**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** | Delia Goodman |
| **Email address:** | |
| **Name of organisation/group:** | Better Start National Early Years Quality Development |
| **Does your organisation wish to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website?** | Yes |

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**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?

What is evident is that the updated Aistear keeps its reference to Principles, Themes and Learning Goals, which provides a familiar baseline for users who have become very familiar with using Aistear in its current format.

Overall, the structure of the document remains the same. Having reduced the principles from 12- 9 has ensured that it is more user friendly and consolidates the information for use by educators.

The principles are effectively woven throughout the document, which increases the visibility and importance of them.

The broadening of children to babies, toddlers and young children throughout the document is an important change too as it provides equal weight to the importance of each age group.

The changes to terminology such as the replacement of adult with educator and equality with equity reflects the changes within the ELC sector that are more commonly used today and demonstrates commitment of national policy makers in ensuring the ELC sector remains current, whilst encompassing societal changes. Demonstrating commitment of the Aistear Framework to remain up-to-date and a meaningful document that is used daily by numerous stakeholders. Consideration needs to be made about the language used in the document to ensure it is accessible for all educational levels of educators accessible to parents.

The new visual Figure1: Aistear's structure (p. 8) visual with Agentic, competent and confident learners– highlights and reinforces the importance of principles.

The use of the word "agentic" in the new proposal really highlights the importance of children having their own voice and the educator being agentic highlights the importance of their role too. As the word Agentic is a relatively new terminology consideration, needs to be given to the audience and may require additional explanation throughout the document to ensure it is fully

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understood. It would be helpful to have other additional terms explained further in the document i.e. Agentic global citizens; slow relational pedagogy.

**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?**

The proposal draws greater attention to the importance of quality interactions.
It has successfully highlighted the importance of the relationship between service and parents. Respecting the parents/ caregivers as the first educator of the child is clear throughout the document. It focuses on the importance of the adult in building relationships and responding to each baby, toddler, and young child. It emphasises the child's voice as important to acknowledge what is important to them.

The introduction of Building Relationships Through a Slow Relational Pedagogy is a welcome addition. While the concept is broken down into key features in terms of what is looks like in-practice additional information on implementing this is needed with more examples on what a slow nurturing pedagogy looks like in practice, particularly for children under 3 years.

The emphasis on co-regulation and self-regulation is very positive. As these are complex topics, perhaps descriptions, support, and guidance under the guidelines for good practice would be useful to help educators in realising these. It would be beneficial if there were supplementary information and guidance on these topics to raise educators' awareness and understanding, or is this something that will be considered as part of the toolkit.

**Possible additions to consider.**

Greater emphasis could be placed on how educators create opportunities for children's collaboration, co-creation, discussions and inclusion of them in every aspect of their day-to-day in their early years setting i.e. Curriculum planning, documenting, leading their own learning, daily routine etc.

The proposal could highlight the role of the adult in interactions across all areas of Aistear with greater emphasis on the quality of the interactions. It could also be adapted to include interactions for children who are neuro-diverse.  Use term 'additional needs' rather than with 'disability' as the approach in settings is not diagnosis led – many children have additional needs e.g. trauma, social emotional that are not covered by 'disability'.

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

It does emphasise babies, toddlers and young children as citizens with rights to meaningfully participate and exercise influence on decisions that affect them. It highlights babies, toddlers and young children's choices, opinions and needs. It emphasises the child's voice as important and in

acknowledging what is important to them. It clearly outlines how educators can support this within their practice.

The fact that the consultations have also provided spaces in which the voices of babies, toddlers and young children can contribute and have their say has placed weight on the importance of babies, toddlers and young children as citizens with rights to meaningfully participate and exercise influence on decisions that affect them.

**Possible additions to consider**
An explanation of how this translates in settings. Provide examples and steps involved to implement a planned approach. More practical examples on implementing "Global Citizenship " particularly in relation to babies and how adults can begin to develop this.

It may also be helpful to look at when it is appropriate for the adult to step back from the child's play to support sustained experiences and peer interactions.

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

The addition of Equity into this is a positive addition. The use of 'multi-modality of children' in the principles and themes is very effective.

The new framework highlights the importance of inclusion however, it was noted that inclusion is mentioned only 7 times in the proposals, therefore possible consideration is how the importance of inclusion can be intertwined throughout the document and supported in a holistic approach.

Diversity has been expanded in this update. The visuals need to be updated to match this expansion of diversity and inclusion.

An awareness of and an appreciation of diverse contemporary Irish society, including age, gender, family status, religion, world view, ethnicity including membership of traveller and Roma community is embedded in the framework, in particular within the theme of identity and belonging (p20-22). With the traveller community to include Roma community.

There is a focus on celebrating and respecting diversity, while also noticing and valuing our similarities and connectedness.

**Possible additions to consider**

Making the language more accessible/universal would further provide a focus on the concepts of diversity, equity & inclusion.

Recognise that there is not equity among services in terms of socio-economic group, public/private/community. Acknowledge that some services may need more supports.

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Highlight meaningful engagement of diverse groups, such as new communities.

Provide steps and examples on the practical management of their implementation, as it remains a challenge at times.

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

The proposal highlights the importance of play and the children doing things for themselves. It highlights the importance of time, space, freedom, choice and resources. It draws attention to a wide variety of types of play and hands-on experiences both indoors and outdoors. It places a greater emphasis on learning thorough outdoor play and the benefits of enjoyable, challenging, adventurous play. There is very welcome emphasis on play and hands-on experiences.

In Example 4 – Valuing Child-Led Play with Babies for example, the practice example emphasises how play is encompassed in what could be viewed as daily interactions, whilst also demonstrating the importance of recognising and understanding the actions of babies, toddlers and young children as purposeful. This is a meaningful example whilst demonstrating the value of the educator's response too.

The proposal does however over references digital technology, at least 10 times in the document. While we acknowledge the benefits of using digital technology as part of the curriculum as a resource, can this be highlighted within certain examples or with a note to specify measured or balanced use? e.g. light boxes, lines of inquiry vs screen time (for passive viewing activities).

**Possible additions to consider.**

More emphasis on the role of the educator in creating an environment to meet the needs of all children within the setting to ensure meaningful child led play and sustained play.
The educator's role in nurturing interactions in play and getting involved in play with the children is critical. Explore when it is appropriate in the child's best interest and when to step back from children's play. Highlighting that play is fundamental for supporting and enhancing social and emotional learning? The inclusion of an example of hands-on experiences and 'inquiry based play' would help educators understanding of the term and what it looks like in practice.

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

The proposal supports greater continuity of experience and progression throughout the document overall.

It is positive that babies, toddlers and young children are mentioned individually when referring to children in the proposals – this emphasises the importance of each developmental stage throughout the document. The overlapping age grouping shows the progression but also how to respond to the individuality of each baby, toddler and young child and giving them the time, freedom and space to develop at an unhurried pace within a slow, nurturing pedagogy.

The role of the educator has been highlighted many times in reference to 'notice/noticing' as a starting point for getting to know children. The word notice invites the educator to tune in and take the time to become aware of the child, reinforcing the notion of a slow relational pedagogy.

There is a positive focus on alignment with the Primary Curriculum Framework. The addition of a principle on Transitions supports the importance of supporting children's progression of learning. Highlighting the utilisation of Mo Scéal within the framework recognises the significance of transitions. Using this tool is valuable for advancing the learning journey of young children. Greater attention could be directed towards fostering a similar learning progression in the everyday experiences of babies, toddlers and young children.

**Possible additions to consider.**

Differentiate what it looks like for each age group, e.g. attachment in the baby room: picking up baby.

Highlighting the key person approach throughout Aistear and embedded with all age groups, in every setting, in every room and the continuity.  Highlight the benefits of having one strong adult in their life.

Reference to continuing learning at home under partnership with parents.

**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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The principals are clear and are more in line with current practice. The inclusion of two new principals highlights the importance of transitions not just from home to pre-school/ pre-school to primary school but throughout the day. It is also good to see the importance and the influence of the learning environment highlighted as a principal.

The visual on page 11 clearly demonstrates that the principles are interwoven and central in Aistear and are an integral part of the framework rather than seeing them as separate to the themes.

▪ Agentic Global Citizens

As indicated above there should be a definition of the word 'Agentic'– this may be a new concept for readers and therefore consistent definitions throughout will support the embedding of the concept into practice.

▪ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

A focus on the concept of equity is important; the line "Diversity, equity and inclusion are about creating a fair society where barriers are identified and addressed within empowering and inclusive environments". The proposals provide a meaningful baseline statement; however further information on specific examples of how this is done would provide further merit to this vision.

▪ Relationships and Interactions

This principle recognises the importance of early strong relationships and attachments – the value of a slow relational pedagogy is underlined here. Linkage to examples of what a slow relational pedagogy is may be useful to add to this section. Description of the term pedagogy as it may not be a term some educators may be familiar with. Terminology accessible and inclusive of all levels.

▪ Family and Community

This principle provides the opportunity to help readers understand the importance of early relationships in a child's life as well as the importance of these relationships/networks being interconnected – Ecological Systems Theory perspective in the sense that the child's contexts hold influence on one another. Possible addition or reference to the fact that parents are viewed as children's primary educators.

▪ Agentic Educators

A definition of agentic would again be useful here. The inclusion of this principle places value and weight on the important role educators play. However, a focus on the educator in

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terms of the valuable role they play could provide opportunity for feelings of empowerment when Educators read it.

- Transitions

  This principle eloquently summarises the presence of transitions throughout the day for a baby, toddler and/or young child and the importance of supporting each child during times of transition. This principle lays foundation for understanding that transitions are ongoing and a process. This could benefit from reference to the importance of preparation for transitions, which should be in partnership with families. Reference on how to support transitions and how to support the child with transitions, practical strategies could be included e.g. A picture of a visual schedule.

- Holistic Learning and Development

  This principle provides understanding of the uniqueness of every baby, toddler and young child. With the inclusion of a reference to assessment here (in the draft proposals) it would be useful to include information as to what is meant by 'assessment' as often this word may have more formal or academically based connotations for readers. Maybe using the word 'ongoing observation' instead of 'ongoing assessment' would help here.

- Play and Hands-on Experiences

  Recognising the value of play in early childhood learning is emphasised by the inclusion of this as a principle. Further expansion on 'play' would support reader's understanding of its importance and understanding of how play is a vessel for learning in itself.

- Learning Environments

  This is an important principle to include. Would links to opportunities for CPD – or – visuals from practice support readers to understand how aesthetically pleasing; challenging and inclusive spaces present themselves.

Phrases such as 'Tóg go Bog é' are useful. However, the insertion of random single words is unlikely to lead to their use and contribute to embedding Irish as intended. CLIL is a meaningful intervention to embed Irish. Support services through suggesting engaging with such a planned approach.

**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,

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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.

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

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**Theme: Wellbeing**

The feedback on wellbeing provides detailed insights into proposed changes for Aim 1, Aim 2, Aim 3, and Aim 4, along with broader considerations for incorporating the adult role across themes. Here's a concise summary:

Aim 1:
- Positive reception to the change in language, emphasizing a nurturing relationship and supportive environment.
- Appreciation for the visibility of under-3s.
- Goals reduced to three, perceived as more readable.

Aim 2:
- Reduction of goals from 6 to 3 noted.
- Concerns raised about the length and clarity of the new goals.
- Preferred the replacement of 'fit' with 'active.'

Aim 3:
- Positive feedback on adding 'compassionate.'
- Challenges highlighted with terms like 'meaning maker' and intermittent Irish usage.
- Questioning the necessity of the term 'rituals.'

Aim 4: "Agentic Global Citizens"
- Suggested consideration for using more familiar language, considering the audience's diversity.
- Noted that terms like 'agentic' and 'global citizens' might not align with everyday language.

Adult Role Across Themes:
- Emphasis on supporting well-being, identity, and emotional/social aspects.
- Highlighting infant mental health and consistent language use.
- Explanation of 'dysregulated adults' and the importance of recognizing trauma.

Additional Feedback:
- Positive reception for a theme resonating with educators and parents, particularly the clarity of learning goals.
- Suggestions for improved text layout, numbering of learning goals, and standalone emphasis on children's developing emotions.
- Questioning the relevance of referencing digital technology under Aim 2 Learning Goal 1.
- Varied preferences for language choices, with specific positive notes on 'slow, nurturing pedagogy,' 'flexibility,' and 'reciprocal.'
- Praise for including a focus on living sustainably in Aim 4.

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Overall Suggestions:
- A call for more examples, particularly for toddlers and young children.
- Aim-specific recommendations, including separating transitions and emotions in Aim 1 and clearer highlighting of agentic educators.
- Suggestions to enhance Aim 2 by maintaining phrasing from the original Aistear document and providing more detailed descriptions.
- Explicit labeling of emotional well-being in Aim 3 and a more accessible language style for Aim 4.
- Emphasis on the broad focus of the aims, covering relationships, self-awareness, physical wellness, community spirit, and global citizenship.
- A desire for sample learning activities to supplement the broad language used in the document.

**Theme: Identity and Belonging**

The document emphasizes integrating the adult role across four themes to support Identity and Belonging, stressing the importance of neurodiversity awareness. Strategies for neurodiverse children are outlined, highlighting the need for inclusive environments. The text questions the integration of neurodiversity throughout the framework and suggests inclusion of new communities. It praises aspirational language and underscores addressing individual needs, emphasizing inclusion and equity. Learning goals are commended for clarity, with a suggestion to include "unique" in Aim 4. Clarification is sought for some terminology. Equality's mention is questioned when equity is the identified principle, urging language consistency.

Feedback Summary:

1. *Adult Role in Identity and Belonging:* Suggest incorporating the adult role in all four themes, specifically addressing how educators can support Identity and Belonging.

2. *Neurodiversity Emphasis:* Highlight the importance of neurodiversity, providing explanations and examples of strategies. Stress the need for children to learn about neurodiversity alongside adults.

3. *Environment Importance:* Emphasize the significance of an appropriate environment meeting every child's needs, including neurodiverse children. Consider integrating neurodiversity throughout the framework and potentially under the theme of new communities.

4. *Aspirational Wording and Phrases:* Appreciate the aspirational language used and encourage maintaining such positive language throughout.

5. *Inclusion and Equity Emphasis:* Stress the need to highlight individual needs, emphasizing strong reflection on inclusion and equity.

6. *Learning Goals Clarity:* Commend clear and concise learning goals, suggesting the inclusion of the term "unique" in Aim 4 to capture a more meaningful aspect of identity.

7. *Wellbeing Theme Feedback:* Acknowledge clarity in Aims 1 and 2. Suggest separating social justice from Wellbeing to emphasize its importance. Welcome the shift from behavior to focusing

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on relationships and interactions. Request more explanation of unfamiliar terminology in Wellbeing.

8. *Page 20 Paragraph Structure:* Recommend breaking down the long sentence on page 20 for improved readability and communication.

9. *Equality vs. Equity Clarification:* Note the reference to equality in the third paragraph and suggest clarifying it since equity has been identified as a principle. Consider consistency of language.

10. *Community Theme Importance:* Emphasize the theme's importance regarding community, family, and diversity. Suggest placing more emphasis on inclusion and welcoming new families into educational settings.

11. *Traveller Community Inclusion Clarification:* Seek clarification on why members of the traveller community are specifically identified in the document.

12. *Partnership with Families:* Appreciate the promotion of partnership with families to celebrate individualities and cultural perspectives. Encourage the promotion of awareness and respect for individuals, viewing the child in a social context.

13. *Reduced Learning Goals Recommendation:* Recommend fewer learning goals for each aim for improved readability.
The document promotes partnering with families, cultivating awareness, respect, and a social context for the child. The preference for fewer learning goals per aim is expressed for improved readability. The importance of breaking down a lengthy sentence on page 20 is noted.

**Theme: Communicating**

Feedback in relation to communication is as follows:

1. *Print Rich Environment:* Suggest extending the emphasis on books to include a "print-rich environment," promoting literacy.

2. *Concerns on Technology Use:* Address concerns about the strong emphasis on technology, providing clear guidance on safe and healthy use. Highlight the need for a balance between digital and screen-free activities, acknowledging the digital age children are growing up in.

3. *Learning Goals for Technology Use:* Express concerns about Aim 3 LG 3, recommending clarity on using digital technology for enjoyment.

4. *Process Over Product:* Appreciate the emphasis on "process over product" in Aim 4 LG 2. Suggest providing an explanation of "transient art" in brackets.

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5. *Home Language Integration:* Stress the importance of knowing a child's home language and incorporating it into the curriculum. Encourage partnerships with parents for language support, including consultation on pronunciation and key words.

6. *Communication Theme Highlights:* Acknowledge the improvement in the layout of the Communication theme. Suggest adding transitions and explaining the concept of mark making in a concise manner.

7. *Inclusivity in Communication:* Emphasize the importance of inclusivity in communication, especially for preverbal children. Highlight the significance of recognizing various means of communication, including sign language and alternative communication methods.

8. *Gaeilge Inclusion:* Appreciate the inclusion of Gaeilge in cultural heritage, preserving diversity.

9. *Emphasis on Process Over Product:* Note the insignificance of the emphasis on process over product in the text; suggest reinforcing this concept in other parts of the framework.

10. *Guidance on Digital Technologies:* Request further examples and explanations on the use of "digital technologies" to avoid misinterpretation and promote meaningful engagement.

Overall, the feedback emphasizes clarity, inclusivity, and the need for specific examples to guide educators effectively.

**Theme: Exploring and Thinking**

Feedback in relation to exploring and thinking is as follows:

1. *Positive and Meaningful Phrases:* Appreciate the introduction of positive and meaningful phrases. Suggest aligning them with the information and resources in the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide.

2. *Metacognitive Terminology:* Acknowledge the presence of unfamiliar terminology and recommend adding asterisks or links to explanations in the glossary.

3. *Digital Technology in Aim 2 LG 2:* Question the use of digital technology as an example in Aim 2 LG 2. Suggest emphasizing open-ended materials and real-life experiences/resources to prioritize them over digital technology.

4. *Positive Focus on Outdoor Learning (Aim 3):* Acknowledge the positive focus on learning in outdoor spaces in Aim 3.

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5. *Identification of Mathematical Ideas:* Suggest naming and identifying specific mathematical ideas and concepts within aims/learning goals or in guidelines/supplementary resources.

6. *Rephrasing for Age and Development Stage:* Request rephrasing of a sentence to reflect the age and stage of development rather than chronological age.

7. *Clarity in Language:* Express concerns about the complexity of terms like "agentic" and suggest ensuring transparency by avoiding potentially unfamiliar terms like "flora and fauna."

8. *STEM Inclusion (Aim 1):* Recommend including the term STEM in Aim 1 and making the aim more concise.

9. *Conciseness in Language (Aims 2 and 4):* Suggest using clearer and more concise language in Aims 2 and 4.

10. *Risk-Taking Emphasis:* Appreciate the focus on risk-taking within the "exploring and thinking" theme and the descriptive statement about challenging play.

11. *Inclusion of Key Themes:* Recognize the visibility of key themes like agentic global citizens, diversity, equity, inclusion, relationships, interactions, holistic learning, and development throughout the themes. Recommend strengthening some aspects in certain themes.

12. *Agentic Educators and Transitions:* Note the visibility of agentic educators and transitions in specific themes, suggesting improvements for better visibility.

13. *Simplified Language in Theme:* Suggest simplifying language in a theme to convey the core message more effectively.

14. *Positive Change in Aim 3:* Appreciate the change in Aim 3 from "explore ways to represent ideas" to "connect with nature and spend meaningful time in the outdoors." Highlight the importance of outdoor experiences.

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

The feedback on Aistear's proposals indicates agreement that its principles are interwoven in the themes, yet concerns were raised about the visual representation's clarity. Suggestions include embedding principles into each theme for a stronger foundation. The need for a consistent developmental approach from pre-school to Primary school is emphasized, with language adaptations for better understanding. Positive feedback on using the Irish language is given, but there's a call for increased emphasis on inclusion and equity. Reviews include the busy and text-heavy infographic lacking clear theme and principle outlines.

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Principles are acknowledged as evident in the themes, and the visual representation is praised for highlighting their interwoven nature. Positive aspects include using Irish terms, though concerns about the term "agentic" are noted. Removal of sample learning opportunities is criticized, seen as valuable for understanding play and positive outcomes for children. Key principles highlighted are 3, 8, and 9. Suggestions include clearer separation of aims, further clarification on the principle of Transitions, and reducing academic language. Implementation support is deemed necessary.

In summary, while there's appreciation for Aistear's principles, feedback highlights concerns about visual clarity, language complexity, and the need for practical support in implementation. Adjustments in terminology, separation of aims, and clarification on certain principles are recommended for a more user-friendly and effective framework.

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

This following information highlights several key points for consideration in the proposals:

1. *Acknowledgment and Importance of Play:*
   - The recognition of the value placed on play is appreciated.

2. *Introduction of Updated Aistear:*
   - A discussion within the team emphasizes the importance of how and when the updated Aistear is introduced for proper implementation.

3. *Inclusion Concept:*
   - Inclusion is deemed crucial and should be seamlessly woven throughout the document.

4. *Document Accessibility:*
   - The layout should be accessible and informed by adult learning principles.
   - Terminology needs to be in plain English, catering to diverse educational levels.
   - A clear, accessible stepped approach with practical examples is suggested.

5. *Use of Models and Examples:*
   - Include a variety of models, especially highlighting how the approach applies to diverse settings like Montessori preschools.
   - Incorporate videos, pictures, and learning journals as practical examples.

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6. *Evaluation Tools:*
   - Suggest providing more focused evaluation tools alongside the existing broad ASPG self-evaluation tools.

7. *Professional Development:*
   - Educators require continuous professional development.
   - Establish clearer links between the framework, practice guide, and pillars of practice.

8. *Language and Support for Implementation:*
   - The language is considered too academic, and settings may need support to implement the proposed aims.

9. *Role of Parents:*
   - Parents are now referred to as educators.

10. *Pedagogical Approach:*
    - Encouraging a slow relational pedagogy through an emergent inquiry-based curriculum approach (Tóg go bog é) is endorsed.

11. *Irish Language Inclusion:*
    - The consistent use of the Irish language is praised as a positive addition.

12. *Challenges and Implementation Structures:*
    - Consideration for fundamental structures is needed for practical implementation, particularly regarding training and workshop delivery.

13. *Specific Feedback on Document Draft:*
    - Positive remarks on the warm and nurturing essence of the draft.
    - Praise for the inclusion of the Irish language to strengthen cultural context.
    - Suggestions for more information on the term "agentic," clearer documentation examples, and alignment of themes/principles with existing guidelines.

In summary, the additional information provided above outlines constructive feedback on various aspects, emphasizing clarity, accessibility, practical examples, and alignment with existing guidelines for successful implementation in early learning and care settings.

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# 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.**
>
> **It is proposed that Guidance for Good Practice will be extended and supplemented through resources developed for the Aistear Toolkit" – how will the tool kit work alongside the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide? What training and support will be provided in using both the toolkit and the Practice Guide?**
>
> **Guidance for good practice mentions practitioners change to educators.**
>
> The Guidance for Good Practice appears to provide information that will be meaningful to educators in practice. Each 'Big Idea' is extremely important in its own right in the early life of babies, toddlers and young children and therefore each one having its own section in the Guidance for Good Practice will support Educators to understand how they can be part of the provision of quality partnerships, interactions, play experience and via their skilled observations and assessments to make rich experience across each of the 'Big Ideas' a daily experience in the life of the baby, toddler or young child with whom they work.
>
> On reviewing the guidance, the language at times is academic, an index of terms at the end of the document would be helpful. More information graphs, more links to videos explaining the information would be more beneficial to all and support Educators in understanding new terminology.

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**Learning and Developing through Play**

Emphasise to owners, managers, and educators the value of play as education. This does seem to be not fully understood and can be limited in some settings. Guidance on how to create playful experiences that promote learning.

**Supporting Learning and Development through Assessment**.

- How to document meaningfully: what does 'meaningful' mean in terms of documenting what children do?
- Why do we document?
- How can we use the documentation usefully?

It is important for this to be highlighted, so that educators will understand the necessity for the task.

**Appendix 1: Example 1: Documenting the learning**

**Documenting:** Provide an example in addition to or instead of the generic paragraph as is done in other text boxes in this section of the appendix

**Planning and Implementing**:   Specify when the following will be done rather than leaving it generic e.g. during which activity: 'introducing new words and phrases and creating space for him to communicate his ideas.' Give examples of activities and resources for 'activities I know he likes and with resources he enjoys.'

Reflecting: Replace the following term with plain English: 'life-world'

Co-regulation and self-regulation have been introduced as learning goals. This gives scope to support educators in understanding and realising these goals for children under the guidelines for good practice under interactions. Irish phrases capture an essence of what the principles and themes are about. A page of these together would be nice as almost like a curriculum statement / vision for practice

Can the guidance for good practice headings be the same as the pillars of practice on the practice guide for consistency? (including transitions and Learning environment to existing 4)

**Learning and Developing through interactions.**
- The part about relationships is clear and concise. The barriers may need to be outlined, what they are and who do they affect. Educators may require guidance to ensure that

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> underprivileged and disabled children, as well as children from minority groups experience equity in their early years setting.
> ▪ Could the term 'disabled children' be included in the language? especially when referring to inclusive spaces. Children are often disabled by their environment, and this would be a good place to reflect on this.
>
> The part about being a reflective and agentic educator is explained well and highlights the importance of the key person approach. The explanation of the slow pedagogy is also clear and concise.
>
> In general, there is a lot of new terminology and that these needs to be highlighted first in the new document.  it is important to ensure that all language is in plain English and is as clear as it can be.
>
> *Points to consider:*
> - *Guidance is more descriptive rather than practical, key messages from the background research could be emphasised in a practical way.*
> - Irish phrases capture an essence of what the principles and themes are about. A page of these together would be nice as almost like a curriculum statement / vision for practice.
> - *Practical guidance on slow relational pedagogy would be very useful to support nurturing and supportive interactions with babies and toddlers. This should be stepped out and given attention, considering care routines can take up a lot of the curriculum for children under two and the focus of making babies and toddler more visible in the updated Aistear Curriculum Framework.*
> - *Co-regulation and self-regulation have been introduced as learning goals. This gives scope to support educators in understanding and realising these goals for children in  the guidelines for good practice under interactions with the use of practical examples.*
> - *Sample learning opportunities will be beneficial, particularly for educators who have not worked in an Irish service/context previously.*
> - *Use of the word 'practitioner' in section Partnerships between Parents and Practitioners, should this be 'educator' to reflect the language in the rest of the document?*
> - *Cultural gaze part of sustainability could be separated out to highlight it's importance.*
> - *When referring to inclusive spaces, the term 'disabled children' could be included in the language. Children are often disabled by their environment and this would be a good place to reflect on that. Signpost to UDI would be useful here.*
> - Continuous reference to a slow relational pedagogy is very positive, clear examples here would be very useful.
> - Important not to oversimply complex and very relevant issues e.g. removing barriers for more vulnerable and not treating all babies and toddlers the same.
> - emphasise the responsibility of all curriculums to prioritise the child's right to play as the main component of learning.
> - All new terminology should be clearly and concisely explained, plain English is used and is as clear as can be.

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- In section Learning and developing through play the notion of that educators should accept the play of children in whatever form it takes could be expanded further and emphasis should be placed on recognising the child's stage of development.
- *Examples of how to consult with babies and toddlers would be useful.*

## 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?**

Educators can be supported in working meaningfully with the curriculum framework right from the start of when the updated version of Aistear is released, with the provision of training sessions for Educators on the updated version, roadshows, presentations, recorded videos and online webinars. The addition of links or QR codes throughout the Aistear text might be useful in describing the example in Appendix 1 of the draft proposals, the Educator has observed Sammy and has noticed that he is developing independence in his actions, assessing risk and challenging himself when he is climbing up, on and over things. This observation by the Educator of Sammy's Learning Disposition holds valuable information that the Educator can

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then use to reflect upon to plan for the provision of meaningful and fun opportunities for Sammy to experience plenty of opportunities for climbing in his learning environment. At the 'planning and implementing' stage of Appendix 1, a link to resources already contained in the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide for example on Risky Play (such as the video available here; https://www.aistearsiolta.ie/en/creating-and-using-the-learning-environment/examples-and-ideas-for-practice/risky-play-and-the-learning-environment.html) could provide the Educator with inspiration as well as evidence-informed information to support their planning for the provision of opportunities for Sammy to climb in the future.

Better Start website provides tipsheets linked to Aistear on areas including transitions, interactions, sensory play and the resource My Inclusion Plan.

News & Resources - Better Start https://www.betterstart.ie/news-resources/

Hanen resources support interactions:

Hanen Language and Literacy Tips Hanen Language and Literacy Tips https://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Monthly-Language-and-Literacy-Tips.aspx

Building Communication in Children with Autism (hanen.org) https://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Autism-Corner.aspx

To support partnership with parents in relation to language development: Language-building Tips for Parents of Young Children (hanen.org) https://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Parent-Tips.aspx

Community of practice groups organised through CCC for services/educators

Webinars are a resource that can be used to support Educators with the option to ask questions and to engage in peer learning and support. Following from this a podcast series can be another way to support reflection on different elements,  also videos, testimonials, and real-life examples.

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