

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	21/10/2020
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Organisation submission details

Name	
Position	
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Yes

No

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

Currently teaching Junior Infants, I have been a mainstream class teacher for the past 5 years.

Gaining a specialism in Visual Art Education as part of my undergraduate degree in Mary Immaculate College in 2016 I have been awarded the Carmel Naughton Foundation Scholarship which allowed me to study at Notre Dame for a few weeks and worked in an arts-focused primary school in South Bend, Indiana.

I am the author of the teacher summer course Education for Sustainable Development Using Fabric and Fibre which had over 200 teachers complete and was successfully inspected by the Department of Education in the summer of 2020. The purpose of this course is to strengthen the teacher's understanding and knowledge of sustainable development, while complementing the strategies of the national Education for Sustainable Development in the Irish primary curriculum using an element of the Visual Arts curriculum, Fabric and Fibre.

After this course teachers are enabled to implement effective, innovative and enjoyable learning of sustainable development in the classroom using this particular strand of the Visual Arts curriculum.

After learning more about sustainable development, it would be hopeful that teachers implement more strategies for learning and development in the school in light of sustainability. This is just one effective way in which to teach children to become self-reliant and resilient in a world of change for environmental and sustainability purposes.

The teachers learn about the importance of having this mindset of sustainability and learn how they could incorporate it easily and seamlessly into the curriculum, across all subjects, using the fabric and fibre strand in the Visual Arts Curriculum. Having a background in fashion design and having researched the damages the fashion industry does to the environment (it is one of the most damaging industries in the world and creates more carbon emissions than air

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travel and shipping combined) , it is important to educate and teach the skills to children in order to live sustainable, healthy lives.

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*.

Having reviewed the framework, I welcome the focus on the key principles and key competencies needed for an encompassing education to happen for a child. As a working teacher, I appreciate the empathy shown in the draft towards the overloaded curriculum. The current curriculum is not linked well enough across all subject levels and so this new framework will propose to address this.

Although it is not detailed in terms of what major changes will be seen across the various subject levels, it is vital that more emphasis is placed on Education for Sustainable Development. The draft mentions the emphasis on environmental sustainability in the classroom and school context, however, I feel that a more structured and planned approach is needed to address this vital aspect of education on all subject levels.

In particular, the Visual Arts curriculum has an opportunity here to fully address the environmental and sustainability issues that we all face through the fabric and fibre strand. It is of my professional opinion that the art of sewing be reintroduced into the classroom as one answer to this issue.

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

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flexibility in schools. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

Following the review of this draft, it is interesting to consider whether differentiation is to be considered in greater detail as it indeed gives greater opportunities for flexibility and choice for children's learning. Tomorrow's child will need accommodations made and it would be insightful to see the recognition and advice for the need of differentiation at each class level and subject area in general terms.

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.

Fine motor skills in the early years are aided by Aistear's focus on play and manipulation of objects for the young child. Throughout the primary years in school, fine motor skills are developed but are they mastered? Sewing allows for a connection of hand-eye co-ordination and concentration and is a skill that can be developed from a very early age (simple threading activities and exploration of yarn and fabric) and mastered over the course of their primary education. Home economics is introduced to children in their first year of secondary school, but only a percentage of children ever experience it. Sewing, if completed incrementally throughout the primary school years, will skill every child to live creatively and sustainably. It will provide meaningful links to home and family traditions and history as well as a meaningful improvement of skill when students decide to complete the subject of Home Economics.

Emerging priorities for children's learning

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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.

Focusing on competencies are most welcomed following this draft of the curriculum framework.

Being able to distinguish how a child has progressed will prove vital in terms of their future development. Below I will explain how focusing on Education for Sustainable Development and the Fabric and Fibre strand of the visual arts curriculum will help foster and grow each of these competencies:

As consumers, we need to realise that our actions can have an enormous impact on others’ lives.

If we don’t pass this knowledge and these skills onto the students we teach, we are doing an injustice to ourselves and to the world.

Yes, there are many other aspects of sustainable development that covers the Sustainable Development Goals laid out by Unesco, but rare is it that one industry can encompass a multitude of learning opportunities like the fast fashion industry.

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Sewing provides a very social and human aspect to learning, as it allows imagination, conversation and activism to take place. Sewing is a skill we are all going to need in the future as we change our buying habits and turn our backs to the industry that has caused so much harm to the environment.

This does not mean we tell the children of our schools to never buy clothes or to feel guilty for indulging in new runners for example. In fact, it is the opposite. It is giving children an opportunity to make the decisions themselves, knowing the full implications their choices have on the world.

A school that can provide a safe, secure and understanding culture to this idea is where children can thrive. By learning how to sew, children will be able to mend, upcycle and design their own clothing. Children will be skilled in becoming conscious consumers as they get older and will have the knowledge about what they're buying and what it can do to our environment. Sewing is a collective experience. For generations, sewing and needlecraft have been a part of the Irish identity. As teachers, we must not let this tradition and art form die, as to do so, would be letting our heritage and history die also.

Children will engage in the measures strand of Maths throughout their primary education by learning how to sew. Documenting their creations using technology will allow for digital literacy to occur throughout the years.

An important note made by the United Nations was that 'inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream education should be promoted proactively. Schools and educational facilities as well as learning environments must be accessible and adapted for students with disabilities. Improving access to education for persons with disabilities is critical because educational disadvantage often leads to higher exposure to social exclusion and poverty, and therefore has a significant impact on capacity and opportunity to participate in society and development, particularly in employment ' (2018). Therefore, it is not only for the possibility of children being able to gain the opportunity to sew in the classroom, but instead, a collective objective of the school community to ensure each

child is given every opportunity possible for their development and indeed a chance to live a more sustainable future.

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.

The time allocations supplied in the draft seem reasonable and allow for integration to occur. Having a broad Arts Education for the younger years needs more detail in order for true analysis to be completed. It is not enough to advise a new broad spectrum without giving more detail as to what this new change looks like. We do not know if there will be a shared amount of time allocated to the separate arts subjects (visual arts, drama and music).

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.

In terms of pedagogy, it is important to note how focusing on Education for Sustainable Development through the visual art strand of fabric and fibre will allow all aspects of pedagogy come into fruition. Subject knowledge that is to be shared with children and skills taught to children will help embrace sustainable development through a creative medium such as sewing. Therefore, a teacher’s professional knowledge will need to be either learned or refreshed when it comes to the skill of sewing in order to proficiently teach it to their class. Understanding the context of their school and community will prove vital in the disseminating

of the information given to the children so that they consciously understand about sustainable development and the damaging fashion industry while not guilting families of lower socio-economic communities for contributing to fast fashion. Creating an inclusive environment that is relatable between the child and the teacher is vital to its success. Sewing allows this gap to happen as it provides the meaningful exploration of the topic of sustainability through critical thinking, problem solving and curiosity. By being creative through sewing and sustainable development, this will lead to children being open to collaboration between their peers and promote wellbeing as they are actively contributing to protect our environment. By connecting Education for Sustainable Development with sewing and the fabric and fibre strand we are giving teachers the opportunity to create integrated opportunities across the curriculum that positively reflects their school and community's culture.

In order to support school, teachers and school leaders, the draft mentions ongoing access for high quality professional development that also complements national priorities. It is vital that teachers are given these opportunities, especially in the creative realm of the curriculum.

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.

No two school day timetables are the same. Teachers can sometimes feel overwhelmed with an already packed curriculum that they question whether adding new skills or initiatives are logistically possible or beneficial enough for the management they take to create. The curriculum overload experienced by all teachers has undoubtedly been overwhelming over the duration of their teaching experience. Coming from the perspective of an infant classroom, it is a daily struggle to complete all objectives laid out in the 1999 curriculum, given the context of today’s environment and the busyness of life in a modern classroom. Needs and strengths of each child are therefore hindered as a result of feeling the need to ‘tick every box’ on meeting objectives, some of which are not achievable by some children. The addressing of this challenge that teachers face is most welcomed. Connecting and integrating our subjects across broad streams and themes will provide this solution in a more achievable and adaptable way. By focusing on fabric and fibre and sustainable development, it would prove seamless in its integration with other core subjects such as literacy and numeracy. Wellbeing, fine motor skills, creativity and meaningful engagement all add to this integration.

The skills and concepts provided through CPD are to help teachers to further integrate and mainstream sustainable development into their classroom, by giving it a new angle to view it from

- sewing and the fast fashion industry. It can be interwoven into other strands and strand units of the curriculum, where possible and does not aim to strain the already compact primary timetable.

Taking stock of the strategies needed for the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development and the sustainability goals 2030 into the curriculum are vital for teachers to have in their classroom. Resources, training and real-life skills are required by teachers to effectively and meaningfully teach tomorrow's children how to live sustainable lives. This includes the energy they produce, their carbon footprint, their ethical buying decisions and indeed the clothes they wear.

While there is no research conducted by the NCCA on the visual arts curriculum that is visible on their website, there is a need for deep insight into how the visual arts curriculum can transform the overall curriculum's approach to sustainable development. Training, whether it be personal professional development or school-wide endorsements, allows teachers to build the skills they need to effectively implement the new curriculum. *Education for Sustainable Development Using Fabric and Fibre* is an opportunity for teachers to begin to delve into the mindset, understand and meaningful implementation of sustainable development in the classroom through the visual art strand of fabric and fibre.

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Thank you for your submission.

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