



## Updating *Aistear* Phase 2 Consultation

### Written submission template for organisations, groups and individuals

This template is intended to help you (and your colleagues) develop a written submission in relation to Updating *Aistear*. Please e-mail your completed submission to [updatingaistear@ncca.ie](mailto:updatingaistear@ncca.ie).

The template is structured according to the Principles, Themes and Supporting *Aistear*. Each section is briefly summarised as a support for working on the submission. Before completing the template, please read the draft updated *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* at this link: <https://ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/early-childhood-education-developments/updating-aistear/consultation/>.

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

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

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>E-mail address:</b>	
<b>Do you wish to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website?</b>	Yes/No
<b>Do you wish to have your written submission published on the NCCA website?</b>	Yes/No

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

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



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?

The structure is quite similar which is great to see and promotes a reassuring sense of familiarity which will make applying the new *Aistear* very straightforward to those who have worked with the original *Aistear* since 2009, but a sentence in the 'Introduction' is somewhat unclear. It is stating that **'Aistear is the curriculum Framework for all children from birth to six years in all settings other than primary and special schools'**. I am interpreting this as *Aistear* not being used with young children between the ages of 0-6 in primary schools and special schools. My understanding based on the original *Aistear* document, is that it is for all children which includes young children from 0-6 in special schools and young children up to 6 years of age in Junior and Senior primary school classroom settings? This is suggesting to me that *Aistear* will no longer be used with children in 0-6 age cohort in primary school and special schools. Given the significance Transitions has been given as it is now a principle in the updated *Aistear*, it would be important for *Aistear* to still apply to all children between the ages of 0-6 in all settings so that transitions from and/or between early years, special schools and junior primary settings can be effectively supported. The terminology 'special schools' needs to be reconsidered too, it is a somewhat dated term. Perhaps 'settings for young children with additional needs' may be more appropriate.

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, absolutely. The emphasis on interactions underpins the types of learning that are important in the early years and the outcomes we want for young children, that is, growing into competent and confident learners. It is great to see the importance of interactions and relationships specifically mentioned in the proposed updated *Aistear*.



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. It was interesting to see it named specifically as Agentic Global Citizens. Part of the accompanying definition of this term brought attention to the emerging responsibilities young children have as rights holders, for themselves, others and for the environment. World Wise Global Schools (<https://www.worldwiseschools.ie/development-education/>) describes Global Citizenship Education (GCE) as engaging the head, heart and hands which is reminiscent of the Montessori approach which describes how children learn as a process involving the hands and the mind. Some of the key areas of GCE are knowledge, skills, values and attitudes which young children develop in the early years based on interactions with their environment. Often it can be challenging to consider babies and toddlers, who naturally are very dependent on primary care givers to have their needs met, as citizens with rights. Would it help at all to make a specific mention within this principle of the UNCRC thematic areas which are: survival rights; development rights; protection rights; & participation rights and how these rights may be actualised for the baby/toddler by the Agentic Educator in order to support babies and toddlers as Agentic Global Citizens?

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

Yes, they do but I would not like to see the term 'equality' dropped. The proposal mentions the shift from using 'equality' to 'equity' is to reflect policy and sectoral change but I think it is important for practitioners/educators/those working with babies, toddlers/young children to be able to make the distinction between the two. How will **not** using the term 'equality' impact on service provision. I am specifically thinking of the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter published in 2016. It is an excellent resource for AIM support workers, Inclusion Coordinators and Early Childhood Professionals alike.

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

Yes, they do. There was a great emphasis on this in the original document, it is great to see it here too in the updated Aistear proposal.

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

Yes, it does, especially with the introduction of the new principle 'Transitions'. It is concerning to read in the Introduction of the proposal that Aistear will no longer apply in primary and special school settings. This proposed updated Aistear does mention there will be alignment between it



and the revised primary school curriculum but the suggestion in the Introduction that it will no longer apply could mean the continuity of experience and progression will not be fully realised.

### 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

**Feedback on Principle 1 Agentic Global Citizens:** I mentioned above if it would it help at all to make a specific mention within this principle of the UNCRC thematic areas which are: survival rights; development rights; protection rights; & participation rights and how these rights may be actualised for the baby/toddler by the Agentic Educator in order to support babies and toddlers as Agentic Global Citizens?

**Feedback on Principle 2 Diversity Equity and Inclusion:** I think the term equality needs to remain in this *Aistear*. It is explained at the start of the proposal a shift from using 'equality' to 'equity' reflects policy and sectoral change. I think it is important for practitioners/educators/those working with babies, toddlers/young children to be able to make the distinction between the two. How will not using the term 'equality' impact on the use of the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter published in 2016? It is an excellent resource for AIM support workers, Inclusion Coordinators and Educators alike?

**Feedback on Principle 5 Agentic Educators:** Are there a few words missing from the 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point/ sentence: 'I trust that you will find appropriate resources and to help me to get access to professional support and services when I need it'. The words **to support my learning and development** inserted after **appropriate resources** would make this point in respect of Agentic Educators a bit clearer, I think?

**Feedback on Principle 6 Transitions:** I have noticed a typo in this sentence: 'Learn about me and know what I want and **need** (at the moment it reads as **ned**) to make my transitions as positive and effective as they can be'. There is also a typo in the foot note at the bottom of the page in the year 2018 which is presented as **20218**. Given the significance Transitions has been given as it is now a principle in the updated *Aistear*, it would be important for *Aistear* to still apply to all children between the ages of 0-6 in all settings so that transitions between early years, special schools and junior primary settings can be effectively supported.



### 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 focus of this theme aligns with Trócaire’s Early Years Development Education resources (<https://www.trocaire.org/our-work/educate/>) and Global Village Global Citizenship Education resources (<https://globalvillageschools.ie/>). The mention of sustainability is welcomed but it needs to be explored in more detail and with specific guidance for educators in the Guidance for Good Practice section.*

**Theme: Identity and Belonging** *Equity doesn’t appear to have been mentioned in the introduction to this theme, but equality features twice. Diversity Equality and Equity should feature in this theme because so much of a child’s sense of who they are is associated with childcare provision that promotes diverse, equal and equitable practices.*

**Theme: Communicating** *Would it be helpful to include a mention in the introduction to this theme of how slow relational pedagogy would be of particular importance when it comes to communicating with children. The concept of sustained shared thinking (Siraj Blatchford et. al, 2002) would be important to mention here also and why it is important to engage with it when working with young children.*

**Theme: Exploring and Thinking** *Is there an opportunity to make a specific reference to how this theme may be particularly helpful in supporting children’s understanding of how they can learn to*



*live sustainably through making sense of and interacting with their world and their place in it. Doing so might also support the development of educator knowledge around what it means to live sustainably.*

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

Yes, very much so and this is very welcome.

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

*Overall, it is great to see that the Principles remain and that they also have been revised to reflect changes in society and the strong focus on children rights has been maintained. I have added some feedback in relation to just a few of the Principles in the sections above, however on the whole, the Principles and Themes have been well put together as they were with the original Aistear. I would like to add that the principles of 'Agentic Global Citizens' and 'Diversity, Equity and Inclusion' reflect Trócaire's Early Years Development Education Goals which aim to engage young children's interest in the wider world by encouraging respect for diversity, empathy with others, challenging stereotypes, thinking critically, understanding rights [and responsibilities] and becoming a global citizen.*



## 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.** The feedback in this section relates to *Partnerships between Parents and Practitioners only*. Should the word 'practitioner' be changed to 'educator' as stated elsewhere in the proposal?

The proposed updated Aistear also has a special focus on sustainability, but I have noticed it has been inserted in Section A of Supporting Aistear - Guidance for Good Practice. Would it be helpful for educators to have the content on sustainability integrated into the guidance on Principle 1- Agentic Global Citizen because an aspect of being a global citizen means understanding how to be and live in a sustainable way.

The activities given in Example 3 of the Appendices entitled 'Supporting sustainability in early childhood' which focus on creating an intentional awareness, intentional focus and cultural gaze need a little more work. Trócaire have excellent resources in the form of 'early years resource packs' to support young childrens learning in respect of sustainability. The resources are designed to suit ages from ages 3 to 8 years. Signposting these resources to educators who work with young children may be very useful in the longer term and could form part of their CPD. You will find information about the resources I am referring to at this Trócaire link:

<https://www.trocaire.org/our-work/educate/early-years/resources/>

I think there may be a typo in the routine/activity in Example 3 given for intentional awareness. The wording is as follows: 'Opening a book or toy library within the setting and community'. It is



not altogether clear how this relates to ‘supporting the development of intentional awareness related to the importance of sharing with others’. Perhaps inviting a speaker into the setting to speak to the children, in line with current child protection/safeguarding practices of the setting, around the importance of growing food sustainably might be more relevant. Maybe integrating SDG Goal 2 -Zero Hunger would be helpful here also. There are great child friendly resources on the UN website which could be signposted ( videos/posters) for educators:

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals> and also some great powerpoint resources on Twinkl too

<https://www.twinkl.ie/resource/t-t-2548554-what-is-world-poverty-information-powerpoint>

The definition of Sustainability in the Glossary needs a little more work. There is an excellent definition to found in The Brundtland Report which defined the principle of sustainable development in 1987 as “**development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**” and it is this definition that has been carried through to the current SDG agenda. Here is a link to information about the Brundtland report <https://www.environmentandsociety.org/tools/keywords/brundtland-report> and the report itself <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf> The use of this 1987 definition in the updated Aistear glossary may help to support the agentic educator in their understanding of sustainability and concepts related to it.

As with anything new, there will be a period of change and adjustment which will bring with it, its own challenges. Signposting resources within Aistear to support those who will struggle with moving away from the old Aistear principles to working with the new will hopefully make the adjustment that bit easier. For those for whom this is their first experience of Aistear in its new updated form, they are in for a treat! Well done everyone involved so far & thank you.

## 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?**

Trócaire has a long-established track record in the delivery of education and training related to Development Education and Global Citizenship Education. More recently the sustainable





development goals have become a useful framework supporting learner engagement with Development Education and Global Citizenship Education. Would it be helpful for educators if the NCCA were to consider signposting on their website the free digital and face to face resources currently available to early years educators, such as Trócaire workshops & resources for Development Education. These resources have a specific focus on justice, equality and global citizenship. Doing so will be of benefit to Educators when working with these areas of the updated Aistear curriculum framework.

The implementation of the updated Aistear will likely rely on a community of practice including Trócaire (<https://www.trocaire.org/our-work/educate/>) and Global Village (<https://globalvillageschools.ie/>). It will also rely on whatever NCCA resources are made available, formal and informal online training being offered by various organisations and /or CPD opportunities being rolled out or organised through County and City Childcare Committees, Further Education and Higher Education institutes. Perhaps the creation of a panel of GCE practitioners with experience in Early Childhood Education to support CCCs in the delivery of this training could help with building capacity in this area.

Development Education Officers currently deliver training at various HEI's around the county offering ECCE degrees and primary school teaching degrees. The new early years curriculum framework and the primary curriculum frameworks will be integrated into this training and curriculum links will be sign-posted during ITE CPD sessions. There is also the possibility that such training and CPD may be considered part of a suite of overall quality improvement activities associated with Core Funding. One of Trócaire's core values is participation and Aistear's themes have been updated to incorporate meaningful participation for babies, toddlers and young children. The Development Education resources Trócaire uses to support learner engagement with global citizenship would be helpful to guide early years educators towards, given the shared focus of both on the importance of participation.

The sample learning opportunities for each theme in the original Aistear were very helpful but they do not appear to have been included in the proposed updated Aistear. Perhaps they will be shared on the NCCA website? I think they would still be important to include if not within the updated document, then to be signposted on the NCCA website. Newly qualified early years graduates whether they are at QQI Level 5 or Level 8 may find this guidance helpful to refer to as a point of reference.