Guidance for Good Practice

Pages 27 to 33 describe the Guidance for Good Practice. The Guidance for Good Practice expands on some of the important ideas introduced in the Principles and Themes. It also reflects other important messages, or big ideas, from Phase 1 of the consultation to update Aistear, as well as from research and wider societal and policy changes. The big ideas are organised according to Aistear's original Guidelines for Good Practice.

- [Partnerships between Parents and Practitioners](#)
- [Learning and Developing through Interactions](#)
- [Learning and Developing through Play](#)
- [Supporting Learning and Development through Assessment.](#)

It is proposed that these will be extended and supplemented through resources developed for the online Aistear Toolkit. Sample resources are available in [Appendix 1 of the draft proposals](#).

Please give your overall feedback in relation to the Guidance for Good Practice.

Considering the strength of the Aistear Framework (both the original and the updated Frameworks), the key challenge for Good Practice lies in how well educators are trained, supported and resourced for its implementation. We recommend that strong connections be fostered between Early Childhood Education practitioners and IDEA members. This could be done through a Community of Practice model, supporting educators to understand and grapple with the implementation of education to foster 'agentic global citizens' – a term that might otherwise appear daunting or overly complex. GCE/DE provides the framework for connecting the local to the global. [IDEA's Code of Good Practice](#) is a useful framework for early childhood educators to guide them in their overall approach towards GCE/DE activities.

With regards to Example 3 in the Appendices, we draw attention to the suggestion of 'being involved in fundraisers to support children and families' – with a view to fostering "an intentional awareness of the importance of sharing with others: creating a foundation of empathy and cooperation to address poverty and hunger". While we fully support the idea of developing a sense of social justice and empathy in young children, we caution that actions such as fundraising must be accompanied with appropriate education and awareness-raising on the systems and root causes of systemic inequality, including around poverty and hunger. From early childhood, it is essential to instil in babies, toddlers and young children a sense of social justice and to draw their attention and understanding to these systemic issues of inequality and injustice.



Examples of action, with a view to fostering that agentic global citizenship highlighted through Principle 1, should show educators how to engage babies, toddlers and young children in collective acts of solidarity.

Taking the existing example on p.45, an alternative activity might be “Sharing their learning on inequality, poverty and hunger with adults who have responsibility to address these issues”. This could be done in a number of ways, for example, creating a piece of artwork to reflect their learning; voicing their learning and suggestions for improving sustainable ways of living – which could be recorded by an adult in a written format. The children’s learning and suggestions regarding sustainability could be sent (email/letter with e.g. photographs of the artwork) to local/national/international representatives with responsibility for sustainable development. These actions could be linked with wider campaigns e.g. the World’s Largest Lesson (annual UN educational programme on the SDGs). Another suggestion could be inviting local government representatives to visit the education setting to learn directly from the children and listen to their concerns and ideas regarding sustainability. Another could be engaging in an awareness-raising campaign by inviting parents/guardians and members of the wider community to come and learn from the children directly and/or through a display of their work. The emphasis in these suggestions being on the toddlers/young children having the opportunity to engage in a meaningful and age-appropriate way with the concept of sustainability, that does not reinforce the charity model but instead gives them early experiences of collective engagement grounded in social justice and acts of citizenship.

Part 2: Supporting Educators

Page 34 of the proposals explains how this consultation is an opportunity to gather information on the nature of supports required to support the early childhood educators in working with the curriculum framework.

Please provide feedback on how early childhood educators can be supported in working with the curriculum framework. For example, what resources would be helpful to include in the Guidance for Good Practice?

IDEA’s members are well-equipped to support educators with a wide range of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) resources, workshops, and training.



There are many existing resources available to support the implementation of the updated Aistear Framework, in particular with regard to incorporating a Global Citizenship Education lens across all Aistear principles and themes. Some examples include:

- [IDEA's Code of Good Practice](#), which provides guidance to educators on development education/GCE approaches and activities
- DevelopmentEducation.ie provides a wealth of resources for different age groups and educational settings produced in Ireland, including open access childhood education materials available at www.developmenteducation.ie
- Trócaire provides [Early Childhood Education](#) resources including [Good Neighbours: A Development Education Resource for Early Childhood](#) which summarises the 17 Sustainable Development Goals into three goals: A Happy and Healthy Life; A Clean and Green Planet; A Peaceful and Equal World
- ['We Only Want the Earth': A Global Justice Infant Teaching Resource](#) by Dr. Tríona Stokes, Maynooth University for Galway One World Centre
- [Global Goals Book Club](#) (An Taisce Green-Schools)
- ['Water Come to Me!'](#) from GOAL and Maynooth University
- [Human Rights Stories](#) from Amnesty International Ireland
- [Someone Like Me](#) from Concern Worldwide
- [Making Children's Rights Real](#) from the Ombudsman for Children