Information for parents

NCCA
An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

What is *Aistear*?

Aistear is a **curriculum framework** for children from **birth to six years** in Ireland. It describes the types of learning that are important for babies, toddlers and young children.

Aistear
Creatchuraclam na Luath-Óige
The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

How can *Aistear* help me me as a parent?

There are lots of great examples, exciting ideas, and practical suggestions in *Aistear* to help you as a parent. For example, the Framework suggests lots of things you can do to help your child learn through everyday activities and routines, such as getting food ready for meals, going to the shops, and checking the post. *Aistear* shows how important play is for your child's learning and development, and gives ideas for ways you and your child can play and learn together. And the good news is that this doesn't mean you have to buy expensive toys. *Aistear* has a long list of low-cost and free resources for play.

Who else is *Aistear* for?

If your child goes to a crèche, a childminder, a playgroup, a pre-school, or a primary school the practitioner there may also be using *Aistear*. The Framework has lots of suggestions for how you along with the childminder, the practitioner or teacher might work together to help your child settle into the new surroundings and benefit from all the fun and exciting opportunities that are provided to support his/her learning and development.

Where can I find *Aistear*?

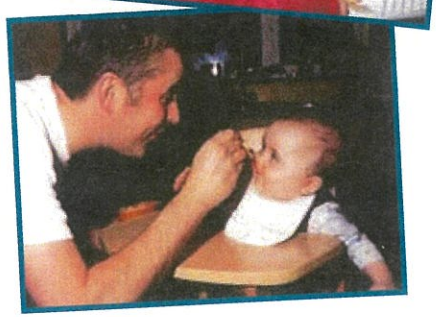
Aistear is available in English and in Irish at **www.ncca.ie/earlylearning**. When you visit the website, click on the *Aistear* logo to go to the Framework. If you don't have the internet at home check your local library to see if you can get online there.

What else is in *Aistear*?

Aistear has four elements:

- *Principles and themes*
- *Guidelines for good practice*
- *User guide*
- *Key messages from the research papers.*

The *Principles and themes* and the *Guidelines for good practice* are the most important of these.



Themes

Aistear uses four **themes** to describe what children learn during their early childhood. The themes are:

- *Well-being*
- *Identity and Belonging*
- *Communicating*
- *Exploring and Thinking.*

Each theme has **sample learning opportunities**. These are ideas for activities you might like to try out at home to help your baby, toddler or young child learn in a fun way. Many of these ideas can be used outside as well as inside.

Guidelines for good practice

Aistear also has **guidelines** that look at

- partnerships between parents and practitioners
- interactions
- play
- assessment.

The guidelines include 22 'stories' based in children's own homes. These are called **learning experiences**. See the example on the next page.

Learning experience 17: The big base drum

Theme: *Communicating*, Aim 1 and Learning goal 6

Age group: Babies

Setting: Home

Callum (9 months) and his Da are sitting on the floor at home playing together. Callum has been playing with some of his toys but Da senses he is getting bored. His Da gets an empty biscuit tin from the kitchen. He gives it to Callum. Callum lifts it, and moving it notices a sound inside it. He searches for the source of the sound. After a few minutes he looks at Da and screeches, indicating he wants to see inside the tin. Da takes the lid off. Callum reaches in for his set of play keys. They put other nearby things into the tin and take them out. Da talks about what they are doing. After a while Da goes to the kitchen and brings back a wooden spoon. He puts the lid on the tin and starts to bang on it with the wooden spoon as he sings, *I am the music man*. Callum shrieks with laughter. Da gives the spoon to Callum and he bangs loudly on his new drum copying what his Da was doing. Da sings again while Callum drums. Da talks to Callum describing and affirming his actions. Callum shows his delight in his achievements through taking turns in the conversation, laughing, gurgling, and smiling. Callum shows his new skills to his uncle Jimmy later that day.

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Reflection: What new skills can I model for children?

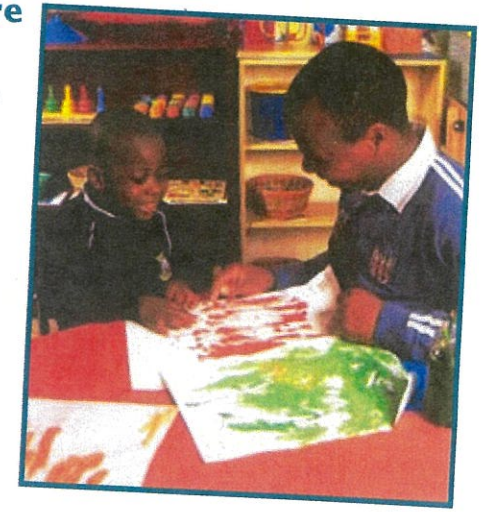
If you enjoyed reading about Callum's dad helping him learn about making music and taking turns while also having great fun, then you might like to read more of the learning experiences. Visit **www.ncca.ie/earlylearning**, and click on the *Aistear* logo and then click on 'Search learning experiences'.

What's the Aistear Toolkit?

The Aistear Toolkit which you will find at **www.ncca.ie/aisteartoolkit** has lots of resources to help you learn more about *Aistear* and to see how it might help you at home to support your child's learning and development. For example, there are three tip sheets for parents on helping your child learn through play.

Where can I find out more about *Aistear*?

Contact your local County/City Childcare Committee (CCC) for more information.



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