

Building Partnerships with Parents

Pillar: Overview

Connections to *Aistear* and *Síolta*

Aistear

Themes: *Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communicating, Exploring and Thinking*
Guidelines for good practice: Building partnerships between parents and practitioners (pp.6-25)

Síolta Standards

1: Rights of the Child, C1.1, 1.2, 1.3
3: Parents and Families, C3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Research Digests linked to the above *Standards*

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

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 the pillar, **Building Partnerships with Parents**. This pillar has a range of resources to help you build stronger partnerships with parents in your setting.

Why focus on building partnerships with parents?

Aistear and *Síolta* highlight the important role parents and families play in children's lives. The Practice Guide uses the term 'parent' to refer to the child's primary caregivers and educators. These include the father and mother and/or guardians. The two frameworks provide ideas and suggestions to help practitioners build good relationships with parents and families and give ideas on how to involve them in the early childhood setting. Strong partnerships support all families but are especially helpful for parents in situations that may make it difficult for them to participate in their children's learning and development as much as they would like.

Building Partnerships with Parents is one of the pillars in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide*. This pillar has a number of connections to other pillars including *Learning through Play, Nurturing and Extending Interactions* and *Planning and Assessing using Aistear's Themes*. This short introduction reminds us why partnerships with parents are important and gives a brief overview of the set of resources in this part of the Practice Guide and provides suggestions on how you might use these.

Aistear’s principle on parents states that,

Parents are the most important people in children’s lives. The care and education that children receive from their parents and family, especially during their early months and years, greatly influence their overall development. Extended family and community also have important roles to play (Principles and themes, 2009, p.9).

Similarly, Síolta’s principle on parents acknowledges that,

Parents are the primary educators of the child and have a pre-eminent role in promoting her/his well-being, learning and development (2006, p.6).

Standard 3 of Síolta, *Parents and Families* highlights the importance of valuing and involving parents through a range of clearly stated, accessible and implemented processes,

policies and procedures. The components focus on having informal and formal information sharing and communication with parents and on providing a variety of opportunities for parents to be involved in the setting. *Síolta’s Research Digest, Parents and Families* provides further information and references.

Aistear’s guidelines, Building partnerships between parents and practitioners provide information on helping parents to support their child’s learning and development at home. Suggestions are provided on how information can be shared between the home and the setting and between the setting and the home. The guidelines also provide ideas on how parents can be involved in the setting as well as highlighting the importance of consulting with parents.

The benefits of building a strong partnership with parents and families are outlined in *Aistear’s* guidelines and in Table 1 below.

Table 1 : The benefits of parents and practitioners working together

Parents	Practitioners	Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel value and respected • are more involved in their children’s learning and development • can share information about their children • feel their family’s values, practices, traditions and beliefs are understood and taken into account • feel comfortable visiting the setting, talking to and planning with practitioners • know more about their children’s experiences outside the home and use this information to support their learning and development more effectively • understand why early childhood care and education is important • have increased confidence in their own parenting skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand better the children and families in their settings and use this information to make learning more enjoyable and rewarding for all children • can help children develop a sense of identity and belonging in the setting by actively engaging with and finding out about family values, traditions and beliefs, and building on these where appropriate • benefit from parents’ skills and expertise • can provide a more emotionally secure environment for children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel more secure and benefit more from the educational opportunities given to them • move from one setting to another with greater confidence • see learning as more enjoyable when their home life is ‘visible’ in the setting • enjoy hearing and seeing their home language in the setting when their home language is neither English nor Irish • experience more connections between the different services that support them.

(Aistear, Guidelines for Good Practice, p.8)

Using the resources in this pillar

As with all the pillars in the Practice Guide, there are four categories of resources in *Building Partnerships with Parents*:

1. Self-evaluation Tools

These provide prompts to help practitioners reflect on their work with parents in order to identify successes and challenges and to note changes they would like to make.

This tool looks at six elements:

1. Supporting families to feel welcome, valued and respected
2. Sharing information about the setting and the curriculum
3. Sharing information about children's learning and development with parents
4. Helping parents to support learning and development at home
5. Consulting with parents
6. Parents being involved and contributing to the setting.

2. Examples and Ideas for Practice

These show examples of how different early childhood settings have built partnerships with parents.

3. Resources for Sharing

These include tip sheets for parents on how they can support their child's learning and development at home.-

4. Action Planning Tools

These help practitioners plan for changes in a particular area of their work in building partnerships with parents.

Each category has resources to support you as you reflect on your practice. You might like to look at the **Self-evaluation Tool** first to help identify your strengths in building partnerships with parents as well as noting changes you would like to make. After this, you might be interested in looking at examples and ideas from other practitioners. You will find these in Learning Experiences linked to *Aistear's* themes, short podcasts, photo presentations, video clips and practical tip sheets in the sections, *Examples and Ideas for Practice* and *Resources for Sharing* at www.aistearsiolta.ie. The *Action Planning Tool* can then help you plan specific changes you want to make in your setting.