



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:	Meera Oke & Anna Barr
E-mail address:	
Do you wish to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website?	Yes
Do you wish to have your written submission published on the NCCA website?	Yes

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

Name	N/A
Email address:	
Name of organisation/group:	
Does your organisation wish to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website?	N/A

Please email your submission to updatingaistear@ncca.ie



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

N/A

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?

To a large extent

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?

To a great extent – suggesting considering the importance of **'joint attention'** to support Educator interactions and relationships with young children. Joint attention involves sharing a moment and focussing jointly on an activity or object. This helps to co-ordinate thoughts and behaviours and collaborate, besides developing sustaining relationships and supports the process of attuning.

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

To some extent: We suggest, it will be useful to make visible what children's rights to participate in decisions looks like (for example, using Laura Lundy's model). It's not about 'just listening' to children, but acting on what they are communicating, and thereby acknowledging and integrating the funds of knowledge that they bring to their learning experiences.

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

To some extent. We would have liked to see the term **plurality** mentioned so as to emphasise individual differences in learning and development. For example, it could be mentioned on page 5 (overview of the changes)



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

Yes, to a significant extent.

However, we propose that the **role of the educator** be more explicit in providing or guiding or facilitating play experiences, for example, designing 'Conceptual Play world Experiences'.

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

Needs more attention for example in the section on **Holistic child learning and development** to include:

For me (child) *care is education* – I need regular sleep, and routines to develop my brain and vitality.

I am **developing a sense of myself**, including my skills and habits, and learning to managing my body – I can have accidents and take time to self-regulate and develop skills.

I need exercise along with wholesome and nutritious food to nourish my body and mind.

Principles of Aistear

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:

1. In the explanations for the principles, it will be useful to clearly mention the overlaps between them and highlight the integrated nature of learning. Additionally, the agentic role of the educator needs to be intentionally made explicit. We suggest that in practice the educator intentionally includes the principles of curriculum for young children, such as a **balance and integration** of active and passive domains of curricula; child led and teacher led curricula, integration of rest and timeliness, structured and unstructured activities.
2. The principles need to be clearly underpinned with the real lives that children live (for example see point 4 below)
3. It is important to mention that ECEC educators are agentic professionals and **not 'in loco parentis'**. Educator's professional role needs to be clearly differentiated from that of parents.



4. It would be good to acknowledge that children live in a digital world and have digital lives at home and these interests/ experiences/ funds of knowledge should be acknowledged and supported by ECEC educators. For example,
 - In the principle **Agentic Global Citizens** (p.12) it would be good to acknowledge that 'culture' includes children's digital lives/living in a digital world. Acknowledging children's digital lives in this principle creates opportunity for educators to build on the digital funds of knowledge children bring from their home lives to the setting as reflected in the principle **Agentic Educators**, "*I learn more and better when you recognise and build on my abilities, interests, identities and experiences*" (p.13). And, in the principle **Holistic Learning and Development**, "*remember that what and how I learn is shaped by me and by my previous learning and experiences with my family, my community and as part of wider society.*" (p.14), this would also include their digital experiences from their home lives.
5. In the principle **Play and Hands-on Experiences**, it would be important to be more explicit in mentioning the value of guided play and supporting children's play skills; some children need strategies to access and extend their play. The points in this principle guide educators to set up for play, but don't identify the valuable role educators have in being a play partner, or guiding play as part of supporting children's inquiry, or responding to the emergent interests and inquiry. It would be good to see guided play mentioned. I.e. '*I want to play but sometimes need support from you...*' or '*I benefit from guided play opportunities to help me explore, use my imagination, extend my thinking, inquiry, and play with others; I benefit from provocations or invitations to play....*'

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

Well covered and given significant centrality in the framework.



Theme: Identity and Belonging

The themes are visible in the curriculum framework.

We suggest the following inclusion in the agentic role of educators (see page 20):
to acknowledge their role in developing children's identity and belonging.

For example:

"It's important to **me (child)** that you patiently communicate, appreciate, and respect my home, family. You are a bridge between my home and other places where I spend time."

"Communicate about **me (child)** and my family respectfully, even when I am not there..."

Theme: Communicating

Positive changes here and acknowledgement of the role of literacies in learning and development.

Babies, toddlers, and young children will benefit from the agentic role of the educator who facilitates blending in of Irish/local funds of art. (page 23).

Theme: Exploring and Thinking

It is good to see *scientific, technological, engineering, and mathematical* concepts/ ideas and learning experiences mentioned. However, the term STEM or early childhood STEM (EC STEM) needs to be introduced within the Exploring and Thinking theme and included in the glossary.

STEM is part of national education policy for ECEC that the DE and DCEDIY both are involved in (STEM Ed, STEM and the Arts, The Primary curriculum Framework) which means it will influence the practice and experiences children have in ECEC. There is also a very recent recommendation from Oireachtas committee to include STEM in ECEC. Including the term STEM helps to future proof the document and align with current education policy.

Include aspects related to providing play-based learning opportunities with computational elements for example, using educational technology tools and games, integrating with existing curriculum to develop solving problems, number sense, pattern recognition, sequencing, abstraction, and evaluation. These will enable improved enhanced early childhood digital literacy and language skills through clear communication, improving memory and fostering creativity and innovation. This aligns with the OECD (2023) recommendation that national curriculum frameworks include learning goals for early digital literacy (which includes computational thinking). https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/empowering-young-children-in-the-digital-age_50967622-en#page29



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

Yes.

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

1. Useful to note the intentional inclusion of the Early Childhood Educator as an essential agentic part of the ECEC curriculum framework.
2. While a focus on child centred playful pedagogy is relevant and is an overarching principle, we would have liked to see more reference to the crucial purpose of **intentional teaching, guided/unguided participation and joint attention, project-based inquiry, tech enhanced pedagogy.**
3. Would like to see the inclusion of **sustained shared thinking and funds of knowledge. Working theories** are mentioned in the glossary, however no acknowledgment of funds of knowledge; children develop working theories when they have opportunities to share their funds of knowledge.
4. Would like to see the mention of the importance of age relevant routines and habit formation to emphasise the role that they play is building security and stability in learning and development.
5. Inclusion of the principles of curriculum for young children, such as a balance and integration of active and passive domains of curricula; child led and teacher led curricula, integration of rest and timeliness, structure and unstructured.
6. It might be useful to distinguish between the under three's and over threes in terms of specific emphasis for Educator knowledge, skills, and expertise.
7. While mentioning partnerships with parents, need to clearly distinguish the role of parents and ECEC educators in terms of spontaneity and intentionality, spread of responsibility, knowledge domain.
8. Needs greater visibility of this framework building on traditional approaches (Montessori and Froebel, Waldorf, High Scope, Reggio) to ECEC practice.
9. Would like to see STEM included in the glossary and within the theme Exploring and Thinking.
10. Would like to see digital literacy included in the glossary and the theme Communicating (mentions digital technologies, but not digital literacy)
11. Page 5 mentions: **To support continuity of experience and progression for children, there is a focus on alignment with the Primary Curriculum Framework (PCF) (DoE, 2023) in the updating of Aistear.** It is really important that our national education policies align, for example we need alignment with the Primary Curriculum Framework, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy strategy, STEM Education



strategy and STEM and The Arts Strategy. Educators need to see their practice guided and reflected in the education policies.

In particular the Primary Curriculum Framework has a focus on STEM and the key competence of 'being a digital learner' and rightly acknowledges that children bring valuable learning and experiences to primary school based on their preschool (ECCE) experiences and highlights the value of ECEC/preschool bridging learning between home and primary school. Aistear, likewise needs to acknowledge this, for example to refer to the funds of knowledge children bring from ECCE to primary school, especially in the area of early childhood STEM and digital experiences which will provide a fantastic foundation for their engagement in the STEM curriculum and being a digital learner in primary school (lets future proof Aistear, make sure it aligns with current education policy).

12. It is useful to see the inclusion of a Glossary



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.

Great to see that the 'Guidelines for Good Practice and presents a set of big ideas (p.5), focused on Aistear's Principles and aspects of the Themes. As part of *Learning and Developing through Play*, a big idea to include would be early childhood **STEM**. At the moment the principles and themes or glossary do not explicitly identify STEM, however they do include dispositions, ways of thinking, play and creativity, curiosity etc., which are found in STEM learning experiences, however many early childhood educators may not see the connections and will need support to make connections. We would consider it especially important to add STEM to the glossary and include it in framework with good practice guidelines as we have a STEM Education policy statement that talks about plans for CPD, Community of Practices for early childhood educators on STEM. (lets future proof Aistear to make sure it reflects what is being promoted with Department of Education and Department of Children so it's a meaningful document for educators, children, and their parents)

Other big ideas to include as part of *Learning and Developing through Play* are **digital literacy** and **computational thinking** as an element of digital literacy, **play-based pedagogies involving digital technologies**, **project-based learning** experiences in ECEC, and the use of **robotic kits and unplugged approaches to computational thinking**. These feature in the OECD (2023) Starting Strong: Empowering Young Children in the Digital Age, Available: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/empowering-young-children-in-the-digital-age_50967622-en#page112 pp. 112-134



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?

Develop guides (written, visual, video, audio) based on the big ideas suggested in the section above. Provide CPD and Community of Practice opportunities for educators.