

Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment

Written submission template for organisations, groups and individuals responding to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*

This template is intended to support you (and your colleagues/organisation) in developing a written submission in response to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Please e-mail your completed submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

Individual submission details

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Date	10/08/2020
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Organisation submission details

Name	
Position	
Organisation	
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Yes

No

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

Please provide some brief background information on your organisation (if applicable).

To give a brief background, my fundamental area of interest and experience is in Education in Human Values (EHV) and fostering wellbeing. I have been involved with EHV since first encountering it in India in 1999. I teach in St. Brigid's GNS Glasnevin, a fully integrated values school, where we integrate education in human values into all aspects of the curriculum and school life. We have also developed and deliver training for teachers and principals in 'Integrating Human Values Education and Well-Being Into Teaching and Learning'.

The remainder of the template includes two sections. Section 1 invites your overall comments and observations on the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Section 2 is structured to align with the six key messages related to the framework. Each message is summarised as a support for you in working on the submission.

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

Section 1

Please outline your overall response to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*.

As I mentioned above, my particular area of interest and experience is in Education in Human Values (EHV) and wellbeing. As such, the response I put forward in this section is in relation to the proposed Wellbeing curriculum area of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* only. I will use Section 2 of this submission template to respond to the various other key messages outlined in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*.

Having worked as a primary school teacher using the EHV method of values education with children for the past seventeen years I consistently see the direct benefits EHV yields for each child every year in terms of fostering wellbeing, self-esteem, positive behaviour and confidence in the child. It is a very simple, yet very powerful method of fostering wellbeing and one that I believe should be included in our redeveloped curriculum.

The seven **Key Competencies** supporting the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework's* vision include the competency of **Fostering Wellbeing**. This is precisely what Education in Human Values does; it *fosters* wellbeing in the child. Wellbeing and a positive sense of self is cultivated as a result of a deliberate process of putting a conscious and systematic weekly focus on the child's innate positive human values. As we know, wellbeing is not something that can be taught, but rather it is something that can develop as a result of repeated positive thoughts, words and actions. When human values are focused upon during a person's formative years, it does exactly what this key competency in our *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* envisages; it fosters wellbeing. *The Crucial Early Childhood Years, EDUCARE* (Robinson, 2019) is one of many books to delve deeply into this area of research.

In the following paragraphs I will outline what the EHV method of values education involves. I will also describe how we integrate Education in Human Values into our teaching and learning in St. Brigid's Glasnevin, in order to demonstrate how EHV would work well as part of the Wellbeing area of our redeveloped curriculum.

EHV is a model of values education that focuses on five main values and uses five teaching methodologies to do so. The five human values of Truth, Love, Peace, Right Action and Non-Violence are the five overarching values, with each of these main values having countless sub-values such as kindness, patience, honesty, tolerance, self-discipline etc. See table below.

The five teaching methodologies used to nurture these values in the children are Story Telling, Quote, Group Singing, Activity and Meditation.

This clear and simple structure of EHV allows for individual schools to adapt the model to work within their own school context and to integrate into their own time structures.

TRUTH	LOVE	PEACE	RIGHT ACTION	NON-VIOLENCE
Being Trustworthy	Acceptance	Calmness	Accountability	Active Citizenship
Being Yourself	Caring	Concentration	Being a Good Example	Appreciation
Creativity	Compassion	Contentment	Consideration	Care for the Environment
Curiosity	Dedication	Endurance	Courage	Compassion
Determination	Empathy	Equality	Dependability	Concern for Others
Discrimination	Forgiveness	Equanimity	Duty	Co-operation
Fairness	Friendship	Focus	Fairness	Equality
Fearlessness	Generosity	Gratitude	Good Manners	Forgiveness
Honesty	Happiness	Humility	Gratitude	Gentleness
Integrity	Joy	Limiting Desires	Healthy Eating	Global Awareness
Intuition	Kindness	Mindfulness	Healthy Living	Harmlessness
Reflection	Non-Judgement	Patience	Helpfulness	Inclusiveness
Self-Awareness	Patience	Positivity	Honesty	Loyalty
Self-Knowledge	Purity	Reflection	Perseverance	National Awareness
Self-Worth	Selflessness	Self-Acceptance	Resourcefulness	Recycling
Sense Control	Sharing	Self-Confidence	Respect	Reflection
Speaking-Up	Showing Love	Self-Discipline	Responsibility	Respect for Diversity
Spirit of Enquiry	Thoughtfulness	Self-Respect	Sacrifice	Service
Truthfulness	Tolerance	Simplicity	Self-Control	Solidarity
Unity of Thought, Word and Deed	Understanding	Understanding	Self-Improvement	Teamwork
Wisdom	Wisdom	Wellbeing	Sincerity	Tolerance

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In St. Brigid's we begin each month with a whole school Values Assembly. The assembly integrates most of the five teaching methodologies, as it will always include a story around the value of the month and a meditation and ends with everyone singing together the song for the month (see plan).

Within each classroom every teacher introduces the new month/week's value on a Monday morning giving the children the opportunity to discuss and fully understand the meaning of the week's value. Each child also has her own values copy, which is used as a personal journal for reflection on her own use of each week's value. We find this reflection opportunity to be very important and beneficial in ensuring that the focus on the value each week is *experiential* for the child. As homework during the week each child writes (or records in a picture) in her copy about a time when she showed the value of that week, e.g. *This week I showed kindness when I helped my sister to tidy up her toys*. The following day in school the children each read or tell their story aloud to the rest of the class and the teacher. This simple process of giving the child the opportunity to reflect on her use of each week's value, while also receiving acknowledgement for this from her family, her peers and her teacher, goes a long way towards fostering wellbeing and building a strong, positive sense of self in the child. As the weeks and months progress using this focus on human values to draw out the innate goodness in each child, the child comes to know herself as the good and important person that she is, as she realises that she embodies all of these positive human values.

Each teacher uses the five teaching methodologies to integrate the week's value into his/her own teaching throughout each week. For example, he/she might integrate a story highlighting the value of the week into an English lesson, a meditation into a religion or SPHE lesson, the song of the month into a music lesson, the quote into an art lesson and might facilitate an improvisation activity around the week's value during a drama lesson. There are endless opportunities for a teacher to integrate the five teaching methodologies around the value of the week into his/her teaching each week, without the EHV model of values education being too prescriptive or restrictive. The value of the week simply becomes an ever-present, invisible reference point for everyone in the school each week.

Each week the new value is displayed on a large values noticeboard in the main school hall and within each classroom. It is also shared with the wider school community through Twitter and the school website and newsletter.

To sum up, having worked with children and Education in Human Values for many years, it is my experience that EHV is a form of education that truly fosters wellbeing. It is a simple, but powerful form of values education. It can be implemented in any school setting, including special schools, religious/non-religious/multi-/non-denominational schools and mainstream schools. The five values EHV focuses upon are universal human values that are common to all human beings, regardless of age, culture, religion, academic ability, gender, nationality and so on. They are values that unite people and create unity in diversity. It is for this reason that I believe EHV would be an ideal 'subject' to introduce and strengthen the Wellbeing area of our redeveloped curriculum from Stage 1 onwards.

Section 2

Agency and flexibility in schools

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Be for every child.
- Recognise teachers' and principals' agency and professionalism to enact the curriculum in their individual school context.
- Give more flexibility to schools in terms of planning and timetabling to identify and respond to priorities and opportunities.
- Connect with different school contexts in the education system.
- Give greater opportunities for flexibility and choice for children's learning.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework outlines important messages in relation to agency and flexibility in schools. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

I think the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* provides enough flexibility for schools to use their own agency and professionalism to enact the curriculum, while still providing a clear framework for doing so. I think the planned examples and guidelines for how time allocation can be used will provide a good practical support to help schools and teachers timetable and integrate curriculum areas and subjects, while still leaving flexibility for schools and teachers to use their own agency and professionalism to enact the curriculum.

Curriculum connections between preschool, primary and post-primary schools

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Provide a clear vision for children's learning across the eight years of primary school.
- Link with learning experiences provided through the themes of the *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and connect with the subjects, key skills and statements of learning in the *Framework for Junior Cycle*.

Support educational transitions by connecting with what and how children learn at home, in preschool and post-primary school. **The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework outlines important**

messages in relation to curriculum connections between preschool, primary and post-primary schools. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

I think the consideration given to the transitions and curriculum connections from pre-school to primary and on to post-primary is an important perspective to take and is perhaps one that was less evident in the 1999 curriculum. The connections between the principles in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* and the Principles of Junior Cycle Education are evident with use of similar language and principle headings, as are the connections between the Key Competencies of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*, the four themes of Aistear and the Key Skills of Junior Cycle. This consideration for transitions and continuity of learning will surely benefit the learner, providing a holistic educational journey from early childhood to adulthood.

Emerging priorities for children’s learning

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Embed seven key competencies across children’s learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class.
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes. The Learning Outcomes and the Key Competencies are broad in nature to describe this wider understanding of learning.
- Have increased emphasis on some existing areas such as PE and SPHE (Wellbeing) and digital learning, and have new aspects such as Modern Foreign Languages, Technology, Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics, and a broader Arts Education.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to emerging priorities for children’s learning. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

I believe that our priorities for children’s learning today are very different to those of the 1999 curriculum. Ireland today is a very different place to the Ireland of twenty years ago, given the growth of the internet, the decline of the role and influence of the Catholic Church in society and the growth in immigration to Ireland of people from many different countries and cultures. The

Draft Primary Curriculum Framework looks set to address new and emerging priorities for children's learning with the inclusion of each of the curriculum areas and subjects proposed, particularly Modern Foreign Languages, Technology, ERB and Ethics and an increased emphasis on the area of Wellbeing.

As detailed in Section 1, I believe that values education is now crucial to meet the emerging priorities for children's learning in Ireland today. With uncensored instant information available on the internet and with much communication taking place through social media it is important that we teach children how to use discernment and how to base their decisions on their own sound values. Children need to know how to regulate and take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour. Education in Human Values (EHV) teaches children to do this, while also cultivating social and moral responsibilities, promoting unity in diversity and fostering wellbeing in the child.

Changing how the curriculum is structured and presented

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Be broad and balanced in purpose and content.
- Be structured in five broad curriculum areas;
 - Language
 - Mathematics, Science and Technology Education
 - Wellbeing
 - Social and Environmental Education
 - Arts Education.

(In addition to the five areas above, the Patron's Programme is developed by a school's patron with the aim of contributing to the child's holistic development particularly from the religious and/or ethical perspective and in the process, underpins and supports the characteristic spirit of the school. These areas connect to the themes of *Aistear* and to the subject-based work in Junior Cycle.)

- Provide for an integrated learning experience, with curriculum areas in Stages 1 and 2 (junior Infants – second Class) and more subject-based learning in Stages 3 and 4 (third class – sixth class).
- Use broad learning outcomes to describe the expected learning and development for children.
- Incorporate the new *Primary Language Curriculum / Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile*.

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The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to changing how the curriculum is structured and presented. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

I think the proposed structure of the new redeveloped curriculum provides teachers with the opportunity to best teach and integrate areas and subjects using his/her own agency and professionalism to ensure that the curriculum's learning outcomes are achieved, by avoiding rigidly prescribing exact time allocations for each subject but rather suggesting minimum weekly/monthly time allocations.

Supporting a variety of pedagogical approaches and strategies with assessment central to teaching and learning

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Promote high quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- Conceptualise assessment as an essential and critical part of teaching and learning.
- Highlight the importance of teachers' professional judgement in supporting progression in children's learning.
- Encourage teachers to make meaningful connections with children's interests and experiences.
- Recognise the significance of quality relationships and their impact on children's learning.
- Recognise the role and influence of parents and families in children's education.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to supporting a variety of pedagogical approaches and strategies with assessment central to teaching and learning. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

The draft framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will support each child's learning journey using a purposeful and broad continuum of assessment ranging from intuitive assessment to planned interactions to distinct assessment events. I think that the use of these varied types of assessments combined will be beneficial and sufficient in helping teachers and children to plan and

progress the teaching and learning in their classroom, while also providing useful information for school leaders and policy makers.

Building on the successes and strengths of the 1999 curriculum while recognising and responding to the challenges and changing needs and priorities.

The 1999 curriculum contributed to many successes including:

- Enhanced enjoyment of learning for children.
- Increased use of active methodologies for teaching and learning.
- Improved attainment levels in reading, mathematics and science as evidenced in national and international assessments.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Address curriculum overload at primary level.
- Take stock of strategies, initiatives and programmes and clarify priorities for children's learning.
- Link with *Aistear* and *the Framework for Junior Cycle*.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework outlines important messages in relation to building on the successes and strengths of the 1999 curriculum while recognising and responding to challenges and changing needs and priorities. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

Looking at the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* it is clear that much consideration has been given to building on the successes and strengths of the 1999 curriculum while recognising and responding to changing needs and priorities for children's learning today.

I think that the proposed framework for the redeveloped curriculum achieves its aims

- to address curriculum overload through its proposed time allocation options
- to clarify priorities for children's learning through the inclusion of the new areas and subjects such as Modern Foreign Languages, Technology, Education about Religions and Beliefs and Ethics, the broader Arts Education and the increased emphasis on Wellbeing

- to link with *Aistear* and *the Framework for Junior Cycle* through supporting continuity and connectivity within the principles of each, thus supporting the child's transition from primary to post-primary school.

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Thank you for your submission.

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