



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	Claire Glavey, Education Officer
Email address:	
Name of organisation/group:	Global Village is the strategic partnership for Global Citizenship Education in primary schools between Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs and a consortium of four partners: Dublin City University,

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	Irish National Teachers' Organisation, Irish Primary Principals' Network and Trócaire
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?

Global Village is the strategic partnership for Global Citizenship Education in Ireland, between Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs and a consortium of four partners: Dublin City University (DCU), Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) and Trócaire. We welcome the updated *Aistear*: Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and the opportunity to engage in this consultation. We are particularly interested in supporting smoother transitions for young children between early childhood education settings and primary schools.

As such, we note that in the Overview of Changes (p.5), no mention is made of the changing role of *Aistear* in primary school settings. As per the original Framework "*Aistear* is the curriculum framework for children from birth to six years in Ireland" and the original framework provides many examples of learning experiences including those for the infant classes. The new Framework, however, states that "*Aistear* is the curriculum framework for all children from birth to six years in all settings other than primary and special schools" (p.7). This is a significant change for children in infant classes and for infant class teachers alike. We believe further information is required to outline how infant teachers will be supported to move from the use of *Aistear* and the Primary School Curriculum (1999), to the use of the Primary Curriculum Framework (2023) alone.

The rest of the proposals keep the *Aistear* structure, maintaining the child-centred focus of the original Framework, and the recognition of learning as a lifelong journey, while also responding to societal changes in Ireland and internationally. We support the changes made to the framework, and welcome the stronger global perspective incorporated into the updated framework, as evidenced in the shift from the principle of 'children as citizens' to 'agentic global citizens'. This shift, along with the strengthened principle on 'Diversity, Equity and Inclusion', provide a strong case for the NCCA to pursue and support collaboration between the Early Childhood Education sector and the Global Citizenship



Education (GCE) sector, which would be of benefit to both. The GCE sector offers experience, training, and resources for educators to support them to incorporate high quality GCE into their work.

We are positive and supportive of the updated *Aistear* Framework. The suggestions provided below are intended to further enhance the Framework and its implementation.

The situating of the *Aistear* updates in “*an everchanging and globally inter-connected and inter-reliant world*” (p.5) could be repeated in the Updated Curriculum Framework Introduction (p.7). We recommend this so as to draw attention to the global context which has significant influence on the families and education settings within which babies, toddlers and young children learn and develop.

We suggest wording such as: *Aistear recognises that the families and education settings within which babies, toddlers and young children learn and develop, are situated in an everchanging and globally inter-connected and inter-reliant world. Humanity is currently facing multiple crises (climate, biodiversity, social), which must be grappled with for the sake of the health and wellbeing of current and future generations and of the planet. Aistear sets out to establish a foundation for lifelong learning and for engagement with these global challenges, by fostering Global Citizenship Education values including empathy, solidarity, inclusivity, and learner agency.*

We also recommend that the Purpose section on p.10 be expanded to include a point on Global Citizenship Education.

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, they do.

The relationship between humanity and the rest of the natural world is also of great importance to babies, toddlers, and young people. This could be reflected in the descriptor of ‘Relationships and Interactions’ on p.12, drawing on the Guidance for Good Practice section on Supporting Sustainability, to highlight the interdependence between humanity and the rest of the natural world.

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

Yes. We welcome and support the emphasis on global citizenship and human rights across the updated *Aistear* Framework.



We recommend that the definition of a global citizen in the glossary be extended to include strong emphasis on global justice, recognition of the need to challenge inherently unequal global systems and an emphasis on critical thinking skills, empathy, solidarity, and collective action. Without a critical and justice-oriented understanding of global citizenship, terminology around citizenship can be used in a narrow and restrictive manner.

The [Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy](#) (p.4) could be drawn upon to enhance the definition. For example, the current definition could be adapted to read: *A global citizen is aware of and understands the wider world – and critically reflects upon their place in it. Each baby, toddler and young child is a citizen of the world. They take an active role in their local community and engage with national and global justice initiatives to challenge systemic inequalities. They are empathetic and work in solidarity with others to make our planet more peaceful, sustainable and fair.*

It would also be of benefit to explicitly detail that human rights are inherent and inalienable. This may be required so as to make clear that rights are not conditional e.g. in exchange for responsibilities. This could be explained in the glossary, and through the inclusion of an example on the topic of human rights education.

We suggest that information be included on relevant international frameworks, specifically the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and recommend that educators be trained on the significance of these frameworks e.g. Target 4.7 of the SDGs which highlights the importance of GCE in achieving all of the SDGs: “By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”.

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

Yes, the proposals embed these concepts well.

We recommend incorporating into the descriptor of this principle (p.12) explicit reference to and recognition of the inequity that exists within Irish society as well as global inequities, and providing examples of these e.g. the Direct Provision system in Ireland.

We note the need to question dominant paradigms from the outset and throughout all curriculum development and subsequent implementation of the same. We caution against the risks of further embedding and perpetuating mythologies around superiority and inferiority in its various forms – cultural, economic, racial, linguistic, environmental etc.



These myths must be challenged across all curricula and at all levels of education. The stories we tell and share with babies, toddlers and young children have great power and become the foundation of their understanding of the world around them. When these stories are grounded in mythology such as that surrounding the perceived superiority of neoliberal, euro-centric, anglophone culture, and indeed regarding the superiority of humanity over the rest of nature, we are doing babies, toddlers, and young children a great disservice and are perpetuating systemic inequalities.

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

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

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

Yes. We support the focus on play for play's sake, and the references to outdoor play. This outdoor learning element could be further strengthened by linking it to the concept of stewardship for the Earth, which goes beyond a surface level approach to sustainability and considers at a deeper level our role as human beings in the care of the planet and natural world, of which we are part.

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

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

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



As noted above, we draw attention to, and seek clarity, regarding the move away from using *Aistear* within the Primary School setting. We would like to see more clarity regarding how the alignment between the updated *Aistear* Framework and the new Primary Curriculum Framework will work in practice. Given the benefits that incorporating the *Aistear* Framework has brought to children in Junior and Senior Infant classes over the past 14 years, we would like to see clear guidance on how the strengths of *Aistear* will be incorporated into the Primary Curriculum Framework, and guidance for infant teachers on supporting the transition from early childhood education settings into primary school. From a GCE perspective, the labelling of one of the *Aistear* principles as ‘agentic global citizens’ is more evidently global in nature than the ‘being an active citizen’ competency in the Primary Curriculum Framework.

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:

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

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

Regarding the use of the term ‘agentic’ in both the ‘agentic global citizens’ and ‘agentic educators’ principles – further exploration of this term and how to translate it into practice will be required to support on the delivery of these principles.

Themes of *Aistear*

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



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

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

Theme: Wellbeing

We welcome the integrated approach to Wellbeing that is taken in Aistear.

We suggest expanding the descriptor to explicitly acknowledge that our health and wellbeing are enhanced by being connected to each other and nature, that humanity is interconnected by nature, and that we are interdependent with the rest of the natural world. It should be stated that there is a direct link between environmental health and human mental and physical health, and that social connection and meaning derived from collective endeavours is an essential component of human health and wellbeing. We recommend including reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG3 Good Health and Wellbeing).

Theme: Identity and Belonging

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

Theme: Communicating

With regard to Aim 3, as identified earlier, care and critical thinking should be applied to the selection of stories shared with babies, toddlers, and young people. These stories should be selected and used not to reinforce stereotypes and dominant paradigms, but to foster critical analysis, understanding of different perspectives and the pursuit of empathy, solidarity, equity, and justice. GCE provides myriad ways to support this critical analysis, and also to enhance Aim 4, which focuses on creativity and imagination, each of which is a core feature of GCE.

Theme: Exploring and Thinking

We support the focus on care (in many forms) throughout the *Aistear* Framework, and in particular the attention drawn to caring for the Earth in this theme. Regarding Aim 3, we



recommend including the point that humans are part of nature and interdependent with the rest of the natural world, rather than separate to it.

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

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

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

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

It gives learners the opportunity to examine, in age-appropriate ways, the impact of these issues globally and locally, including how their own lives are affected. It also supports them in considering how their values, choices and actions can contribute to or mitigate an issue and in exploring what action they can take themselves.

The implementation of the *Aistear* proposals could be further enhanced through engagement with the GCE sector.



Supporting Aistear

Part 1: Guidance for Good Practice

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

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

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

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

Considering the strength of the *Aistear* Framework (both the original and the updated frameworks), the key challenge for Good Practice lies in how well educators are trained, supported and resourced for its implementation. We recommend that strong connections be fostered between Early Childhood Education practitioners and GCE practitioners. This could be done through a Community of Practice model, supporting educators to understand and grapple with the implementation of education to foster 'agentic global citizens' – a term that might otherwise appear daunting or overly complex. GCE provides the framework for connecting the local to the global.

With regard to Example 3 in the Appendices, we recommend changing the suggestion of 'being involved in fundraisers to support children and families' to move away from a charity-oriented response to symptoms of systemic inequality including poverty and hunger. From early childhood, it is essential to instil in babies, toddlers, and young children a sense of social justice and to draw their attention and understanding to systemic issues more than to symptoms of those issues. Examples of action, with a view to fostering that agentic global citizenship highlighted through principle 1, should show educators how to engage babies, toddlers, and young children in collective acts of solidarity.



Instead of 'Being involved in fundraisers to support children and families' (p.45), an alternative activity might be "Sharing their learning on inequality, poverty and hunger with adults who have responsibility to address these issues".

This could be done by:

- creating a piece of artwork to reflect children's learning;
- voicing their learning and suggestions for improving sustainable ways of living (recorded by an adult in a written format).
- sending examples of children's learning and suggestions regarding sustainability could be sent (email/letter with e.g. photographs of the artwork) to local/national/international representatives with responsibility for sustainable development.
- linking children's actions with wider campaigns e.g. the World's Largest Lesson (annual UN educational programme on the SDGs).
- inviting local government representatives to visit the education setting to learn directly from the children and listen to their concerns and ideas regarding sustainability.
- engaging in an awareness-raising campaign by inviting parents/guardians and members of the wider community to come and learn from the children directly and/or through a display of their work.

The emphasis in these suggestions being on the toddlers/young children having the opportunity to engage in a meaningful and age-appropriate way with the concept of sustainability, that does not reinforce the charity model but instead gives them early experiences of collective engagement grounded in social justice and acts of citizenship.

The example of fundraising (p.45) under the theme of 'supporting sustainability' and under the pillar of economic could be read as suggesting that fundraising is an appropriate response to existing unsustainable economic practices, rather than challenging the root causes of these unsustainable practices.



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?

Early childhood educators can be supported through the establishment of relationships with existing organisations and practitioners offering Global Citizenship Education (GCE) resources, workshops, and other forms of support for educators.

Global Village (www.globalvillageschools.ie) provides GCE support for primary school teachers and leaders, including infant teachers looking to support children to make a smooth transition from early childhood education settings to primary school.