WWGS   Aistear Submission

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	Katie Chapple
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Name of organisation/group:	WWGS (WorldWise Global Schools)
Does your organisation wish to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website?	Yes
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?

We welcome the update of the Aistear Framework and the opportunity to participate in the consultation process. It is clear from the update of the Aistear Framework that the holistic development of the child is the focus at the beginning of a lifelong journey of learning. The framework also recognises the changes that have taken place both in Ireland and internationally, and acknowledges the role of babies, toddlers and young children as global citizens. WorldWise Global Schools (WWGS) is Irish Aid's national Global Citizenship Education (GCE) programme for post-primary schools. WWGS is the key channel through which Irish Aid's support of GCE in post-primary schools is co-ordinated. WWGS can collaborate with other key players in the sector to strengthen GCE in Ireland and to work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Target 4.7 of the SDGs highlights the importance of GCE stating that, by 2030 all learners should 'acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development' through education for sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, global citizenship and the promotion of peace and non-violence.

At present, WWGS offers support and training to educators in the post-primary sector to support them to incorporate GCE into their work. We recommend that partnerships between Early Childhood Practitioners and organisations in the GCE sector should be clearly communicated to support practitioners in implementing the updated Aistear Framework.

Since the implementation of Aistear in 2009, the structure and focus of the development of babies, toddlers and young children in pre-school settings has been well documented. We broadly support the continuation of this structure and welcome the updates that have been incorporated since phase 1 of the consultation process. WWGS are supportive of the updated Aistear Framework and hope that the suggestions below further enhance the framework drawing on lifelong Global Citizenship Education to achieve this.

- 'Agentic, competent and confident learner' (p.8, fig.1). The word agentic can be interpreted in different ways; to be able to express agency on one's own behalf or *the behalf of another.* The word itself is not accessible, and the latter definition is contradictory to the former so we suggest replacing this with 'independent'. While

- definitions appear in the footnotes, simpler language should be used to make the framework accessible to practitioners and to avoid possible ambiguity.
- 'The educator acknowledges the importance of the family culture, language(s), values, beliefs, traditions, experiences and interests that babies, toddler and young children bring from their home and community' (p.9). We feel the inclusion of the words 'ever changing and globally interconnected and inter-reliant world' (p.5) should be included here.
- 'The purpose of Aistear is to support babies', toddlers' and young children's learning and development' (p.9). We suggest an addition of '*in a complex ever-changing and interconnected global world'.*
- 'Appreciates our cultural and linguistic history and story and introduces terms *as Gaeilge* as part of this' (p.9). We suggest an addition of *'and recognises the connections we have to the wider world*'.
- 'I am an agentic citizen and use my 'voice' to show you what is important to me' (p.12). We suggest a change to '*I am an independent global citizen and I use my 'voice' to show what is important to me'.* Suggest a further explanation of 'voice' to include non-verbal sounds, gestures, creative, digital, physical movements or expressions.
- Tá a lán focial as Gaeilge comhtháite san 'document'. Tá béim ar dteanga- ní fhaca mé é riomhe seo agus tá sé an deas é a fheicáil.

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?

Certainly the importance of parents and the relationships between home and early years settings are highlighted. The partnerships that nurture a diverse culture and celebrate different traditions and customs are evident in the updated Aistear framework.

- 'My parents are the most important people in my life' (p.12). We acknowledge that for the majority of babies, toddlers and young children this may be accurate, however it overlooks babies, toddlers and young children who are cared for in varied and diverse circumstances. By stating parents only, others are marginalised. We also suggest that in this description, the role of carers, guardians, and other family relations such as Grandparents, who make valuable contributions to the lives of babies, toddlers and young children, should be acknowledged.
- Relationships with the wider community such as An Garda Siochana, members of public services such as libraries, county councils and emergency services all participate in the holistic development of the baby, toddler and young child. We suggest that these relationships should be more distinctly acknowledged.
- By extending the descriptor to include the relationship between the baby, toddler, young child and the natural world, it would signal that Aistear understands that we as humans are part of and interconnected with the natural world, rather than distinct from it. Extending the descriptor to include elements of the guidance for Good Practice in the section 'Supporting Sustainability' could bolster the innate *fiosracht agus grá* that young children possess for the natural world.
- 'Diversity of family, home and community are respected and celebrated while also noticing and valuing our similarities and connectedness' (p.12). We suggest '*connectedness to our local, national and global communities.*
- 'Help me to learn and to recognise and challenge injustice and to stand up for myself and others' (p.12) This could be an opportune space to highlight the injustices and inequalities that exist in our society and in the wider world.

- 'I benefit from time and space to be with others - family, friends, peers and educators as well as coming to know others in my local community' (p.13). We suggest '*I benefit from time and space to be by myself, with others and in the natural environment'.*
- Broader relationships with the planet and with the global community could also be included here.
- 'I want to share my family culture and celebrations with you and my friends' (p.13). We suggest an inclusion of the words '*to acknowledge our connections, and similarities, as well as the richness in our differences'.*

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

- We welcome that a children's rights discourse is adopted in the updated framework. In particular the language of our own constitution (31st and 42nd amendment), in addition to a number of articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The right to voice (Article 12); freedom of expression (Article 13); freedom of thought (Article 14; right to privacy (Article 16); right to education (Article 28) and the right to development of personality (Article 29) - these should be highlighted explicitly and listed as rights in the updated framework.
- We feel that the right of the young person to 'meaningfully participate and exercise influence on decisions that affect them' is realised by adults being an appropriate audience that can listen and support young people to have influence. The role of the adult as the catalyst through which rights are realised could be emphasised further by perhaps outlining practically how this can be done.
- We would encourage that the framework be based on human rights that are universally accepted rather than using language such as 'children as citizens'. The term citizen may have a narrow definition in the minds of some. Justice oriented understandings of global citizenship may prove useful here.
- We believe that the links to stewardship need to be practical. It may be overwhelming for practitioners with little knowledge of these concepts. Using simpler language, providing training and establishing a designated maintained site where practitioners could go for advice would be welcome.

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

The young person's innate sense of fairness is acknowledged well in the updated framework.

- Terms like 'equity' need to be clearly defined in plain English so that it is not ambiguous. Inequity in our society needs to be included such as the Direct Provision system in Ireland.
- An anti-bias approach such as the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for ECCE (DCYA 2016) could be included.
- Meaningful participation is informed by an awareness of age, gender, family status, ethnicity, religion, worldview, and membership of the Traveller community. (p.12). We suggest:: *membership of the Traveller community and/or other groups.*
- Recognise my abilities, identities, needs and potential and respect my right to belong. Put supports in place so that I am empowered to participate and contribute in a

meaningful way (p.12). We suggest: *I also recognise the abilities, identities, needs and potential of others, and I respect their right to belong.*

- Recognise and celebrate my achievements at every age and stage of development (p.12). We suggest : *I recognise and celebrate the achievements at every age and stage of development of others.*

- My family, culture, home-language (s) and ethnicity are what make me Me! Celebrate and value me, my family and community (p.12). We suggest: *I respect the culture, languages and ethnicities of others.*

We feel that this section could be bolstered with suitable, relevant and up-to-date resources to guide and support practitioners. A dedicated and maintained webpage which aids practitioners would be welcomed. The following websites and resources may be useful:

- Center for Human Rights and Citizenship Education, DCU https://www.dcu.ie/chrce/resources

- Trocaire: resources for preschool including SDGs for children, 'Helping Hands' and video resources

- 'Just Children 1' Story Sack - designed to introduce children aged 3-6 years to global concepts such as fairness and interdependence.

- Amnesty International Stories of human rights https://www.amnesty.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Human-Rights-Stories.pdf

- UNICEF Child Rights for pre-school: https://www.unicef.ie/child-rights-education/earlychildhood/

- The Ombudsman for Children. A resource designed in consultation with young people - 'It's your right' has age-appropriate information, pictures and videos as well as a game called 'Rights Runner'. https://www.oco.ie/itsyourright/4-7-years-old/

- Early Childhood Ireland https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/about/advocacy/our-policy-on-childrens-rights/#:~:text=Every%20child%20is%20born%20with,to%20be%20protected%20from%20harm.

- Children's Rights Alliance https://www.childrensrights.ie/childrens-rights-ireland/childrens-rights-ireland

- The Yellow Flag Toolkit (Irish Traveller Movement) for diversity and inclusion.

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

- The right of babies, toddlers and young children to play is asserted. This could be supported with reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989).
- The emphasis of play for play's sake, with no explanation necessary, and without adult interference in the play, should be highlighted as a right of the child within Aistear Guidelines for Good Practice (characteristics for play p.53, table 7).
- We feel that there could be more emphasis on the outdoors so that babies, toddlers and young children could be connected and part of the natural world and not separate from it.
- With the aim of promoting sustainable practices and a circular economy, we feel that an emphasis needs to be placed on the play materials used, to move away from plastics and glue to a focus on recycling, redesigning and minimising waste.
- Given our collective role in caring for our planet, we feel that a stronger link could be made between play and the concept of stewardship for the earth.
- The International Play association have resources on children's right to play: https://ipaworld.org/childs-right-to-play/uncrc-article-31/un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child-1/

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

- Transitions, when unsupported by adults can be periods of difficulty for young people. In the original Aistear framework the ages from birth to 6 years were included which incorporated those in the infant classrooms. The new framework states that the Aistear curriculum does not include 'primary and special schools' (p.7). We suggest that there is an alignment between curriculum in pre-school and primary school. Separating the two curricula does not embrace the smooth transitions that should exist between pre-school and primary school.
- The language in this statement is unnecessarily burdensome: ' I am an agentic, confident and competent learner – notice and respond to how I am developing dispositions, attitudes and values, skills, knowledge and understanding' (p.14).
- 'When everyone talks with me, and to each other, this makes change and transition a lot better' (p.14). Consider changing 'talks with me' to *'communicates with me'*.

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:

- The streamlining of the 12 principles into 9 facilitates a more practical implementation of the framework. Rooting the framework in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child may guide practitioners in how best to support babies, toddlers and young children in becoming active global citizens.
- There is a change in language from equality to equity and it would be useful to define the distinction between those two words so that educators understand the impact that equity has.
- The bulleted italic points written in the child's voice has impact and reinforces the message of the child as agentic. Perhaps there should be a short sentence before these bullet points, for example, '*Illustration of this principle is in the voice of the baby, toddler, young child'* or alternatively label these as learning outcomes or learning objectives so that practitioners can refer to these descriptors in their planning and reporting.
- Examples of how these principles will translate into practice would assist educators greatly.

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

The integrated approach to wellbeing where it is incorporated during the day is a healthy approach as it is not siloed into 'wellbeing' time.

- We welcome the acknowledgement of the 'slow, nurturing pedagogy' (p.18) which could be further supported by acknowledging that our wellbeing is enhanced by being connected to each other and to nature. An explicit link between humanity and the natural world shows the connection between environmental health and wellbeing and human mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- Social connections could be highlighted more to emphasise how we are reltional and social beings and that our relationships with others are an essential component of our human health and wellbeing.
- Empathy could be more strongly emphasised in this theme, especially in terms of demonstrations and practices of empathy.

- We suggest that by embedding the SDGs within the themes, issues relating to the complex, interdependent and interconnected world we live in may be explored more fully. Specific reference in this case to SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) has the potential to overlap and connect with wider national policy concerning the 'whole-of Government' approach to the implementation of the SDGs, as well as the objectives of the National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development- ESD to 2030 (Department of Education, 2022).
- They have a right to be agentic and to have a say in matters that impact on them (p.18). The two clauses are not absolutely related; consider separating these two.
- Active physical play and outdoor experiences support their holistic wellbeing (p.18). Consider the addition of '*play for play's sake*' to encourage play that has no adult influence.
- A resource to support this theme is 'Have you filled a bucket today: A guide to daily happiness' by Carol McCloud- online versions with animations available also.
- 'Build secure attachments and experience consistent, reciprocal, nurturing relationships that support confidence and connectedness with family, friends, educators, and community' (p.19). We suggest adding 'nature' to this.
- 'Use their bodies to move/be active, experience, discover and explore, and extend their physicality through enabling, inclusive environments and fun experiences that encourage practice, challenge, adventure and mastery' (p.19). We suggest adding outdoor play to this.

Theme: Identity and Belonging

- We support the inclusion of 'age, gender, family status, disability, ethnicity, religion, worldview, or membership of the Traveller community'. We recommend adding to this the interconnection and inter-reliance of the global community on all people.
- The sense of the richness and bród of the culture that the baby, toddler or young child comes from is a lovely inclusion.
- We welcome the inclusion of rights and themes of justice, fairness, and equity woven into the theme.
- We welcome na cúplí frásaí Gaeilge a chur san framework. We recommend an inclusion of a wider range of linguistic backgrounds, cultures and ways of living in order to demonstrate many different ways of being a global citizen.
- A stronger focus is needed on our identity and belonging to the planet; our responsibilities towards the planet and as a global citizen.
- 'Knowing that their voice is listened and responded to' (p.20). This is a welcome inclusion which acknowledges the rights of children. We suggest a change to the plural 'voices' to acknowledge that young people are not a homogeneous group, but a diverse group with many different voices.

Theme: Communicating

- 'They use multiple ways of communicating, including but not limited to: facial expressions; gestures; behaviours; body movements; cooing; babbling; language(s); digital and assistive technologies; and augmentative and alternative communication' (p.23). It is very welcome to see the inclusion of other types of 'voices'.
- The acknowledgement of creative pursuits such as 'art, mark-making, dance, drama, music, poetry, pictures, writing and stories' (p.23) is welcome as a form of communication and expression. We suggest the inclusion of free expression in these forms to acknowledge the time to create in a way that the baby, toddler or young child desires.
- 'Aistear supports learning about the importance of Gaeilge in our cultural heritage' (p.23). We suggest an inclusion of how our heritage is connected to the wider world or an acknowledgment of other cultures that enrich our own heritage.
- 'Combine different communication strategies to express choices, ideas and opinions' (p.23). We suggest an inclusion of '*and to respect the choices, ideas and opinions of others'.*
- 'Experience a print-rich environment and learn the value of books and digital technologies for enjoyment and as a source of information to learn about the world' (p.24). We suggest that a critical approach should be used when selecting stories for babies, toddlers and young children. Stories in pre-school settings should not reinforce stereotypes, ableism, or dominant paradigms but should open the baby, toddler and young child up to understanding different perspectives, the pursuit of empathy, solidarity, equity and justice. Support should be available to practitioners in recommending such materials.

Theme: Exploring and Thinking

- The focus on care in many forms is interwoven throughout the updated Aistear Framework. We would encourage attention drawn to caring for the Earth in this theme.
- 'Feel a connection and sense of place with nature, by being in nature and having stories, folklore and play merging with local heritage in coming to know the environment in a deeper way throughout the seasons' (p.24). We feel that an explicit connection is needed here to recognise that humans are part of nature and not separate from it.
- The idea of playfulness and exploration are woven through this theme, which is welcome to see.
- There is ample room to connect the SDGs to this theme when babies, toddlers and young children are exploring and thinking.
- ' Recognise their connection to and responsibility for the environment and their community and come to know and respect local people, places, flora and fauna (p.25)'. It is welcome to see the connection to the environment in this aim.
- 'Explore a variety of resources, provocations and materials, including digital technologies, to gather and use information to find out about the world around them' (p.26). We suggest an inclusion of the environment and world around them as a natural and valuable resource.

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

Yes, we believe that the principles are visible throughout the themes. There are more opportunities where the principles of global citizenship can be integrated further as highlighted in the previous sections.

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

We appreciate the inclusion of *Gaeilge* and this could be used by practitioners in their everyday interactions as it will help embed the language for young learners.

Global Citizenship Education equips the learners with the knowledge and skills to explore key issues such as human rights, discrimination, climate justice and equity through interactive approaches, empowering them to become agents of positive change. GCE provides the opportunity to examine global issues locally, by connecting them to the wider world. GCE supports young people in considering their values, choices and actions to explore how they can make positive changes in the world. Support for GCE is available in the sector and should be communicated to practitioners through a dedicated website that is continually updated with new resources.

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.

- Good practice will lie in how the practitioners are trained and supported in their settings. The most effective way to do this is to have strong links with the GCE sector. Training the practitioners in short courses online or in person, forming communities of practices or short modules available in initial early childhood training must be established for understanding of GCE.

- Example 3 in the appendices suggests that being involved in fundraisers is an appropriate activity for showing empathy. Fundraising activities can reinforce stereotypes and systemic inequality whereas acts of solidarity such as campaigning for change or learning about root causes can be more beneficial.

- The focus on sustainability and the natural world is welcome to see, but practical examples and case studies are needed to help support practitioners in everyday experiences. The same is true for the broad statements like 'building relationships with parents' but practical guidelines are lacking in how to do this. Pre-schools are at the centre of many communities and it is important to acknowledge the large role these settings will have in community life.

- 'As global citizens, each baby, toddler and young child has an emerging responsibility for sustainability' (p.30). It is important to say here that it is the settings/practitioners responsibility also to think about the materials used, who produces them, how they are sourced and how they are recycled or reused.

- 'This enables educators to know the baby, toddler and young child – to slow things down, to be present, to notice their identities and capabilities, to see their potential' (p.32). We welcome the acknowledgement of the slow pedagogy, but we must question how this will be resourced?

- 'Each baby, toddler and young child has both a right and a desire to play' (p.33). We welcome the inclusion of rights throughout the updated framework.

- 'Child-led play is freely chosen and can involve risk, challenge, joy, hope and deep engagement' (p.33). We welcome the focus on child-led play without adult interference.

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?

Many existing GCE organisations are ready to provide assistance to practitioners through CPD, online and in-person, resources, guides, videos, case studies, websites and books. A dedicated online space which has up to date resources would be welcome.

Some examples include:

www.developmenteducation.ie GCE resources for different age groups.

Trocaire.org 'Good neighbours', the SDGs for kids, Global Village

'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).

Oberman *et al.* (2012) 'Developing a GCE programme for 3-6 year olds'.

https://doras.dcu.ie/21595/1/161_SCAN.pdf

UNICEF https://www.unicef.ie/child-rights-education/earlychildhood/

Amnesty International https://www.amnesty.ie/human-rights-education-primary-school-resource/

United Nations SDGs for kids: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-action-superheroes-info/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAr8eqBhD3ARIsAIe-buPihpox0NlmSA-HFkyJbk892Jxa2Kn7dyCbWMWN3-M8rmOD8OaokosaAsGbEALw_wcB

 The Worlds Largest Lesson- age appropriate lesson plans and material for ages 4+

https://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/resources/?_sft_age_group=4-8&_sft_language=english