

**Information booklet:
Sharing personal learning
portfolios with parents
(3-6 years)**

Connections to Aistear and Síolta

Aistear

Guidelines for good practice:

Building partnerships between parents and practitioners (pp.74-79); Supporting learning and development through assessment (pp.13-15)

Síolta Standards

7: Curriculum, C7.5, 7.6

Research Digests linked to the above Standards

This booklet provides ideas and suggestions for how children's **personal learning portfolios** can be compiled and used to document children's learning and development, making this visible to parents. A portfolio can take the form of an A4 ring-binder, a scrapbook, box or folder. It can be personalised for each child, preferably by the child, using photos, drawings or paintings so each child comes to recognise his/her own 'special book'. It tells the story of each child's learning journey while in your room or setting—his/her interests, efforts, progress and achievement over time and linked to *Aistear's* themes, aims and learning goals. This record helps you to support and plan for each child's learning and development.

Getting started

At the beginning of the year or when a child first attends your setting, you can introduce parents to the personal learning portfolios and show them how you use these to document children's learning and development. At the end of this information booklet, there is a **sample letter** you can use with the parents. Adapt this in a way that suits your setting. For example, you may use another title for **personal learning portfolios**, so add this to the letter.

There is also a template called, *Look at what your child has been doing, saying and learning* which you can use when talking with parents. The template helps you to highlight specific examples in the portfolio and show these to parents explaining how they relate to *Aistear's* themes. You might like to send the personal learning portfolio home with children and encourage parents to get involved in decorating the cover by adding a photo and the child's name to it. In the case of babies, a handprint and photo might be added while older children can choose what they would like to do to make their personal learning portfolio special. Over time, you can encourage parents to add comments in the portfolios about what their children did, said and learned.

Contents of a personal learning portfolio

The portfolio can include a selection of drawings, paintings and other art work, photographs, stories by and about the child, learning records, practitioner observations and notes, checklists and/or records of care, as appropriate. Encourage children to choose some of the items for their portfolios. This gives them pride in, and ownership of their learning and development. They will enjoy sharing the portfolios with their parents and with friends.



Practical tips for building portfolios

1. Put a date on each item so progress can be seen over time.
2. Add a brief note explaining what a photo or item relates to.
3. Include captions of what children said. This makes the entries more meaningful and helps you to talk about events, items and experiences when you look at the portfolio with the child and when you share it with parents.
4. Include comments to link children's learning and development to Aistear's themes. Only positive information is recorded in the portfolio. Concerns about aspects of a child's development are noted separately and stored confidentially.

- In this portfolio, we'll take a look at lots of things **your child has been learning to do** and **finding out about** as he/she plays, talks to and works with myself, (the other staff) and children.

Children can bring their portfolios home if they wish and/or can share them with parents when they are being dropped off or picked up from the setting. You might draw parents' attention to a particular entry. Share and discuss the portfolio (and other observations and materials kept in the confidential file) regularly. This gives parents the opportunity to see how their child is progressing, to ask questions, to share information and to raise any concerns they may have. The template, *Look at what your child has been doing, saying and learning* may be helpful in guiding you when you are sharing the portfolio with parents. The template might be used perhaps once per term, to show learning and progression and to capture comments and feedback from parents.

Sharing the portfolio with parents

Firstly, you might need to explain to parents what *Aistear* is. You could use the following notes to guide you.

- *Aistear* is the **early childhood curriculum framework** for all children in Ireland. We use it in our setting to support children's learning and development through play, hands-on experiences, stories, discussions and lots of other fun and interesting activities.
- *Aistear* describes children's learning and development using **four themes**:
 - *Well-being*
 - *Identity and Belonging*
 - *Communicating*
 - *Exploring and Thinking*.

Using the template, *Look at what your child has been doing, saying and learning*

Pick a few examples from the personal learning portfolio to show how a child is progressing. Think of what the photos, learning records, observations and the child's own words tell you about his/her progress. Note the page number in the portfolio or describe the anecdote. Link the learning to one of *Aistear's* themes and give a summary of what the child learned through the theme. As you talk with parents, invite them to share their examples and jot down important points.

Below are some examples of information that might be recorded in a child's personal learning portfolio. You might share examples like these with parents. You might have short comments or quotes from a child written in his/her portfolio and you can add to these to explain to parents what the child was doing, the things he/she likes and is interested in. Together, the examples should enable you and parents to see how the child is progressing. For example, there should be a significant difference between what a child can do in September and what he/she can do the following June.

Using examples from the Personal Learning Portfolios with parents

Use one copy of the template, *Look what your child has been doing, saying and learning* per child. Look through his/her portfolio and identify some specific examples. Note the page numbers or make a brief comment about the examples and using a highlighter or other mark, show which aspects of the child's learning you feel is reflected. You'll find a sample completed template in this information booklet.

Example of portfolio entry.	Sharing the photo and experience with Max's parents
<p>Here Katelyn is blowing bubbles – 8 March 2014 We see Katelyn is exploring, thinking about and discovering that if you blow harder, the bubbles get bigger. She is having a lot of fun! (Theme: Exploring and Thinking)</p>	<p>We are encouraging her to blow bubbles a lot at the moment because the speech therapist has told us that this will help to strengthen the muscles around her mouth and help her to form sounds like wh and oo. Her speech sounds are really improving and she can say words like <i>what</i> and <i>where</i> very well now. (Theme: Communicating)</p>
<p><i>May 5th: I went to Dublin on the train with Mammy and my little brother Sam.</i></p>	<p>Katelyn is playing 'going on the train to the zoo' with her friend Jenny and their babies. This takes place the day after being on the train with some of her family. Katelyn loves to talk about her family and we always listen to her stories and look at the photos she brings in from home. This helps to develop her sense of Identity and Belonging. When she first joined the group, Katelyn was a little shy. She has made friends with Jenny now and this has really helped her sense of Well-being. They play together a lot and love playing with the babies.</p>

Child's name

Katelyn

Date

June 2014

Practitioner

Christina

Aistear's themes	Important things to know and be able to do	Examples from the portfolio
<p>Well-being This is about your child being confident, happy and healthy.</p>	<p>Your child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interacts well with other children and adults • shares how he/she feels and respects how others feel • uses lots of gross and fine motor skills • cares for his/her body and understands the importance of good food, hygiene and exercise • is creative and curious and loves to explore and find things out • cares for the environment • shows increasing independence and manages change well • is positive and resourceful. 	<p>Katelyn told us about her trip to Dublin on the train (page 10) with her family.</p>
<p>Identity and Belonging This is about your child having a positive sense of who they are, developing a sense of their culture and heritage and feeling they are valued as part of a family and community.</p>	<p>Your child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shares his/her identity by describing family, pets, interests, special events in the family and community • understands and respects differences in the group of children • takes part in routines and celebrations • understands roles of people in the community • recognises unfairness and helps overcome this • is co-operative and responsible • sees and delights in his/her own progress • enjoys learning and tries new things. 	<p>Katelyn loves to talk about her family. This helps develop her sense of Identity and Belonging.</p>

Aistear's themes	Important things to know and be able to do	Examples from the portfolio
<p>Communicating This is about your child sharing his/her experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with growing confidence and competence in a variety of ways and for different purposes.</p>	<p>Your child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses and understands non-verbal communication such as facial expressions, gestures and eye contact • takes part in discussions; uses new words and learns about sounds and patterns in words • builds information about new interests through books, internet and conversations • enjoys 'writing' and understands that marks/squiggles/letters stand for other things • uses numbers, maths ideas and words in play and conversations • enjoys and shares ideas through singing, dancing, art activities, story, poems, rhymes and drama • is imaginative and creative • tries new things and takes 'safe risks'. 	<p>Look at this photo of Katelyn blowing bubbles! She loved them (page 6).</p>
<p>Exploring and Thinking This is about your child making sense of the things, places and people in their world.</p>	<p>Your child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is knowledgeable about the environment and enjoys caring for it • shows a growing understanding of maths ideas like time, shape, space, height, money and size • links new learning with 'old' learning • plays and works with others to explore, find out things and solve problems • uses marks/symbols to represent things • uses books and ICT for fun and to find out things • is becoming more independent and confident to do things for himself/herself • copes with changes and challenges and takes part in solving problems. 	<p>Here is Katelyn exploring and thinking and discovering that if you blow harder, the bubbles get bigger. She is having a lot of fun!</p>

Parents' comments, feedback and suggestions:

Parent signature:

Child's name

Date

DD/MM/YY

Practitioner

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Parents' comments, feedback and suggestions:

Parent signature:

Sample letter for parents which can be adapted to suit your setting

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to **INSERT SETTING NAME**. We hope that your child will have fun playing and learning lots of new things in our setting.

We use **personal learning portfolios** (or insert your own title) in **insert setting name**. This gives examples of things your child has made, projects your child has been involved in, trips your child has gone on and lots of other fun and exciting things your child has experienced in our setting. We also store confidential information in the **office/filing cabinet** (insert the relevant detail) which you are welcome to see at any time. Together, these records show how much your child has developed and learned during the time with us. As our curriculum is based on *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, we include links to it. *Aistear* describes children's learning and development using four themes:

- *Well-being* - children are confident, happy and healthy.
- *Identity and Belonging* - children are content with who they are, and feel loved and valued in their family and community.
- *Communicating* - children share their ideas, experiences and feelings in many different ways.
- *Exploring and Thinking* - children make sense of things, places and people around them and build their own ideas about why things are the way they are.

We look forward to building the personal learning portfolio (or insert your own title) with you and your child. You can bring this home at any time and add photos, comments and any other items you wish. We hope that your child's personal learning portfolio (or insert your own title) will help to show you what your child is doing and learning in **[name of setting]** and how important play is to all of this. Please come and talk to us at any stage during the year. We welcome your questions, ideas and suggestions.

Kind regards,
