

Element 4: Professional Practice

Activity D: Reflecting on my dispositions, skills, abilities and knowledge

The Practice Guide promotes the development of an *emergent and inquiry-based curriculum*. This curriculum involves the practitioner observing what children are interested in, and how they engage with ideas, materials and events, and then using this knowledge to plan ways of supporting and extending their learning and development. The role of the practitioner is that of curriculum developer and requires particular dispositions, skills, abilities and knowledge.

Activity D is divided into two parts. Part one will help you to look at your dispositions, skills, and abilities, while part two will support you to think about your knowledge. Figures 1 and 2 outline some of the dispositions, skills, abilities and knowledge that can help when using *Aistear* to inform your curriculum development.

Figure 1: Dispositions, skills and abilities supporting curriculum development (*Aistear's User Guide*, p.8)

Dispositions, skills and abilities

The adult:

- acts in children's best interests and is clear about his/her role in facilitating their learning and development
- supports children in taking an active part in their learning, respects their preferences, and involves them in decisions that affect them
- co-operates and shares information with others who have a role in children's lives, including parents, other practitioners, outside agencies, and other professionals
- promotes equality and respects difference
- seeks information and help from specialist services where appropriate
- has good verbal and non-verbal communication skills and knows how to listen and observe
- is welcoming and friendly, and has a good sense of humour
- is aware of his/her strengths, while recognising knowledge and skills that need to be developed.

Figure 2: Knowledge supporting curriculum development (*Aistear's User Guide*, p.7)**What knowledge, dispositions, skills, and abilities can help me to use *Aistear*?****Knowledge**

The adult:

- is knowledgeable about children and how they learn and develop
- is knowledgeable about assessment and curriculum development
- knows the children well in his/her setting and uses *Aistear's* themes, aims and learning goals to plan appropriate experiences for them
- thinks about his/her pedagogy
- participates regularly in personal and professional development
- is up to date with relevant regulations and developments that impact on practice, for example, *Síolta* (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education, 2006) and the *Pre-School Regulations* (Department of Health and Children, 2006).

Thinking about your own practice, consider each prompt below to help identify current strengths and areas for improvement, and to plan for positive change.

Activity D, Part 1: Thinking about my dispositions, skills and abilities

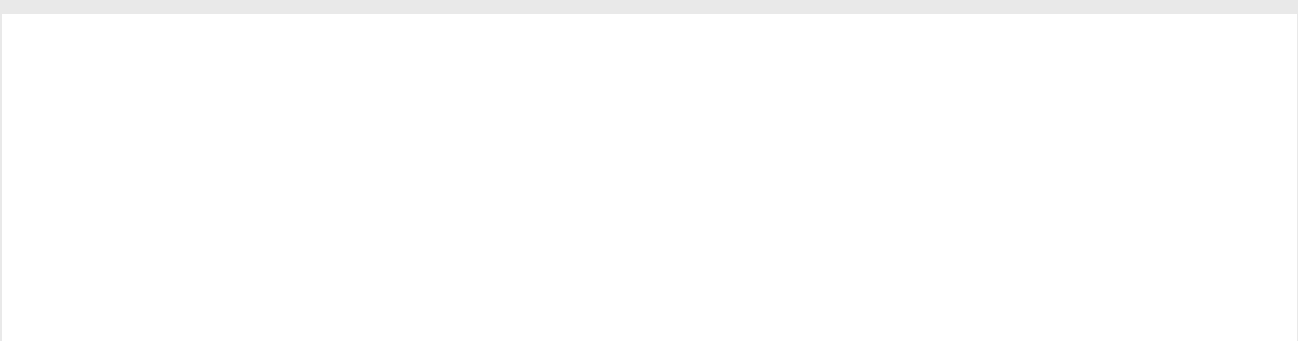
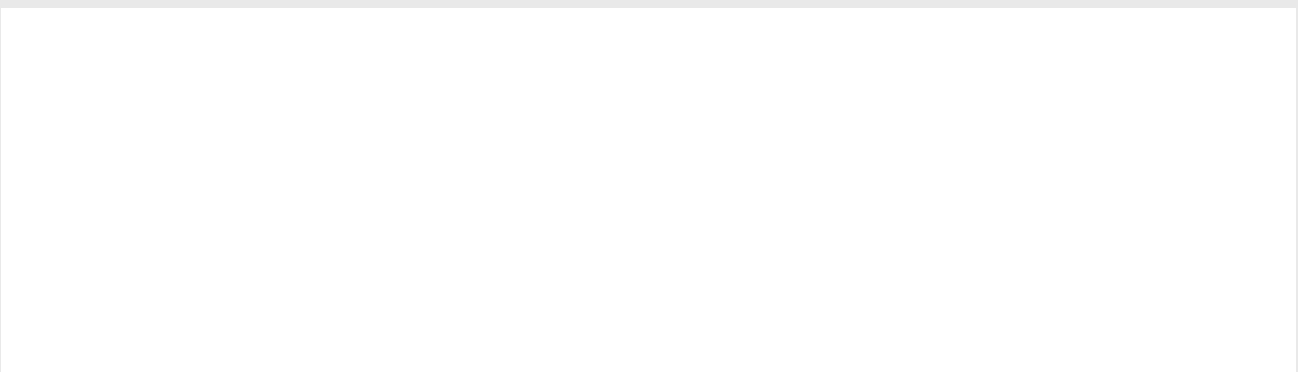
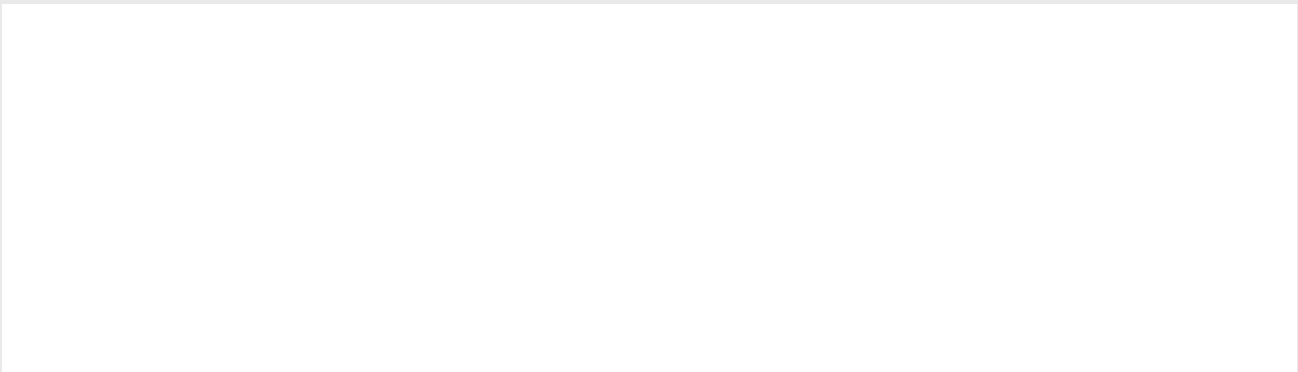
Complete this activity alone before sharing with a colleague or manager, or complete it with the support of a mentor.

	Statements about my dispositions, skills and abilities	Examples of current strengths and/or notes about areas requiring development
a.	I enjoy working with children and their families.	
b.	I show sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for all children and their families.	
c.	I act in children's best interests.	

Statements about my dispositions, skills and abilities	Examples of current strengths and/or notes about areas requiring development
d. I promote equality and respect difference.	
e. I am clear about my role in supporting children's learning and development.	
f. I recognise and respect that while children learn and develop along predictable pathways, they progress at their own pace and in line with their own dispositions, skills, abilities and knowledge.	
g. I support all children to develop and learn to their full potential and I differentiate my practice to support each child, for example, a child learning English as a second language, a child who is shy or bored, or a child who is interested in animals or sport.	
h. I enable children to play an active part in their learning; I respect their choices and preferences; and involve them in decisions that affect them.	
i. I share information, liaise and co-operate (with consent) with others (with consent) who have a role in children's lives including parents, practitioners, outside agencies, and other professionals.	
j. I seek information and help from specialist services where appropriate.	

Statements about my dispositions, skills and abilities	Examples of current strengths and/or notes about areas requiring development
k. I draw on new ideas from research and publications to support good practice.	
l. I have good verbal and non-verbal communication skills and I know how to listen and observe.	
m. I am welcoming and friendly, and have a good sense of humour.	
n. I am reflective and am aware of my strengths while recognising skills that need to be developed.	
o. I have the skills to guide others in the performance of their tasks (where applicable).	
p. I understand the importance of my role in supporting the professional development of others and have the ability to do this (where applicable).	

Reviewing the strengths and possible areas for improvement identified above,
I can further develop my dispositions, skills and abilities by

1. 
2. 
3. 

(Possible ideas - think about shadowing a more experienced practitioner, visiting other settings, attending training, reading, looking at materials on www.aistearsiolta.ie, seeking the support of a mentor, attaining further qualifications.)

Create your own personal professional development plan. The Action Planning Template may help you with this. Discuss this with your supervisor, manager or mentor.

Activity D, Part 2: Thinking about my qualifications and knowledge

Complete this activity alone before sharing with a colleague or manager, or complete it with the support of a mentor.

	Statements about my qualifications and knowledge	Examples of current strengths and/or notes about areas requiring development
a.	I have an appropriate level of qualification to carry out my role.	
b.	I am knowledgeable about children and how they learn and develop.	
c.	I am knowledgeable about curriculum development.	
d.	I am knowledgeable about how to plan for and assess children's learning.	
e.	I know the children well in my setting/ room and I use <i>Aistear's</i> themes, aims and learning goals to plan appropriate experiences for them.	
f.	I think about my practice and understand why I use particular approaches and strategies to support children's learning and development.	

	Statements about my dispositions, skills and abilities	Examples of current strengths and/or notes about areas requiring development
g.	I participate regularly in personal and professional development.	
h.	I am up-to-date with relevant regulations and developments that impact on practice. ²	
i.	I know how to work in partnership with families.	

² For example, The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), *Child Care (Pre-School) Regulations* (Department of Health and Children, 2006), *Siolta* (2006), *Equality and Diversity Guidelines* (2006), *What difference? Working effectively with children who have special needs in early years settings* (2007), *Aistear* (2009), *Children First* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011), *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* (2011), *Aistear Siolta Practice Guide* (2015), *Early Years Education Focused Inspection Tool* (DES, 2015).

Reviewing the strengths and possible areas for improvement identified above,
I can further develop my knowledge by

1.

2.

3.

(Possible ideas - think about reading research articles and books, attending training, using materials on www.aistearsiolta.ie, sourcing information on the internet, talking to peers, or attaining further qualifications.)

Create your own personal professional development plan. The Action Planning Template may help you with this. Discuss this with your supervisor, manager or mentor.

As a practitioner, you might consider reviewing both parts of this activity every six months to assess your progress and to add new areas to work on.

As a supervisor or manager and with colleagues' agreement, you might consider using these activities (*Activity D*, Part 1 and Part 2) as part of an on-going appraisal system. Information gathered could help you to identify further areas of practice to review in Curriculum Foundations, or across Pillars in the Practice Guide. You might also like to use the activities to identify areas for improvement across teams, to create peer-support/team/individual action plans, and to organise external training or seek support from a mentor.