

Element 4: Professional Practice

Activity E, Part 1: Self-reflection

Identify when you could find time for self-reflection. Think about quiet times during the daily routine or taking time after the children leave to briefly consider the events of the day. This may require a change in how you organise the work schedule, for example, making an agreement with a colleague that they will tidy up in the evening to allow you this time while you return the favour each morning. Once agreed with your manager, share this information with your colleagues, where applicable, and encourage them to do the same. Commit to spending at least **five minutes** each day on self-reflection.

Once you do this on a regular basis try to find **other opportunities** during the day to reflect, for example, have sticky-notes available or keep a notebook and pen nearby to make notes of things that occur throughout the day.

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

Identify three possible times for informal reflection.	
1	
2	
3	
Decide on a specific day, time and duration for self-reflection. Think about quiet times during the day or take time after the children leave to briefly consider the events of the day.	
Day (every day if possible)	
Time of day	
Duration	

What support do you need to ensure reflection happens each day?
Who could help you and how?

During self-reflection, briefly consider:

- What went well today?
- What did you find challenging? Why? How did it make you feel?
- Is there anything you want to share – with colleagues, a child, parent or manager?
- Is there anything you want to follow up on with a child/group of children to support their learning and development?
- Are there things you could have done differently or better?
- Is there anything you want to research (a topic a child may have mentioned or introduced)? How will you do this?
- What connections can you make between today's experiences and *Síolta's* and *Aistear's* principles?

Use the *Self-evaluation Tools* from the Curriculum Pillars in the Practice Guide to support your reflection.

Share this information with your colleagues, where applicable, and encourage them to take time to reflect.

Activity E, Part 2: Reflecting as a team (This activity is focused on managers/room leaders.)

Early childhood settings are environments where practitioners are also learners. They observe children, think about what they have seen and use this reflection to inform their practice. Team reflection fosters professional dialogue and supports teams to tease out and examine their practice. In this way, constructive and supportive team reflection and discussion can help practitioners develop their professional practice.

Practitioners can support each other by developing a whole-team approach to reflecting on practice within their setting. Think about informal and formal opportunities to be reflective with your colleagues – not all pedagogical discussions need to occur around a table. Observations, shared and discussed quietly in-the-moment with a colleague, can be immensely powerful in understanding

and supporting a child to progress and reach new levels of understanding. Opportunities for informal reflection can occur throughout the working day, for example, during morning set-up or shared lunch-breaks. However, regular and formal reflection as a team requires some organisation and commitment.

Identify a regular time for you to meet with your team, for example, a brief period weekly or longer meetings once a month, to discuss ideas and experiences regarding practice and practitioner well-being. Nominate one person who will ensure this time is used effectively - identify priorities for practice and curriculum development and take responsibility for staying focused.

Complete the table below with your **team** to help you to plan formal, team reflection.

Identify three times during the month for formal reflection			
	Day	Time	Duration
1			
2			
3			

Date	1	2	3
Person responsible for ensuring the time is used effectively			
Date	1	2	3
How will you, as manager/ room leader, choose a focus and plan an agenda for the meeting?			
Date	1	2	3
What support do you need (external or internal) at the meeting? Who could help you and how?			

During your team reflection, briefly consider:

- Identifying clear priorities to focus on children’s learning and development.
- Building on strengths and identifying areas where the team can improve their work in supporting children’s learning and development.
- Discussing current practice in a critical, honest and solution-focused way.
- Using the *Pillar Self-evaluation Tools* and the activities from Curriculum Foundations to support reflection.
- Making short written plans that include an end-date, persons responsible and dates for review (using the *Pillar and/or Professional Practice Action Planning Tools* from the *Practice Guide*).
- Reviewing progress at next meeting.