



## 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](mailto: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/>.

#### Data Protection Statement

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NCCA, as a public body operating under the Open Data and Public Service Information Directive (2021), is required to publish publicly funded research. All data from this survey will be further anonymised and aggregated before being published and only made available after the final report on this consultation is completed. Further information on the NCCA's Data Protection Policy can be found [here](#).

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

<b>Name:</b>	Muireann Ranta
<b>E-mail address:</b>	
<b>Do you wish to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website?</b>	Yes
<b>Do you wish to have your written submission published on the NCCA website?</b>	Yes

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

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Email address:</b>	
<b>Name of organisation/group:</b>	
<b>Does your organisation wish to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website?</b>	Yes/No

Please email your submission to [updatingaistear@ncca.ie](mailto:updatingaistear@ncca.ie)



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

Yes/No

### 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?

**VERY WELL**

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**

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.**

From a child rights perspective, I believe that it is now necessary to reference explicit articles in-text to further support child rights education for children, educators and families.



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

**YES.**

I believe a discussion surrounding unbiased, conscious and tokenistic gestures surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion would also be helpful. Referring back to Hart's ladder of participation and the first three rungs of (decoration, manipulation and tokenism may be helpful in that regard).

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

**YES**

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

**YES**

### **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:**

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### **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**

-



**Theme: Identity and Belonging**

-

**Theme: Communicating**

-

**Theme: Exploring and Thinking**

-

**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:**

My own area of expertise is that of education for sustainable development (ESD) and child rights. Firstly, I would like to commend the efforts to embed both into the updating process further and would like to use this opportunity to offer you a discussion surrounding my own research on the areas.

**Sustainability**

As part of my PhD, I did a curriculum analysis of how sustainability is embedded in the current *Aistear* framework. Weldemariam et al. (2017) did similar work on curricula from Sweden, Norway, England, Australia and the USA. I also looked at New Zealand and Scotland. In short, the findings generally show that while we are getting there with being more explicit regarding ESD (as of yet, only Scotland has made it a learner's entitlement under the UNCRC), it is still rather environmental sustainability that is visible in the frameworks.

From a transformative point of view, research argues that we need to embed sustainability with a much broader scope to capture all pillars (environmental, economic, social and cultural and political). Reading the initial findings from the consultation, I noticed that while ESD was noted, its importance was perhaps not as evident/ as other areas. Equally, as I went through the document, I noticed that sustainability was instead associated with Nature, Outdoor learning and overall connotation to environmental sustainability. It might be beneficial to have a 'stand-alone' discussion on what sustainability means (an ever-evolving concept with many different starting points and that it consists of multidimensional pillars (environmental, economic, social and cultural and political) at the beginning of the document. This introduction could then reference each pillar when exploring child agency, participation, citizenship and any other discussion throughout the document. This might provide a more interwoven embedding of ESD, for which research is now calling and what you are doing with other concepts.

Equally for the change in values and attitudes needed in this push to change existing human behaviours, research in ESD now underlines the post-humanist perspective and a more 'common world' approach when discussing the environmental pillar. This is understood as while



the child is connecting with Nature, the opportunities are there for them to experience that they too are part of Nature and the flowers and bees etc, are fellow species. Also, that leaves us with an opportunity to demonstrate how we embrace and acknowledge indigenous traditions to respect Earth. Notably, greater emphasis is now being placed on the traditions and culture of the Traveller Community, aligning these traditions to ESD would, therefore also be opportunistic for learning.

**Further reading on this would be:**

Barrable, A. (2019). Refocusing Environmental Education in the Early Years: A Brief Introduction to a Pedagogy for Connection. *Education Sciences*, 9(1), 61.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9010061>

Davies, J. (2014). Examining Early Childhood Education through the Lens of Education For Sustainability: Revisioning Rights. In Davies, J. & Elliot, S. (Eds), *Research in early childhood education for sustainability: International perspectives and provocations*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Grindheim, L. T., Bakken, Y., Hauge, K. H., & Heggen, M. P. (2019). Early Childhood Education for Sustainability Through Contradicting and Overlapping Dimensions. *ECNU Review of Education*, 2(4), 374–395. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2096531119893479>

Ranta, M. (2023). 'Can we see our voices?' Young children's own contributions to authentic child participation as a pillar for sustainability under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 1–18.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2023.2214716>

Ranta, M. (2023). 'Positioning the young child as a rights holder within ESD curricula making under Article 29 1 (e) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *An Leanbh Óg. The OMEP Ireland Journal of Early Childhood Studies*, 16 (1).

Shava, S. (2013). The Representation of Indigenous Knowledges. In Stevenson, R.B., Brody, M., Dillon, M.J. and Wals, A.E.J. (Eds), *International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education*. New York: Routledge, pp.384-93.

Weldemariam, K., Boyd, D., Hirst, N., Sageidet, B. M., Browder, J. K., Grogan, L., & Hughes, F. (2017). A Critical Analysis of Concepts Associated with Sustainability in Early Childhood Curriculum Frameworks Across Five National Contexts. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 49(3), 333–351.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-017-0202-8>

**Child Rights**

Notably, the infamous term 'rights and responsibilities' causes contention from a child rights perspective. While it is acknowledged that children are rights holders and, therefore, contributing social actors who therefore have responsibilities, having them paired together implies that one may depend on the other. I acknowledge the updated term of 'emerging responsibilities'; however, to avoid misrepresentation, I suggest splitting this pairing up to reaffirm that children have rights which are not dependent on something they must do.

Furthermore, as discussed briefly above, now that we advocate for effective child rights education for educators, children and families, I would suggest that explicit referencing to Articles, General Comments and the UN Committee overall are used.

An overall note on language is also necessary, whereby terminology such as 'let the child' and 'allow the child' be replaced with enabling, supporting and empowering. I wish to note that I have noticed this change in language through communication on the Updating process thus far. In the next draft, I suggest an overall child rights impact assessment analysis to support your efforts in making the framework rights-based.

Further reading to that end include:



Byrne, B., & Lundy, L. (2019). Children's rights-based childhood policy: A six-P Framework. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 23(3), 357–373.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2018.1558977>

Daly, A. (2023). Intergenerational rights are children's rights: Upholding the right to a healthy environment through the UNCRC. *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights*, 41(3), 132–154.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/09240519231195753>

Ranta, M. (2023). 'Positioning the young child as a rights holder within ESD curricula making under Article 29 1 (e) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *An Leanbh Óg. The OMEP Ireland Journal of Early Childhood Studies*, 16 (1).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). (1989). *Convention on The Rights of the Child*. Geneva: UN General Assembly.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). (2001). *General Comment no 1. Article 29 (1), The Aims of Education*. Geneva: UN General Assembly.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). (2006). *General Comment No. 7. Implementing Children's Rights in Early Childhood*. Geneva: UN General Assembly.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). (2009). *General Comment no. 12. The Right of the Child to be Heard*. Geneva: UN General Assembly.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). (2016). *Concluding Observations on the Combined Third and Fourth periodic reports of Ireland*. Geneva: UN General Assembly.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, (CRC). (2023). *Concluding Observations on the Combined Fifth and Sixth periodic reports of Ireland*. Geneva: UN General Assembly.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, (CRC). (2023). *General Comment No 26 (2023) On Children's Rights and the Environment with a Specific Focus on Climate Change*. Geneva: UN General Assembly.



## 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.**

N/A



## 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?**

From my own learning experiences as an educator and more recently a researcher, I note that learning through a Community of Practice in terms of having a safe space, opportunity for dialogue, peer learning and reflection have been beneficial. Again while I specifically highlight the need for resources to support both ESD and child rights, how the educator is supported to engage with them to be effective is relevant.