

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

Name	
Date	
E-mail	

Organisation submission details

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The NCCA will publish written submissions received during the consultation. The submissions will include the author’s/contributor’s name/organisation. Do you consent to this submission being posted online?

Yes No

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

The Irish Primary PE Association is a voluntary organisation that was founded in 2002 by and for primary teachers who were particularly interested in the subject of Physical Education. We are part funded by the teacher professional community fund administered by Dublin West Education Centre and annual membership subscriptions. The mission of the Irish Primary Physical Education Association is to:

- support the position of the class teacher in Ireland as the person best placed to provide quality Physical Education within an integrated primary school curriculum.
- represent the needs of teachers of Physical Education in primary schools, those learning to teach primary Physical Education and personnel engaged in working with and supporting teachers and pupils of primary Physical Education.
- act as a lead body and national consultee for quality Physical Education in primary schools and by implication, quality professional development and support of teachers of Physical Education.

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- promote and develop high standards by improving knowledge and understanding of Physical Education in primary schools and in the wider society.
- keep members up to date with latest issues, trends, technologies and legislative developments in Physical Education and related areas.
- increase public awareness and understanding of the contribution that the primary teacher makes to Physical Education, physical activity and sport.
- encourage equality of opportunity in the area of Physical Education, physical activity and sport.
- liaise with the Department of Education and other relevant bodies.
- hold, organise and participate in conferences, seminars and workshops for the purpose of promoting its objectives.
- encourage and support research in primary Physical Education, physical activity and sport, and assist in the publication and dissemination of this research.
- recruit the maximum members to the Association.

As such we are composed of teachers and teacher educators concerned with the design and delivery of Physical Education in the primary school to best meet the Physical Education needs of children in helping them acquire the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to be physically active for a lifetime. For more information about the IPPEA visit www.irishprimarype.com

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.

Section 1

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

The IPPEA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the draft primary curriculum framework. Our submission was created collaboratively based on the views of our executive committee with their responses and perspectives gathered through various media and refined over a number of meetings. Overall, we feel the proposed framework is progressive, ambitious, and forward thinking. We welcome the continuity across the educational life span from pre-school to primary to post-primary. The holistic nature of the framework recognises the child as an integrated person and addresses their learning in a cohesive manner. The central role of the child in assessment places the child at the centre of the pedagogical experience.

There are a number of key points to our response which intentionally reoccur in several sections as they are not only important to us, but reflect the holistic nature and potential of Physical Education within the curricular framework.

- **Time.** The IPPEA strongly support and commend increased and weekly time allocations for wellbeing areas as well as the identification of wellbeing as a key competency. Consideration should be given to the use of a specific time allocation or recommendation for Physical Education within the wider Wellbeing subject area.
- **Significance of naming.** Language is important. Caution should be observed in renaming of the subject to avoid a biomedical perspective of health and Physical Education in which physical activity may be prioritised over learning.
- **Definitions.** There is much new within the framework and concepts that have different meanings to different people. Clear definitions regarding ideology, pedagogy, and associated content of any new terminology must be provided to avoid confusion amongst stakeholders. Likewise, Physical Education should be clearly identifiable as an overt named aspect of Wellbeing at all stages and be reflected in all definitions and attributes related to wellbeing.
- **Progression Criteria.** To represent the foundational and holistic nature of wellbeing and physical/health education alongside languages, mathematics, and science and technology, consideration should be given to the inclusion of progression criteria for this area.
- **Leadership.** Physical Education leadership and lead teachers within schools must play an important role within a redeveloped curriculum.
- **External Provision.** Further explicit guidance in relation to the role of external providers within wellbeing areas is required within the redeveloped curriculum.
- **Continuing Professional Development (CPD).** If the intent of the new framework is to be realised, CPD in a re-imagined format is essential.

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.

The IPPEA are in agreement that greater agency apportioned to schools is a goal many have worked toward during the consultation process and it is excellent to see it reflected here, both in Wellbeing and other subject areas. The flexibility allows schools to devise unique, innovative, and less prescriptive programmes to suit their contexts. Schools will be able to design programmes, within the parameters of the curriculum, that meet their particular needs allowing for the use of indoor and outdoor facilities and local parks as venues as well as initiatives that may become available. It also provides for possibilities for integrated learning in and through Physical Education. While each of the time allocation options have their possibilities, a flexibility which we appreciate, the bottom line is that we endorse a weekly time allocation for wellbeing areas alongside language and mathematics. Such a commitment recognises wellbeing as 'core' element of the curriculum. We strongly suggest this is maintained.

While the flexibility and agency of schools is conceptually appreciated it is also recognised as having potential concerns. Some schools and programmes would be limited in their context, the skill set of the teachers, and their own competences thus exercising their flexibility to justify shortfalls, rather than what is beneficial to the children in a broad and balanced programme. This could result in a limited Physical Education programme with a high dependency on Games (Woods et al 2010, 2018) leading to a negative experience for many children (Coulter et al 2020), extreme dependency on external provision (Mangione, Parker, O'Sullivan and Qualye, 2020), physical activity with no meaningful learning or no Physical Education at all.

In short, we support agency and flexibility for schools, but feel structure is needed to guide the agency and flexibility. Fundamentally the greater the amount of agency and flexibility

in schools, the more organisational pressure it puts on principals and schools to ensure all elements are covered by all teachers. Without guidance this can be an issue. Guidance might include different scenarios that reflect - what to teach, in what order to teach, how to teach, how time might be allocated. From the outset, clear definitions regarding the composition of Wellbeing including both Physical Education, SPHE, health would be necessary to ensure what is taught meets the learning outcomes of the area and that external provision choices complement a learning agenda rather than simply serve as physical activities to engage pupils. Such clear definitions would also eliminate one area dominating the other in terms of content (please see additional comments in the Emerging Priorities section for more detail here). Physical Education should be clearly identified as an aspect of Wellbeing at all stages. Direction could also be given as to how teachers could be used creatively in a school to optimise the Physical Education learning experience (Clohessy et al 2020a). Additionally, consideration may be given to the creation of Physical Education progression criteria that provide direction with flexibility. These progression criteria could meaningfully guide in the achievement of learning outcomes in all three learning domains, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor within Physical Education and wellbeing. Ideally, progression criteria would list benchmarks toward the achievement of designed learning outcomes and would support rather than overwhelm or provide mandates for teachers. Progression criteria relating to the psychomotor domain could align with what currently exists with the PDST's *Move Well, Move Often* programme. Progression levels such as Exploring, Developing, Mastery, as used with the PDST and elsewhere (Graham et al 2020) would help direct teachers toward developmental and expected learning. It should be reiterated that progression criteria within Physical Education should address all aspects of well-being and not simply the physical. SHAPE America Grade Level Learning outcomes (2014) offer a nice model of this and Parker et al (in press) provide detailed examples of how affective goals can be taught through primary Physical Education.)

Definite parameters or recommendations around time allocations within the Wellbeing subject area would guide schools towards a ring-fenced time slot that would ensure the inclusion of Physical Education on a weekly basis. The IPPEA would like to see the SPHE/PE weighting as reflected in the 1999 curriculum maintained. This would equate, for example at Stage 1 a designated time of 1.5 hours PE and 1 hour SPHE per week of integrated learning. Recognizing the integrated nature of the two areas the lines could be blurred, but we would be opposed to “blocking time” so that one week schools would do Physical Education and the next they would do SPHE.

The entire teacher education continuum regarding Physical Education, from initial teacher education to CPD (both PDST and IPPEA) and onwards, need to be working closely in order for the messages around what can be taught and who is teaching PE to be very clear. This could be the time to properly address the ‘elephant in the room’ (external providers during PE time) and encourage adherence to the DES statement on external provision (DES, 2018) in combination with the IPPEA guidelines for external provision in Physical Education.

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.

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- 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.

The IPPEA welcome the concept of a continuum from pre-school to post-primary as this has been too separate for many years. It would serve to highlight the integration of subject areas within Aistear, including PE, making the most of Aistear time and then transition to Wellbeing in the Junior Cycle Curriculum. The further emphasis being placed on sharing of information between settings allows for the continuous and seamless development of the whole child. It is also important that year-by-year transitions within primary school are recognised.

To make the linkages work however some attention will need to be given to terminology, definitions, focus, and practice. To enable connections across the entire curriculum, it would be beneficial if terminology were consistent across all levels. We support the notion of interdisciplinary learning, but, as stated earlier, it needs to be clear what interdisciplinary entails. It is important to ensure that what is designed to occur with respect to movement and well-being in Aistear does happen; at present that can be argued as teachers are confused about how and what to teach (Davern, 2019). Teachers appear challenged in teaching wellbeing in general within Aistear and will require support to ensure both psychological and physical wellbeing are addressed. The Junior Cycle Curriculum seems clear; primary may be able to link with their definitions and describe how they link.

If the Health and Physical Education (HPE) model is adopted as proposed, looking at how HPE models elsewhere are conceptualised, e.g., Scotland, Australia, Wales, New Zealand, US, could support the transition from primary to post-primary. This may also further strengthen the role of PE as preparation for healthy and active lives in the Stage 1 and Stage 2 phases where visibility could be enhanced through earlier recognition of the subject (this issue is further developed later in this consultation response). The interdisciplinary approach is positive for the children at the infant level, but perhaps the transition to subjects that is current proposed at Stage 3 could be commenced during Stage 2 in a phased format that does not result in an abrupt shift between Stages 2 and 3. This might be done throughout primary school links through the use of pedagogical approaches and strategies that philosophically support development across the stages. These pedagogical approaches might draw selectively from one or more evidence informed curriculum models and approaches to PE such as skill themes (Graham et al. 2020), meaningful Physical Education (Beni et al 2019), Sport Education (Siedentop et al 2020), Cooperative Learning (Dyson and Casey 2016), and Teaching games for understanding (Mitchell, Griffin and Oslin 2013). To avoid overload teachers would not be expected to engage with all of the models in full, rather the pedagogies within some of the models may inform the approach to teaching PE recommended within a

redeveloped curriculum. These approaches and strategies may help create meaningful Physical Education learning experiences, linking with a developmental approach and transitioning to Junior Cycle. These pedagogies could be enacted within the context of content such as games, dance, gymnastics, athletics, aquatics and outdoor experiences. Other physical activity interests of pupils may also potentially be explored, along with the knowledge, skills and understandings required to participate in more informal sports and recreation, as result of their increasing position within worldwide physical activity patterns (O'Connor and Penny 2020). A broad range of relevant resources to link the stages must be provided from the outset so one agenda does not take priority.

The spiral nature of 1999 curricula was one of its strengths - building on skills, concepts and knowledge. This should be maintained as child progresses through stages. As discussed later in this document, on the ground further CPD needs to be provided to allow teachers in primary school enrich their teaching in PE by liaising with educational providers in early years and secondary settings.

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.

IPPEA feels it is fantastic to see wellbeing (encompassing PE and SPHE) as a key competency of curriculum as it does reflect 'the extent to which classrooms have changed' (p.1) and tries to make the curriculum relevant to the needs of children within the classroom while reflecting current thinking (MacPhail and Lawson 2020). It is a benefit to teachers, children and parents to have one set of competencies across all areas of curriculum. Across the continuum consistent wording reflecting the vision and principles of the framework is welcomed and wellbeing truly reflects the holistic development of child/person now. It should be noted, however, that the wellbeing key competency definition on page 8 differs

slightly to curriculum area explanation on page 13. To avoid confusion consideration could be given to the presentation of a consistent definition of wellbeing.

Physical Education can link with many of the competencies; in many senses it is a useful enabler and is essential to developing cohesion, as competencies do not compartmentalise learning as subjects tend to do (Ward, Parker, and Barnes 2020). Physical Education can, therefore, support the broader focus of the framework and specifically enabling key competencies such as being creative, communicating and using language, and learning to be a learner as well as the fostering wellbeing. Yet, it overtly links to only one, fostering wellbeing. The wellbeing competency encompasses many of areas we seek to address within Physical Education, physical, cognitive, and affective.

Wellbeing could, however, easily be more associated with SPHE than Physical Education. As currently written the curricular area explanations appear weighted in favour of SPHE over Physical Education. While Physical Education has the capability to address many of the competencies delineated within a holistic approach to wellbeing, this may not be overtly obvious. The word 'physical' is referenced once under the wellbeing attributes on page 10; 'competence' as well as confidence needs to be stressed here. While we fully acknowledge that Physical Education is more than just the physical, the physical aspect represents the uniqueness of Physical Education; there needs to be a balance. It is vital that Physical Education reflect learning of and through movement; that it simply does not become a means to an end. It is a necessity for skill development, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes. It will be important that while Physical Education and SPHE are both aspects of wellbeing that as in other countries (Carse, et al., 2018; SHAPE America, 2014) they are separate components receiving individual attention. It will be extremely important to define what quality Physical Education is (and is not) within the competency and its attributes as it could quite easily become physical activity (e.g. PE with Joe Wicks) and not Physical Education or so merged that it loses all identity.

If a shift towards a wellbeing curriculum area (encompassing Physical Education) reflects a move away from a curriculum with a performance pedagogy orientation (Petrie and Atkins 2018) to a more holistic, socio-cultural and socio-critical approach then (Carse, Jess, & Keay, 2018; Petrie & Atkins, 2018), as seen in other countries such as New Zealand and Scotland, the importance of support for teachers as to how to engage with this rounded definition of wellbeing cannot be underestimated.

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

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- 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*.

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.

The introduction of five broad and balanced curriculum areas is welcomed by the IPPEA. As we have stated throughout this response, it is felt these five areas can potentially represent a positive holistic learning experience for the child. It cannot be understated, that these five curriculum areas would represent a new structure with new terminology, particularly with Physical Education now encompassed within wellbeing and physical and health education. As seen in other jurisdictions the renaming of the subject and introduction of a new terms can, however, create confusion amongst teachers and the wider public (Lynch and Soukup 2016) leading stakeholders to take their own interpretations. In an Irish content we have already recently, for example, seen a positive department of education focus on the concept of physical literacy (which in itself can be misrepresented) as a goal or an outcome of high quality PE (PDST 2018), as well as some emphasis on the term wellbeing. As indicated in the Agency and Flexibility section, for further changes in language to be successful any new language or concepts must be clearly defined. Accordingly the IPPEA are interested in the proposed ideologies, pedagogies, and content associated with the wellbeing curriculum areas in both Stage 1/2 and 3/4. Each of these will now be addressed in turn. Following this, the place of dance within the curriculum will be addressed.

Stage 1/2 Wellbeing

In relation to Stage 1/2 we believe an integrated approach to the development of wellbeing has the potential to be beneficial for pupils. A play-based integrated approach can undoubtedly support deep learning which can transcend traditional subject barriers. Thorburn et al (2011) and Lynch and Soukup (2016) have highlighted the significant challenge of meaningfully integrating health and Physical Education as part of a wellbeing subject areas. The IPPEA will welcome a comprehensive toolkit informed by the experiences of other countries who have recently adopted an integrated approach (e.g., Scotland, Australia, Wales, and New Zealand) to support Irish teachers in this area.

As raised in the section regarding flexibility and agency, we must also acknowledge, based on experiences of other countries (Petrie & Atkins, 2018), that within an integrated curriculum area of wellbeing there is an inherent danger that pupil learning typically undertaken in Physical Education will be placed on the periphery, with some teachers choosing to spend more time on other areas of wellbeing. Flexibility in interpretation can also mean flexibility in implementation and without specific time allocations, guidance or reference to Physical Education, this phenomenon which has become evident in Wales (Carse, 2020, Personal Communication) may be reproduced to the detriment of children in Ireland. Similarly although wellbeing is one of the central themes of the Aistear programme, research indicates that the implementation of the PE curriculum is in general weaker at the lower end of the primary school (Davern, 2019; Department of Education and Skills 2016). Our experiences as an executive committee would also indicate that physical wellbeing is not a topic commonly explored by teachers as part of the Aistear framework.

While an interdisciplinary curriculum is needed, there are inherent challenges, as well as strategies, associated with the implementation of it (McCuaig et al 2020). The IPPEA accordingly suggests that similar to the footnote proposed in relation to arts education at Stage 1/2, a footnote or further guidance be provided in relation to wellbeing in all instances highlighting the contribution of both Physical Education and social personal values education to this integrated curriculum area at Stage 1/2. In addition, alongside the presentation of broader integrated learning outcomes overarching the wellbeing area, the IPPEA also recommends that within Stage 1/2 subject specific learning outcomes are presented for Physical Education. Together these measures may support greater visibility, recognition and ultimately use of Physical Education by teachers to support pupils wellbeing across all domains of learning. Physical Education lead teachers within schools could also help ensure the subject is not left on the periphery within the new wellbeing structure (Irish Primary Physical Education Association 2012; Clohessy et al 2020a; Clohessy et al 2020b). Likewise, there is strong evidence that professional associations with non-formal authentic leadership, such as the IPPEA, can do much to support teachers in the implementation of new curricula (McCuaig et al, 2020).

Stage 3/4 Physical and Health Education and Social, Personal and Values Education

In relation to Stage 3/4, the IPPEA not only supports, but commends the progression towards more subject specific areas at the upper end of the primary school. In the absence of further details we are, however, concerned with the potential renaming of Physical Education to physical and health education. It is unclear from the draft framework as to whether this name change signifies a change in ideology, content or pedagogy associated with the subject area.

A health ideology is one of the dominant discourses evident in PE particularly in recent years (Coulter and Ní Chronín 2013, Powell 2018, Ní Chronín et al 2020). Clarity is first required on what is meant by health in the context of the proposed health and Physical Education subject, as different understandings can lead to different pedagogies and content (Armour and Harris 2013). Does it, for example, refer to similar aspects of health associated within the current social personal health education (SPHE) subject to be taught in an integrated fashion with PE? Or does it signify a change of emphasis within the subject? Does it represent the current worldwide focus on social emotional learning (Collaborative for

Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) 2019) and trauma responsive education (Ellison, Walton-Fisette, & Eckert, 2019)?

Quennerstedt (2019) provides an overview of different understandings of health within Physical Education. These range from a static narrow predefined individual perspective of health as the absence or prevention of disease, to a dynamic broader sociocultural perspective focussed on health as something we actively do and draw on to be healthy. These alternating perspectives in relation to health have a significant influence on what is taught and the way in which it is taught within a school context (Mong and Standal 2019).

If one, for example, ascribes to a biomedical perspective of health (Mong and Standal 2019), Physical Education content becomes largely focussed on aspects such as aerobic capacity and fitness testing, body mass index, body shape, step counts and reducing obesity through increased physical activity (Quennerstedt 2019). Within this approach facts about health are provided and the teacher imparts knowledge and self-management strategies are taught through a pedagogy that forefronts direct instruction (Mong and Standal 2019) and children see Physical Education only as a place for exercise (Parker et al 2018). The IPPEA does not ascribe to this approach towards Physical Education, or in fact towards health education, as evidenced by our position statement on fitness testing and advocacy of quality Physical Education (IPPEA 2015; IPPEA 2010).

Similarly, researchers within the field have expressed considerable concerns about the long term impacts of this approach to Physical Education which seeks to focus on the P to the detriment of the E in Physical Education (Armour and Harris 2013; McCullick 2014; Powell and Fitzpatrick 2015; Quennerstedt 2019; Murphy and McEvoy 2020). This reductionist approach may also exacerbate the worrying trend of external provision of PE in Irish primary schools (Ní Chronin and O'Brien 2019; IPPEA 2010; Mangione et al 2020) as this biomedical perspective largely view health and Physical Education as a structured program to be followed and delivered to pupils.

In line with the perspective of many major stakeholders (Ní Chronin et al 2020; Ní Chronin, Coulter, and Parker 2020; Parker et al, in press) the IPPEA believes PE can support social and emotional learning in addition to cognitive as well as the aforementioned physical learning (IPPEA 2010). This perspective is more in keeping with salutogenic and critical perspectives of health which have a more holistic approach focussing on a variety of learning domains and facilitating pupils to become engaged and active critical thinkers whilst learning about health (Mong and Standal 2019).

Accordingly the IPPEA urges the NCCA to carefully consider the renaming of the subject area to health and Physical Education. In many instances practitioners could associate this change with a negative move towards a biomedical perspective of health and Physical Education (i.e., physical activity prioritised over learning). If the subject is renamed there needs to be a clear definition presented highlighting the associated ideology, pedagogy and content as well as the importance of quality Physical Education focussed on learning within this new subject area. This would at the least entail the development of separate learning outcomes and progression criteria for health and Physical Education.

The position of dance within the curriculum

The IPPEA supports the retention of dance within the Physical Education aspect of the curriculum. Whilst there are undoubted links with the arts, the potential to achieve physical, social, emotional and cognitive learning outcomes through dance within Physical Education may be compromised. If dance remains within the Physical Education curriculum both the aesthetic and creative nature of dance as well as the physical aspects can be captured; if there is a shift to the arts some of this risks being lost. Moving through dance also represents movement concepts similarly found in gymnastics, games, athletics and even outdoor and adventure activities and accordingly opportunities for effective linkage may be reduced. Dance is also best undertaken in a setting with appropriate space for movement and learning (i.e., not the classroom) and accordingly if placed under the banner of arts education the opportunity to use a hall for dance may be limited due to timetabling. Dance is also an important avenue towards lifetime physical activity for many people and a move to arts education may reduce the opportunities for pupils to engage with this activity due to a comparably lower time allocation for arts education. In addition, dance within Physical Education provides options for children who may not be as inclined towards traditional games activities. The positioning of dance within arts education at primary level would also be in contrast to second level where dance is maintained as an important part of Physical Education. Transitions between primary and post primary may accordingly be hampered through the repositioning of dance to arts education.

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 issue of pedagogical approaches has already been addressed in our response to ‘Curriculum connections between preschool, primary and post-primary schools’ and valuable approaches worthy of further consideration such as sport education, cooperative learning, teaching games for understanding, and a number of other models. Accordingly in this section we will primarily address the area of assessment.

The IPPEA commends the NCCA for their presentation of a continuum of assessment. We are especially heartened to see equal value placed on intuitive assessment, planned interactions, and more formal assessment events; with planned interactions being especially welcomed. We strongly agree with this approach and feel it will support teachers to consider assessment beyond external accountability and national monitoring. The IPPEA are also delighted that formative assessment for learning appears to be a central tenet of the continuum of assessment. Assessment for learning is integral to quality teaching and learning and has many accessible applications in the context of Physical Education (Graham et al 2020; Macken et al 2020, Ní Chronin and Cosgrave 2013). The positioning of the child as the central stakeholder is also to be applauded, as a lack of pupil engagement in assessment has been identified as a weakness within existing primary Physical Education assessment practices (Dinan-Thompson and Penny 2015, Ní Chronin and Cosgrave 2013). The recognition of teachers as agentic professionals in the context of assessment is another positive inclusion from the perspective of the IPPEA.

Assessment in Physical Education is often an area of low confidence amongst teachers (Macken et al 2020; Morgan and Hansen 2007) and accordingly the inclusion of clear guidance in the subject specification, as well as clear examples differentiated across class levels and modelling linked to learning outcomes in the toolkit will be most welcome (Ní Chronin and Cosgrave 2013; MacPhail and Murphy 2017). The additional time afforded through the increased allocation for the subject area may also support teachers to engage further with meaningful assessment to support pupil learning (Ní Chronin and Cosgrave 2013). Whilst it is positive that some teachers have already received some professional development in the area of assessment for PE through the Move Well Move Often Physical literacy seminars and assessment materials (PDST 2017), as indicated by a review of Physical Education within the new Junior Cycle (O’Sullivan et al 2020), further sustained professional development for all teachers is needed. In particular, assessment for and of learning relating to all domains of learning in Physical Education, and not just those in the physical domain (e.g., fundamental movement skills), would be beneficial. The toolkit will be vital to support teachers in this area as assessment across learning domains was advocated in the 1999 curriculum, but anecdotally appears to have been focussed largely on the physical domain. It appears that professional associations are key in understanding assessment (Macdonald, Enright, and McCuaig 2018); the IPPEA assessment in Physical Education resource videos (www.irishprimarype.com) as well as the recent IPPEA led primary section of the PExpo (Marron 2019) (<https://www.pexpoireland.com/>) may be useful in this regard. In the PExpo, for example, pupils kept a Physical Education Diary to record their learning based on Head, Heart, and Hands (Cognitive/ Knowledge learning, Affective/Emotional learning and Physical learning) (Ní Chróinín, Coulter, and Parker, 2020; Vasily, 2015).

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.

The IPPEA welcomes efforts that have been made to address curriculum overload and recognises the huge value that may be derived from adopting an integrated approach both within and across subject areas in working towards the development of key competencies. The IPPEA also recognises that many strengths of the 1999 curriculum have been maintained utilised as building blocks in the new draft framework.

While the increased flexibility afforded in this draft framework is beneficial in many instances, the IPPEA urges the NCCA to ensure safeguards of some form are in place to ensure that this flexibility does not lead to the reduction of quality Physical Education to an offering of physical activity under the banner of wellbeing or Physical Education and health. It must be emphasised in the strongest possible fashion that physical activity is neither equivalent to nor a substitute for Physical Education within the redeveloped subject areas. In this regard consideration might be given to the inclusion of progression criteria for wellbeing and physical/health education to represent the foundational nature of this subject alongside languages and mathematics, science and technology. These progressions criteria may

support progressive development across primary school and also effective transitions with early childhood education and second level.

It is fitting that we close with our plea that the success of this curriculum will lie on the professional development that accompanies it. Much is known about effective professional development (Armour et al 2015; Parker and Patton 2017). According to Curtner-Smith (1999), the factors which influence teachers' knowledge and interpretations of and enactment of new curriculum are: (a) personal perceptions and interpretations of the new curriculum, (b) personal experience, (c) gender, (d) personal participation in sport and physical activity, (e) experiences during Physical Education and school sport, (f) initial teacher education, (g) other teachers, and (h) situational constraints. A key conclusion of his analysis was that the introduction of a new curriculum did not necessarily result in a transformation of the values and beliefs guiding teachers' practices. Most teachers tend to interpret curriculum conservatively, and adapt it to be congruent with their existing perspectives and ideologies (Curtner-Smith, 1999). This policy slippage (Penney and Evans 1999), with respect to Physical Education and/or well-being, has been witnessed in Ireland with post-primary Physical Education (MacPhail 2007), Scotland (Thorburn, Jess, and Atencio 2011); MacLean, Mulholland, Gray, and Horrell 2015), Australia (Macdonald 2013), China (Jin 2013), and Finland (Yli-Piipari 2014). There is no reason to believe that primary Physical Education in Ireland would be any different.

This is a time that Ireland might step up and lead the way in CPD. It might be productive to open the discussion on formal in-service training/ ongoing CPD for schools, to include the PDST, and to involve Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers to assist in the development of pupil teachers and partner schools. Teachers need time to plan, design and reflect to devise new programmes or the new curriculum could easily result in policy slippage (Penney and Evans 1999) where the new curriculum reverts to the old (Curtner-Smith 1999). The tool box will be crucial as well as professional development and ongoing support specific for PE. New pedagogies will need time to embed. The role of external providers, if available in the local context must be used very selectively and allow for teacher upskilling and a legacy approach. The CPD promoted by the PDST, IPPEA and others are vital to help to build on the competencies of teachers. In studying the implementation of the 2017 Junior Cycle curriculum it was found that the resources provided by the JCT for Physical Education within the wellbeing area were welcomed, but not enough (O'Sullivan, Moody, & Parker, 2020).

As this curriculum represents a fundamental shift in beliefs, actions, and thinking for most teachers, if teacher learning is not supported, it will run the risk of simply a new name for what is already done. Teachers need a sustainable and on-going approach to CPD that allows them to continuous learn.

Data Protection

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Thank you for your submission.