

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	Yemi Olajide
Position	Co-founder
Organisation	PRESERVE
Date	29/12/2020
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 yes

No

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

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

Preserve is a research project that is led by Maynooth university alumni with the objective of educating children to use social media in a safe and healthy manner.

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*.

This is a welcome development. At this juncture, this is arguably the best thing that can happen to the primary education system. It's been two decades since the primary school curriculum was published, however, the world and the way we live our lives has changed drastically since then.

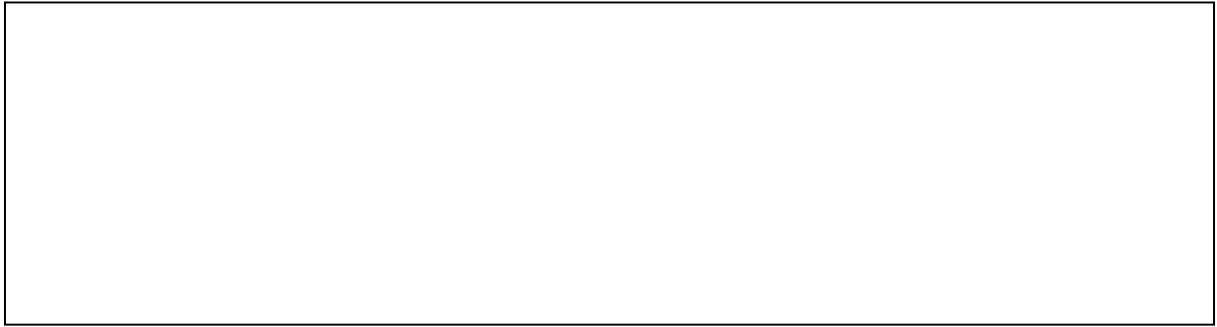
It is therefore important that not only the way we teach children is redeveloped, but crucially, what children are taught must be up to scratch in order for them to deal with the challenges they face in our world today.

Rightly so, the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework touches on all the important key competencies, curriculum areas and subjects. For this reason, everyone, including parents, guardians and teachers should be happy with the manner by which this process is being conducted.

However, efforts must be made to ensure that children are taught the right topics in relation to the key competencies.

At Preserve, our focus is on the 'fostering well-being' competency, mental well-being in particular. It is safe to say that when children are not mentally healthy they will struggle to function properly in other areas of their lives.

The focus of our submission in response to the Draft Primary Curriculum therefore will be on the 'emerging priorities for children's learning', in particular, the key competency and subject of 'well-being' from junior infants to sixth class.



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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.

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.

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.

School is the foremost fountain of knowledge children are exposed to. At school, children are exposed to various sources from which they can absorb extensive knowledge.

It would be rather odd and mind-boggling, to say the least, not to lay much emphasis on what is arguably the biggest phenomenon, 'social media', that has emerged into our world since the primary curriculum was published two decades ago.

With regard to 'emerging priorities for children’s learning', 'Social media education' now ought to be taught as a mandatory subject to primary school children in Ireland. This will facilitate the cultivation of a healthy thought process and groom children’s cognitive abilities. 'Social media' encompasses 3 of the key competencies mentioned in the Draft Primary curriculum namely; communicating and using language, fostering wellbeing, and being a digital learner. It is hard to see how any of the above competencies can be taught without 'social media' playing a major role in the discussion as social media is now more fundamental to human life than ever before. Not only has social media changed the way we interact, but it is rapidly changing how people access information from the news, and the way people organize to demand political change.

Acknowledging that social media has brought positives to mankind, the devastating effects it can have on the mental health of vulnerable people, especially children, cannot be ignored. Studies

continue to tell us that there is a strong link between social media use and the increased risk of anxiety, depression, eating disorders, low self-esteem and cyberbullying among others.

Not only do we sadly regularly read about stories of children who have lost their lives to the dangers of social media, but many children are also being subjected to a life under prescription pills for various mental health problems that can be attributed to social media use. Apologies to the bereaved families and children who continue to suffer just won't cut it. We all have a role to play in preventing these tragedies or at the very least reducing the risk of a child's exposure to the negative effects of social media in the first place. For example, those responding to a survey conducted by the charity Barnardo's, said that pressure online was linked to harmful behaviours such as body shaming and disordered eating. Also, with predators now hiding behind the anonymity of the internet, children should be formally educated on the pros and cons of social media. This is not an exhaustive list, but subtopics to be taught should include; harmful content online, unfair comparison, body shaming, critical thinking, cyberbullying, screen time, and sharing information.

Crucially, this kind of education that we are advocating for should be called by its name, 'social media education'. It should not be taught under the guise of any other name such as; digital safety, cyber security or technology and internet education. According to Confucius, "If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be conducted successfully. When affairs cannot be conducted successfully, propriety will not flourish".

Our duty of care extends to children's safety and happiness. We all have a role to play in tackling the negative effects of social media. The future of Ireland depends on a healthy society.

References

Ortiz-Ospina, Esteban (2019, September 18) The rise of social media. Our world in data. Retrieved from <https://www.ourworldindata.org/rise-of-social-media>

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Changing how the curriculum is structured and presented

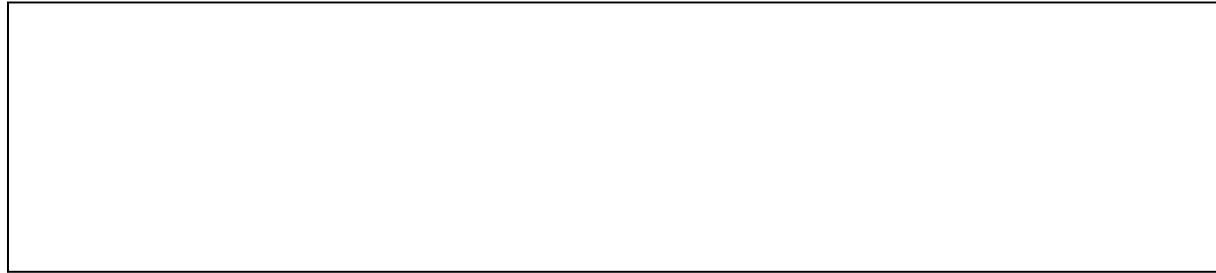
The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- 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.



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.

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

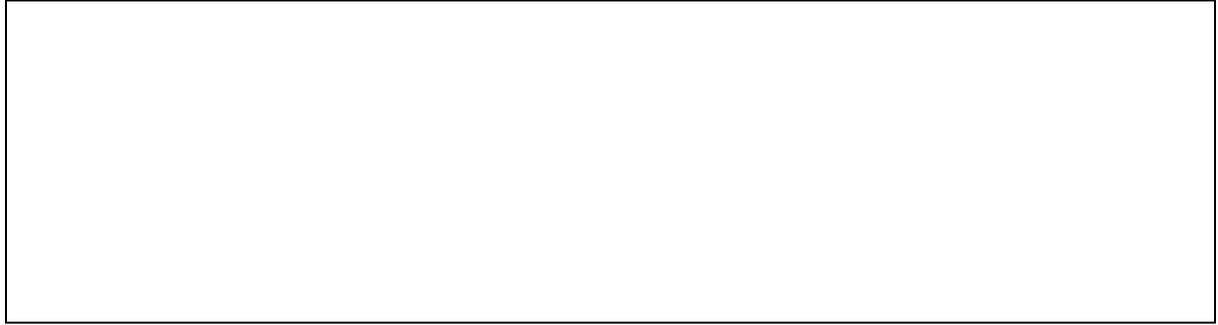
The 1999 curriculum contributed to many successes including:

- 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.



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Thank you for your submission.

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie