AistearSíolta
Practice Guide

Curriculum Foundations:
Overview

Connections to *Aistear* and *Síolta*

Aistear
Themes: *Well-being*, *Identity and Belonging*, *Communicating*, *Exploring and Thinking*
All Guidelines for good practice

Síolta Standards
1: Rights of the Child, 2: Environments,
3: Parents and Families, 5: Interactions,
6: Play, 7: Curriculum, 11: Professional Practice,
13: Transitions, 14: Identity and Belonging,
16: Community Involvement
Research Digests linked to the above *Standards*

The *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* is intended to help you in your role as curriculum-developer to build, reflect on and extend your curriculum to support babies', toddlers' and young children's early learning and development. Drawing on the early childhood sector's experiences of using *Aistear* and *Síolta*, the Practice Guide includes:

• **Curriculum Foundations** and

• six interconnected **Curriculum Pillars**:

1. Building Partnerships with Parents
2. Creating and Using the Learning Environment
3. Learning through Play
4. Nurturing and Extending Interactions
5. Planning and Assessing using *Aistear's* Themes
6. Supporting Transitions.

This document gives an overview of **Curriculum Foundations.** These Foundations are an important starting point when thinking about curriculum.

Curriculum Foundations are rooted in the principles, values and attitudes that shape each practitioner's work and that of the setting. The Foundations include the following four elements:

Element 1: Developing your Curriculum and Curriculum Statement
This element looks at the meaning of curriculum and in particular, an emergent and inquiry-based curriculum. It helps you to think about your own curriculum and develop a statement about it which you can share with others. This statement can become the basis for your long-term curriculum planning and can be updated as necessary.

Element 2: Principles including Rights of the Child and Practitioner Image of the Child
This element looks at the principles underpinning *Aistear* and *Síolta*. In particular, it focuses on the rights of the child and practitioner image of the child and helps you to think about the principles that underpin your curriculum. These activities are designed to be completed over time.

Element 3: Themes in *Aistear*

This element focuses on the themes of *Aistear* which describe learning and development and help to support the holistic development of all children.

Element 4: Professional Practice

This element looks at professional practice including the concept of pedagogical leadership.

Using the resources in Curriculum Foundations

Each of the four elements has a range of resources to support you to reflect on your practice. Table 1 gives an overview of these.

Table 1 : Resources in Curriculum Foundations

Category and Purpose	Resource Title
1: Developing your Curriculum and Curriculum Statement These activities help practitioners to think about their current curriculum and to develop a curriculum statement before they begin work on the Practice Guide. They also support practitioners to develop a more emergent and inquiry-based curriculum and invite them to revisit their curriculum statement at a later stage to ensure it reflects changes made as a result of working with the Practice Guide.	**Activities related to your curriculum** • Activity A: Starting with your current curriculum • Activity B: Developing an emergent and enquiry-based curriculum • Activity C: Reviewing your curriculum after working with the Practice Guide **Podcasts** • Curriculum: Interview with Professor Elizabeth Wood • Moving to an emergent curriculum • What is a curriculum statement? • Using Aistear to plan and assess (Birth-6 years) • Explaining an emergent, play-based curriculum to parents • Creating a curriculum statement • Defining curriculum and curriculum planning • Practitioner Beliefs • Explaining the term funds of knowledge

Category and Purpose	Resource Title

2: Principles including Rights of the Child and Practitioner Image of the Child
 	
These activities provide reflective questions, prompts and scenarios to encourage practitioners to think about the principles which underpin their work with children.
	Activities related to principles
	• Activities A-E on principles related to *Children and their lives in Early Childhood*
	   - Activity A: Describing your view of children
	   - Activity B: Seeing all children as competent and confident
	   - Activity C: Exploring challenges in enabling children to show their competence and confidence
	   - Activity D: Bringing your image of children to life in the curriculum
	   - Activity E: Sharing your image of children with others
	• Activity F: Reflecting on principles related to *Children's connections with others*
	• Activity G: Reflecting on principles related to *How children learn and develop*
	
	Video clips
	• Children's voices: what children enjoy in pre-school
	• Me and my body
	• Being independent at snack time
	• Promoting independence at snack time
	• My favourite things
	• Nurturing Dispositions
	• Image of the child: Exploring challenges in enabling children to show their confidence and competence
	
	Learning Experiences
	• Making wraps
	• Reindeer visit
	• Personal books
	• Hospital
	• Dinosaurs
	• Learning experience 20: I did it, I stood up
	• Learning experience 64: Pilots are boys
	
	Tip sheets
	• Supporting children to become bilingual
	• Supporting your child to become bilingual
	
	Photo presentations
	• Image of the child

Category and Purpose	Resource Title
3: Themes These activities help practitioners to become familiar with *Aistear's* themes.	**Activities related to *Aistear's* themes** • Activity A: Thinking about *Aistear's* themes • Activity B: Matching *Aistear's* themes and aims • Activity C: Exploring *Aistear's* themes and learning goals • Activity D: Using Learning Experiences to reflect on your curriculum **Podcasts** • Supporting children's holistic development through play (3-5 years) • The links between play, learning and development • Making the most of play and learning • Well-being (Birth-3 years) • Well-being (3-6 years) • Identity and Belonging (Birth-3 years) • Identity and Belonging (3-6 years) • Communicating (Birth-3 years) • Communicating (3-6 years) • Exploring and Thinking (Birth-3 years) • Exploring and Thinking (3-6 years) ***Aistear* posters and supporting documents** • Themes and principles poster • *Well-being* poster • *Identity and Belonging* poster • *Communicating* poster • *Exploring and Thinking* poster • *Well-being* theme document • *Identity and Belonging* theme document • *Communicating* theme document • *Exploring and Thinking* theme document

Category and Purpose	Resource Title
4: Professional Practice This element looks at the professional role of the practitioner, reflective practice and the concept of pedagogical leadership.	**Activities related to professional practice** • Activity A: Image of the practitioner • Activity B: Ethical practice • Activity C: Reflective Practice • Activity D: Reflecting on my skills, dispositions and knowledge • Activity E: Identifying opportunities for reflection • Activity F: Thinking about leadership for learning • Activity G: Leadership for learning in a management role • Activity H: Supporting change • Activity I: Leading professional practice **Podcasts** • What being a professional means to me • Pedagogical leadership and professional practice • Supporting others to become professional • Image and role of the practitioner • Skills needed as a professional in early childhood (Birth-6 years) • ICT Supporting reflective practice **Action planning template** • Professional Practice: Action Planning Template