

Element 1: Developing your Curriculum and Curriculum Statement

Activity A: Starting with your current curriculum

This activity is designed for use as you **begin** work on the **Curriculum Foundations** or **Curriculum Pillars** in the Practice Guide.

When thinking about curriculum, a useful starting place is to focus on what you **currently do** and **why**. Your curriculum work is shaped and influenced by many different factors including the number of children in the group and their age and developmental stage. Your work is also affected by socio-economic and cultural factors, the type of setting, the physical environment such as the resources in the room and outdoor space, and the philosophy, ethos, vision, principles, values, routines and policies of the setting. It is also important to remember that the curriculum is shaped by you as a person, including:

- your **professional journey** - your knowledge and skills, what you know about how children learn and develop in early childhood, your experience of supporting and extending this and your beliefs and knowledge about the children in your setting.
- your own **personal journey** - your personal values, attributes and life experiences.

In thinking about your curriculum, it is helpful to consider how all of these impact on your work and interactions with children, their families and with colleagues. The questions in Activity A are designed to help you to think about and describe your work with children and to explain why you work in this way. This will help you and your colleagues to identify principles, beliefs and values underpinning your work. The questions can be used by yourself, as part of a team working with colleagues or with a mentor.

Activity A: Starting with your current curriculum

1a. What does *curriculum* mean to you?

1b. What words would you use to *describe the curriculum* you offer children with whom you work?

2. What are your *aspirations for children's learning and development* in your setting? Why?

3. What do you *do in your daily work* to ensure these aspirations are realised for the children in your setting?

4a. What *characteristics or traits* do you have that support your work with children?

4b. What *principles, beliefs and values* underpin your work with children?

4c. What *theories* about early learning and development most influence your work with children?

5. Write a short paragraph (no more than 5-6 sentences) that describes the curriculum you provide — *how* children learn in your room or setting, *why* this is important and *what* you support them to learn (linking with *Aistear's* learning goals). Think about a paragraph that you would like to share with parents when they first come to your setting. This paragraph is your *Curriculum Statement*.

Review this statement at a later stage, perhaps in six months to a year.

Activity C, *Reviewing your curriculum after working with the Practice Guide* might help you to do this.