

Connections to *Aistear* and *Síolta*

Aistear

Themes: Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communicating, Exploring and Thinking
Guidelines for good practice: Learning and developing through interactions (pp.27-51)

Síolta Standards

1: *Rights of the Child*, C1.1, 1.2, 1.3,

5: *Interactions*, C5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5

Research Digest linked to the above *Standards*

Using the Self-evaluation Tool

This **Self-evaluation Tool** supports you to reflect on the quality of your interactions either as an individual practitioner or as a team working with **young children aged 3-6 years**.

1. This tool is divided into **3 elements**.

- Building relationships
- Facilitating learning
- Directing and leading learning

2. Each element has a **series of statements**. For each statement, choose which of the following best reflects your current practice.

Never/Rarely	I seldom do this.
Sometimes	I do this if and when I remember.
Regularly	I try to do this as often as I can.
Almost Always	I do this most of the time.

If you would like to make notes or record examples from your practice about any of the statements, a box is provided for this.

Using the Self-evaluation Tool

3. After each element you will find **prompts for reflection**.

As you consider these, think about your practice—what you do and how you do it. This will support you to identify what is working well and the challenges within each element.

4. Make a note of changes you want to make.

5. After using the Self-evaluation Tool, you may find it useful to look at the sections, *Examples and Ideas for Practice* and *Resources for Sharing* at aistearsiolta.ie.

6. The Action Planning Template in the section, *Action Planning Tools* can help you plan specific changes you decide to make.

Before working with this pillar, we recommend you work on *Curriculum Foundations*.

Practitioners' names

Date

Element 1: Building relationships

Building relationships is about supporting children to feel comfortable with and enjoy being with other people and to interact with them for a variety of purposes. It includes creating an environment where children feel secure and confident to interact, take risks, explore, take part in challenging experiences, and to direct and co-direct their own learning.

When building relationships in the setting,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
1 we show young children that we enjoy being with them and understand them by interacting in a warm, caring, playful, patient manner and by using a gentle tone of voice and welcoming body language .					
2 we foster positive interactions with and between children. We provide opportunities for each child to interact with peers and with children of different ages in pairs, small groups and sometimes, in large groups. We provide opportunities for siblings to meet during the day.					
3 we tailor interactions to respect different temperaments in children.					
4 we respect children's choices to play alone or alongside each other while supporting children who may find it difficult to play with others.					
5 we use the daily routine to interact sensitively and respond respectfully, consistently and appropriately to each child to build trusting relationships.					

Element 1: Building relationships

When building relationships in the setting,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
6 we support children to develop resilience when things go wrong and comfort them when they show signs of upset, for example, following a toilet accident.					
7 we listen carefully, showing interest and respect when children are speaking and when they share stories about their family life, community, culture or events.					
8 we speak calmly and slowly using a moderate tone when interacting, especially when a child is angry or upset.					
9 we support children who are non-verbal by reading their gestures and body language .					
10 we keep eye contact with children when they are communicating, respecting that some cultures do not do this.					
11 we balance adult-led with child-led activities in which children can direct their own learning.					

Element 1: Building relationships

	When building relationships in the setting,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
12	we join with children in their play , being physically at their level during activities, discussions, joke-sharing and stories.					
13	we help children develop language, listening and thinking skills by using the strategy of 'expanding' to extend their vocabulary by adding words or ideas to what they have said, for example, when a child says <i>ball</i> , we respond with <i>Yes, that is a big, shiny ball</i> .					
14	we model and give clear and consistent messages about appropriate behaviour and give immediate feedback to children, reinforcing in a positive way, their actions and words, for example, instead of saying <i>good job</i> , we say, <i>You did a great job helping to tidy the home corner</i> .					
15	we model respectful language when interacting with children, parents and other adults by saying <i>please, thank you, sorry, excuse me</i> .					
16	we encourage children to find their own solutions to problems giving assistance when asked or needed, for example, <i>Oh no! There's water all over the floor, how can we tidy it up before someone slips?</i>					
17	we acknowledge and name children's feelings especially during times of conflict, for example, <i>I see that you are feeling very angry Jack, you are stamping your feet and shouting, and I see Amy is very sad, she is crying</i> .					

Element 1: Building relationships

When building relationships in the setting,		Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
18	we use 'I statements' to focus on the problem and not the child, for example, <i>I feel worried when you do that because you might hurt yourself.</i>					
19	we mediate in a firm and fair way when children say words or make gestures that are hurtful to others and disrespectful of their identity, ability, gender, family structure or other aspect of diversity.					
20	we build empathy by encouraging children to look at things from another's perspective and we support them to identify what has happened and how they are feeling, for example, instead of asking, <i>Are you sorry?</i> we give children time and space to say sorry by themselves.					

Element 1: Building relationships

Prompts for Reflection

- Think about what is **working well** in relation to building relationships with young children.
- Think about the **challenges** you have experienced with building relationships with young children.
- What **aspects** of this work would you like to prioritise and focus on in the coming weeks?

You can use the *Examples and Ideas for Practice* and *Action Planning Tools* in the Practice Guide to help you plan this work.

Practitioners' names

Date

Element 2: Facilitating learning

Facilitating learning involves encouraging children to take the lead or to share the lead in their learning. It is about involving them in making choices and decisions, and feeling in control. Learning is enjoyable, motivating and rewarding when children challenge themselves and use and build on their existing knowledge, understanding and skills

When facilitating learning,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
1 we follow children's lead and learn about their interests, offering ideas and suggestions when they ask or when it is appropriate.					
2 we value children's ideas, ask their opinions and involve them in decision making , for example, how will we plan our trip to the pet shop					
3 we encourage children who are verbal to increasingly use words to express their needs, feelings and thinking , for example, <i>tell me what you need.</i>					
4 we give children time to put their thoughts together and we offer words and phrases to encourage them to express themselves fully and to help make themselves understood.					
5 we encourage and model problem-solving with children by using reasoning, negotiating, compromising and listening skills with them, for example, <i>how can we make sure that everybody gets a turn? I wonder if we try it this way, what will happen. Do you think that will work?</i>					

Element 2: Facilitating learning

When facilitating learning,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
6 we have realistic and appropriately challenging expectations for each child bearing in mind age and stage of development.					
7 we support all children’s learning and development by adapting activities to suit their individual needs and abilities.					
8 we provide opportunities for all children to acquire language naturally and we do not pressurise children to learn a second language.					
9 we support children with English or Irish as a second language by modelling language, giving them time to use language at their own pace, affirming their efforts and using visual prompts as we speak clearly to help them understand.					
10 we assist children with special educational needs by supporting them to interact and communicate in their own way or with alternative methods of communication, for example, sign language or assistive technology.					
11 we promote Irish language, culture and heritage when we can, for example, by using simple Irish phrases and songs such as <i>go raibh maith agat, slán abhaile</i> and celebrating <i>Seachtain na Gaeilge</i> .					

Element 2: Facilitating learning

When facilitating learning,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
12 we use a balance of questions and comments in conversations with young children to promote and expand their thinking, for example, <i>that's an interesting animal picture Amy, I wonder what is happening?</i>					
13 we resist giving immediate answers to children's questions and instead we start a discussion so we can think together , for example, <i>why do you think the car went rolling down the plank?</i>					
14 we extend children's thinking by providing information related to children's current interests to inform, predict, talk about the future, pretend or imagine, for example, <i>if we support the bridge with a brick it might be level?</i>					
15 we pause and reflect to ensure we enter sensitively into children's play and interactions recognising that sometimes it may be more appropriate to wait and give more time before becoming involved.					
16 we view children as competent and confident and promote independence by encouraging them to do things for themselves .					
17 we are aware of children's developing self-identity and encourage boys' and girls' interests avoiding gender stereotypes.					

Element 2: Facilitating learning

When facilitating learning,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
<p>18 we help children to see strengths and skills in each other, for example, <i>Jamie knows a lot about dinosaurs</i>. This supports children to recognise and respect their diversity and work together.</p>					
<p>19 we recognise the importance of imparting a sense of pride and achievement in children in order to preserve the Irish language and the heritage of the Gaeltacht regions.</p>					
<p>20 we use open-ended questions and comments to lead to new ideas, discussions and exploratory thinking.</p>					
<p>21 we reinforce emerging social and emotional competencies, for example, we tell children they are a great help, that they listen really well or that they are a good friend.</p>					

Practitioners' names

Date

DD/MM/YY

Element 3: Directing and leading learning

Directing and leading learning involves helping children to learn through planning and guiding activities which build on their interests and experiences and which focus on developing particular dispositions, values and attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding.

When directing and leading learning,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
1 we lead some appropriate adult-initiated playful and enjoyable activities which are linked to children's interests and which support their learning and development.					
2 we plan experiences that are focused on children being actively involved and which provide new challenges in an appropriate way, for example, we set up a shop with real money, a cash register, scales, pen and paper.					
3 we give children appropriate time and support to take part in and to complete child- and adult-initiated activities, taking into account individual abilities and adapting activities to suit different needs.					
4 we discuss 'rules' with children and draw up rules together so they understand why these rules are important, for example, everybody gets a turn during a game.					
5 we provide clear information to children when leading an activity so they understand what is happening and what they are being asked to do and why.					

Element 3: Directing and leading learning

When directing and leading learning,		Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
6	we give feedback to children on things they have created, discoveries they have made and tasks they have completed, for example, <i>you built a huge robot together!</i>					
7	we plan activities that involve taking turns and model this in practice, for example, <i>I am going to wait until Jack has finished with the book I want, then I will get to read it.</i>					
8	we use activities and conversations to raise awareness of and nurture respect for difference . We provide a variety of toys, books and equipment depicting children with special needs, different family backgrounds, languages and cultures.					
9	we actively listen to children especially when introducing new ideas. We allow them time to think and respond.					
10	we challenge children's thinking and understanding by posing open-ended questions based on what they already know in order to build new knowledge and understanding.					
11	we introduce new topics based on children's and our interests and work with children to plan experiences and activities that will support them to nurture dispositions and build skills, values and attitudes, knowledge and understanding					

Element 3: Directing and leading learning

When directing and leading learning,		Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
12	we model correct word pronunciation by saying words correctly rather than telling children they are wrong, for example, <i>I branged my tar outside. Yes, you brought your car outside.</i>					
13	in Gaeltacht settings where Irish is the first language of the children attending, we emphasise the development and enrichment of the language with particular emphasis on local dialect through activities such as sean-nós singing and dancing, indigenous poems and nursery rhymes in the daily routine.					
14	we use positive language and model instructions, for example saying, <i>Let's use our hands gently</i> instead of <i>Don't hurt each other.</i>					

Element 3: Directing and leading learning

Prompts for Reflection

- Think about what is **working well** in relation to directing and leading learning with young children.
- Think about the **challenges** you have experienced with directing and leading learning with young children.
- What **aspects** of this work would you like to prioritise and focus on in the coming weeks?

You can use the *Examples and Ideas for Practice* and *Action Planning Tools* in the Practice Guide to help you plan this work.