Connections to *Aistear* and *Síolta*

Aistear

Themes: *Well-being*, *Identity and Belonging*, *Communicating*, *Exploring and Thinking*.
Guidelines for good practice: Supporting learning and development through assessment (pp.72- 102) User Guide (pp.12-22)

Síolta Standards

1: Rights of the Child, C1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 6: Play, C6.7, 7: Curriculum, C7.5, 7.6
Research Digests linked to the above *Standards*

Using the Self-evaluation Tool

This **Self-evaluation Tool** will support you to reflect on how you plan and assess using Aistear's themes either as an individual practitioner or as a team.

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

- Observing, talking and gathering assessment information
- Documenting
- Planning for children's learning and development

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.

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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.

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Self-evaluation Tool : Planning and Assessing using *Aistear's* Themes (Birth-6 years)

AistearSíolta Practice Guide

Practitioners' names

Date DD/MM/YY

Element 1: Observing, talking and gathering assessment information

Gathering information through ongoing observations and conversations with children, parents and colleagues helps to build a rich picture of children's individual learning journeys. This information provides signposts for how their learning and development can be supported further.

	When observing children, talking and gathering assessment information,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
1	we **respect each child**'s culture, family structure and background and reflect this individuality in our conversations and interactions with children.					
2	we encourage children to **self-assess** by helping them to think about their own learning and development and to see what they are able to do.					
3	we **talk to children** about what they are doing so that we better understand their thinking and reasoning.					
4	we use a **range of strategies to encourage conversations** with children, for example, thinking aloud together, reflecting back to children what they have said, asking an open question.					
5	we use a **variety of tools and methods** to carry out **observations**.					

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Element 1: Observing, talking and gathering assessment information

	When observing children, talking and gathering assessment information,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
6	we **observe and tune** in to non-verbal cues and interests, and how children interact with • each other • nearby adults • the indoor and outdoor environment.					
7	we **actively listen** to children's conversations and exchanges with others and note important insights into their communication skills and their thinking.					
8	we **observe** children's play, interactions, use of resources and representations to help us understand their thinking and to note what interests and motivates them.					
9	we use **conversations** with children to **follow up** on observations in order to encourage children to share what they are thinking or feeling.					
10	we use **cameras and/or videos** when possible and with parental permission to record and share key moments in children's learning and development.					
11	we plan **particular tasks** to gather specific information on children's dispositions, skills, attitudes and values, knowledge and understanding linked to *Aistear's* themes, for example when requested by an external agency.					

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Element 1: Observing, talking and gathering assessment information

Prompts for Reflection

- Think about what is **working well** in relation to planning for children's learning and development using Aistear's themes.

- Think about the **challenges** you have experienced in planning for children's learning and development using Aistear's themes.

- 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.

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Element 2: Documenting children's learning and development

Documentation provides a record of children's learning and development. This record uses a range of types of documentation including observation notes, photographs, video clips, examples of mark-making and detail on particular events or activities. The record helps to tell the story of, and show each child's journey as a capable and competent learner. The practitioner documents important points about what children can do, understand and how they approach learning which he/she can then use to plan future learning experiences.

	When documenting children's learning and development,	Never/ Rarely	Some-times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
1	we **respect each child**'s culture, family structure and background and reflect this individuality in our documentation.					
2	we use the dispositions, skills, attitudes and values, knowledge and understanding as set out in *Aistear's* themes, aims and learning goals to guide our **decisions about what to document.**					
3	we identify and **document key moments** in children's experiences as these give us **evidence** of, and important insights into children's learning and development.					
4	we add to our documentation on an **on-going basis** drawing on each other's observations and reflections to build pictures **over time** of children's learning and development based on multiple perspectives.					

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Element 2: Documenting children's learning and development

	When documenting children's learning and development	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
5	we use a **variety of documentation** such as short notes, written observations, photos, video clips, samples of things children create and daily diaries/records of care to build a rich picture of each child's learning and development.					
6	we **involve children in the process of documenting** through the use of their drawings, their choice of photos and their comments, and ensure this documentation is accessible to them.					
7	we select **photos and video snippets** when possible to add to our documentation on children's learning and development.					
8	we use a **Key Person system** to co-ordinate effective and comprehensive documentation on all children.					
9	we **reflect on and discuss** our documentation including our observations with **colleagues**.					
10	we **share** documentation, including observations, **with parents**. We place documentation focused on the children in the group or room where parents can look at it and enjoy it with their child.					

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Element 2: Documenting children's learning and development

	When documenting children's learning and development,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
11	we ask parents for verbal and/or written **feedback** on the documentation and we use this to help us in our curriculum planning.					
12	we ensure documentation is **named, dated and is relevant and accessible** to other authorised persons such as inspectors and therapists.					
13	we document in the **working language of the setting** and where this is Irish, we provide a bilingual version of documentation to parents when needed.					
14	we encourage the **sharing of documentation with other early childhood settings** if children are changing setting and where appropriate and with parents' permission.					
15	we encourage the **sharing of documentation with primary schools** as part of children's transition and where appropriate and with parents' permission.					

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Element 2: Documenting children's learning and development

Prompts for Reflection

- Think about what is **working well** in relation to planning for children's learning and development using Aistear's themes.

- Think about the **challenges** you have experienced in planning for children's learning and development using Aistear's themes.

- 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.

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Element 3: Planning for children's learning and development

Good planning focuses on all aspects of children's learning and development. Drawing on documentation, it builds on children's prior learning and development and takes account of their interests and inquiries as well as those of practitioners in providing relevant, enjoyable and hands-on experiences. This type of planning takes time and comes from knowing children well—their interests, needs, cultures, backgrounds and abilities. Curriculum planning therefore enables practitioners to provide experiences to extend and scaffold children's learning and ensure the curriculum meets each child's needs appropriately and supports his/her learning and development. Assessment information is, therefore, at the heart of planning.

	When planning for children's learning and development,	Never/ Rarely	Some- times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
1	we take account of the **principles of *Aistear* and *Síolta*** and ensure the learning experiences we plan for children are underpinned by these.					
2	we think about the **aims and learning goals in *Aistear's* themes,** and in particular, the dispositions, skills, attitudes and values, knowledge and understanding that we are supporting and nurturing in children when we plan experiences and activities.					
3	we ensure that planning is a part of our **routine every day.**					
4	we use **information gathered** through observations, conversations with children, with colleagues and parents, photos and video clips, and examples of things children did, made or said to inform planning.					

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Element 3: Planning for children's learning and development

	When planning for children's learning and development,	Never/ Rarely	Some-times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
5	we plan **experiences** which enable children to **progress to more complex activities**, providing a balance between familiarity which helps them to feel secure and novelty and challenge which captures their interest.					
6	we plan for **resources** in the learning environment that help children to **progress** in their learning and development, for example, we introduce particular props, books, real-life objects and new vocabulary.					
7	we ensure that most activities and experiences are **child-led,** with some being **practitioner-led**.					
8	we identify and use **spontaneous opportunities that emerge** in conversations, in play and in activities to introduce children to new concepts and skills.					
9	we develop **short-term plans** based on children's emergent interests and inquiries and on our own, and building on what children already know and can do.					
10	we see plans especially short-term and spontaneous plans as being **flexible and open to change** so that they can respond to new ideas and explorations initiated by children or by us in response to children.					

| Element 3: Planning for children's learning and development |

When planning for children's learning and development,	Never/ Rarely	Some-times	Regularly	Almost Always	Notes / Examples
11 we develop a **long-term plan** based on our Curriculum Statement (see Curriculum Foundations) and which describes our aspirations for children's learning and development linked to *Aistear's* themes and our setting's ethos.					
12 we develop **medium-term plans** based on seasonal events, celebrations and topics that may interest children and emerge from their experiences, and gather a range of resources and information linked to these.					
13 we **involve children** in curriculum planning, particularly in short-term and spontaneous plans, making their experiences more meaningful to them.					
14 we **listen to and observe** children on an **ongoing basis** to ensure that experiences and activities are flexible and meeting their needs and supporting progression in their learning and development.					
15 we reflect all children in our setting in our curriculum planning recognising that children with **special educational needs** may have challenges that require **additional planning** and ongoing review.					
16 we develop **Individual Educational Plans (IEPs)** when needed in consultation with parents and other relevant stakeholders involved in the education and care of the child.					

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Element 3: Planning for children's learning and development

Prompts for Reflection

- Think about what is **working well** in relation to planning for children's learning and development using *Aistear's* themes.

- Think about the **challenges** you have experienced in planning for children's learning and development using *Aistear's* themes.

- 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.

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