

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

Name	Dr. Déirdre Ní Chróinín, Dr. Richard Bowles, Dr. Niamh Kitching, Dr. Michelle Dillon, Laura Harrison
Position	Physical Education lecturing team
Organisation	Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
Date	November 2020 (additional notes 25/02/2022)
E-mail	

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 ✓

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

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

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*.

- While we welcome the increased emphasis on Physical Education, we are concerned that the subject may become diluted if situated within Wellbeing. Physical Education should retain a discrete identity and time allocation.
- We recommend a minimum of 120 minutes of discrete Physical Education time at all stages. We suggest that this time should be spread throughout the week at early stages. Allocated time for Physical Education should be separate to, for example, discretionary time for physical activity related to integration
- The class teacher should retain the central responsibility for the planning and teaching of quality Physical Education.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance and benefits of the role of in physical movement and activity in enriching our everyday lives

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.

- In principle we welcome the agency and flexibility afforded to schools, and particularly hope that it will allow for more time allocation for physical education. We remain concerned, however, that a lack of guidance may create a vacuum whereby physical activity initiatives (rather than quality Physical Education) are prioritised.
- The class teacher should retain the central responsibility for the planning and teaching of Physical Education.
- We welcome these principles and propose that the content of the Physical Education curriculum can be framed in ways to allow schools to take advantage of their location, facilities and expertise at local level to maximise children's physical education experiences and make connections to broader physical activity opportunities in their daily lives.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of children's agency in their own learning and as such the potential for student voice pedagogies to promote meaningful PE experiences. These democratic pedagogies can act as an exemplar of student agency within the spirit of the curriculum (Iannucci and Parker 2021; Ní Chróinín et al. 2021)

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.

While we welcome these connections and transitions, there are also inconsistencies in terms of the principles, components and language used in areas of physical education and physical activity from Aistear through to Junior Cycle. For example, physically active play-based experiences are not explicit in the Aistear framework.

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.

We support the proposal that the seven key competencies are embedded across children’s learning outcomes throughout primary school. We suggest that Physical Education should play a central role in achieving these competencies. More broadly, however, we believe there remains a lack of clarity around what constitutes Wellbeing.

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*.

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.

- It is proposed that the broad curriculum area of Wellbeing incorporates Physical Education in the early stages. We have concerns that the subject of physical education, and the concepts of movement, physical skills learning and meaningful physical education experiences may become diluted in this area.
- We recommend a minimum of 120 minutes of discrete Physical Education time at all stages. We suggest that this time should be spread throughout the week at early stages.
- There is immense potential for the integration of physical education across any number of curriculum areas. We recommend that clear principles be established to ensure rich integration, without jeopardising the learning objectives in physical education. In this regard we suggest that additional physical activity opportunities be considered within discretionary time
- In terms of the early stages, we suggest that Wellbeing be more completely defined, and that health and physical education (later stages) have separate learning outcomes and be timetabled separately.

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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.

We welcome a greater emphasis on assessment but are opposed to standardised testing. We prefer to place emphasis on individual self-referenced progress. There is much good practice around assessment for learning within physical education teacher education.

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.

We agree that the 1999 Curriculum had many merits, including in Physical Education. We believe that Physical Education should be given a renewed emphasis as a discrete subject area with increased time allocation, with clarity provided on the place of physical activity initiatives and programmes, as separate from Physical Education.

Data Protection

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Thank you for your submission.

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