

# **Síolta**

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# ***Introduction***

- Structures
- Importance of early childhood education
- Síolta
- Continuity between pre-primary and primary
- Future plans

**Department of  
Education and Skills**

**Department of  
Children**

**Early Education  
Policy Unit**

**Childcare  
Directorate**

**Research Unit**

**Youth Affairs**

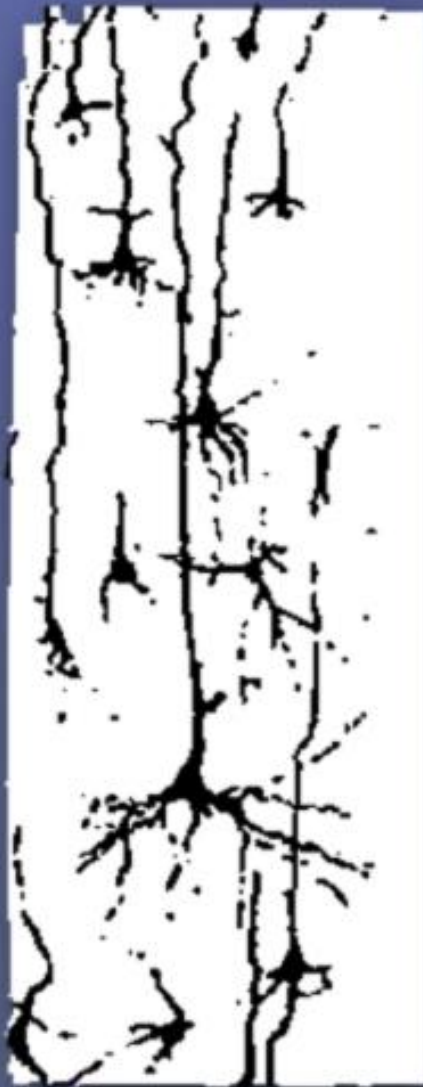
**Child Protection and  
Welfare Policy Unit**

**City and County  
Childcare Committee**

**Preschool  
Inspectorate**

**Voluntary Childcare  
Organisations**

***Brain is Changed  
By Experiences***



At Birth



6 Years Old



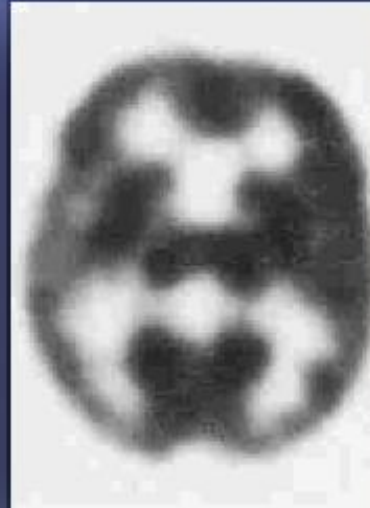
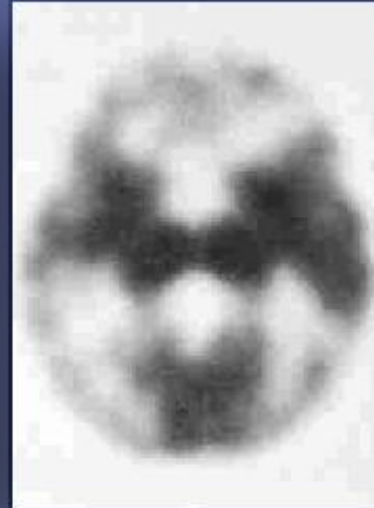
14 Years Old

5 days

2 months

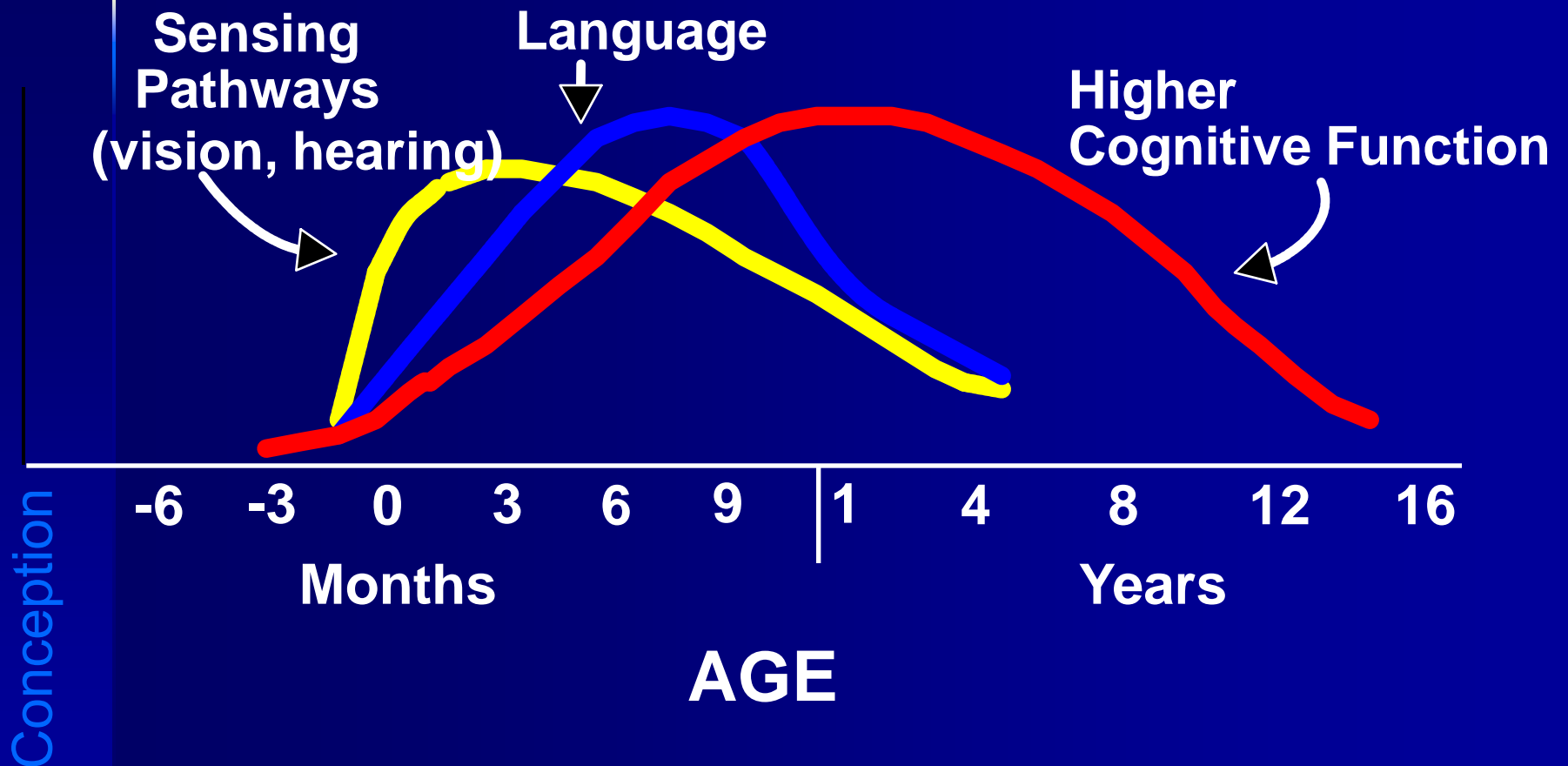
1 year

28 years



PET scans suggest rapid early development

# *Window of Opportunity - ECD*



# ***Síolta – the National Quality Framework***

- *Síolta* focuses on all facets of quality within ECCE settings
- Children from birth – 6 years
- All settings where children aged birth to six are present
- Structured around:
  - Defining
  - Supporting
  - Assessing
- Mediated for ages and settings





# *Síolta Framework*

- **16 Standards of Quality  
(including Play, Curriculum)**

Each Standard of Quality has ...

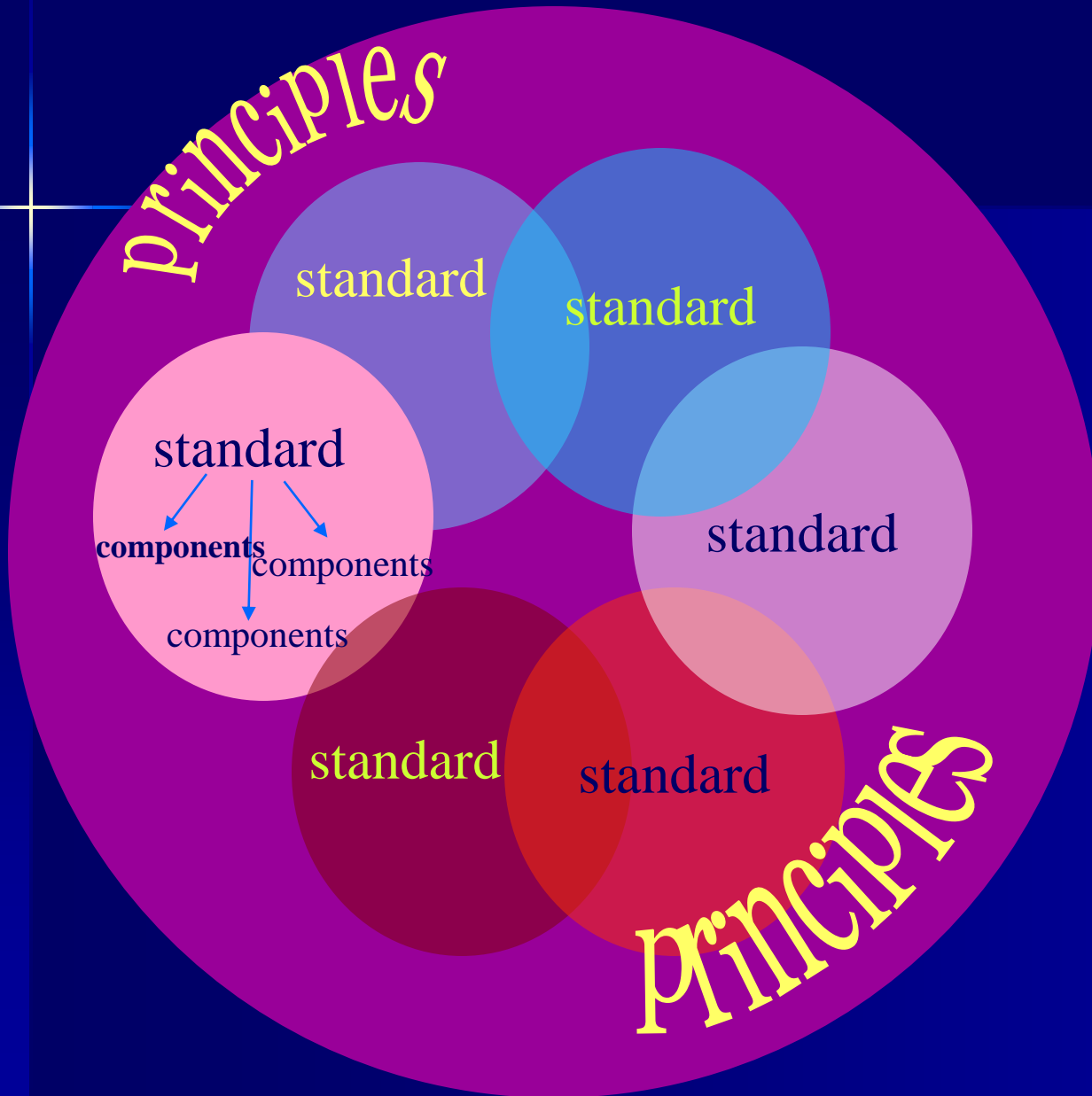
- components of quality
  - “ *the indoor environment provides developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children*” (Environment)
- signposts for reflection
  - “ *how does the environment facilitate and support the development of social activities and interactions*”



# *Defining Quality*

- Principles
- Standards
- Components
- Signposts for Reflection
- 'Think-about's'

# Defining Quality



## ***Standard 7: Curriculum***

- Encouraging each child's holistic development and learning requires the implementation of a verifiable, broad-based, documented and flexible curriculum or programme

# *Components*

- 7.1 It is evident that the child's learning and development are holistic experiences and processes, that play is central to integrated learning and development and to curriculum programme implementation
- 7.3 The curriculum/programme is reflected in and implemented through the child's daily routine, spontaneous learning opportunities, structured activities and activities initiated by the child

## *Signposts for reflection*

- What is understood by holistic learning and development in the infant classroom
- (Think abouts)
  - Links between developmental domains
  - Learning processes
  - Learning dispositions
  - Learning contexts
  - Integration

# Síolta Quality Assurance Programme

Introduction

Baseline Assessment

Action Planning

Developing Quality

Portfolio Building

Validation

## SÍOLTA QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS





# ***Síolta Implementation***

- 12 step Síolta QAP
- 25 Síolta Coordinators
  - Graduates + 5 years experience in service delivery
  - Mentoring, coaching, advisory
- 135 settings nationally
- Evaluation to be completed in 2011

# *Curricula for children aged 0-6*

- High-Scope
- Montessori
- Steiner
- Froebel
- Primary school curriculum for Junior and Senior Infants

Síolta does not prescribe a curriculum

# *Primary School Curriculum (1999)*

The curriculum is child centred, concentrates on children as active agents in their own learning and details what and how the child can learn most effectively. Its two key principles are:

- the uniqueness of each child
- the development of each child's potential to the full.

# ***OECD Review (2004)***

*'Little development of the infant school has taken place in recent decades. As far as the OECD team could judge, teacher training has remained predominantly geared to primary schooling, while classroom practice has remained didactic...'*

# ***OECD Review (2004)***

*'With the exception of the White Paper on Early Childhood Education (1999), the specific needs and learning patterns of young children have not always received attention in primary school regulations and policy guidelines.... The lack of specific policy guidelines sorely impacts on quality in the infant school'*

# ***OECD Review (2004)***

## ***recommendations include***

*'A thorough reassessment of teacher training for the early childhood classroom.'*

*'...prolonged practical training in model early childhood programmes'*

A student teacher spends 5% of their degree course on ECE. *'...Totally inadequate to change the predominant teaching model or to allow students to learn the practical-aesthetic skills that characterise good practice in the early childhood field'*

# ***Transformation and change***



# *Aistear - The Framework's themes*

**Well-being**



**Identity and Belonging**



**Communicating**



**Exploring and Thinking**



# ***Audit of Aistear and Síolta (2009)***

The audit

- Identified the links between the principles underpinning each framework
- Outlined the different emphases of *Aistear* and *Síolta*

Showed how using the two frameworks together can enrich children's experiences

# ***Continuity between pre-school and primary school***

- Universal pre-school provision introduced in January 2010
- 93% of children now attending pre-school
- Challenges and opportunities:
  - Continuity across the two sectors
  - Quality of the child's experience
  - Opportunity for earlier intervention

# *Plans*

- Primary Curriculum for 4-6 year olds is being reviewed in the light of Aistear
- Teaching Council and DES - 4 year B.ED. Change emphasis from academic to pedagogical
- Pilot evaluation of pre-school provision by DES Inspectorate
- Literacy and Numeracy Strategy - Oral Language competency as a pre-requisite for literacy

# *Plans (Cont'd)*

- Workforce Development Plan for the ECCE sector
- Common Award Standards published recently for ECCE awards at Levels 4,5 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications
- Universal pre-school provision – Minimal Qualification Requirement by 2012

**[www.omc.gov.ie](http://www.omc.gov.ie)**

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Thank You